

MAHANAGAR METRO

VOICE OF THE CITY, PULSE OF THE NATION

PM Modi to make brief stop in UAE before heading to Europe

The planned stopover comes months after UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to India in January and follows sustained high-level engagement between the two countries.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Amid heightened geopolitical churn in West Asia and shifting global energy dynamics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to make a stopover in the UAE in mid-May en route to a four-nation European tour. The visit highlights the growing strategic importance of India-UAE ties at a time of regional uncertainty.

The planned stopover comes months after UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to India in January and follows sustained high-level engagement between the two countries. In April, National Security Adviser



Ajit Doval and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had both travelled to the UAE, signalling New Delhi's continued diplomatic outreach to the Gulf nation.

During his meeting with the UAE President, Doval had reviewed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and discussed regional security and energy concerns.

The talks, attended by Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, reflected shared anxieties over regional stability amid ongoing geopolitical tensions, including uncertainty around US-Iran engagements and disruptions in the key energy corridor of Strait of Hormuz.

Jaishankar's visit reinforced the growing salience

in bilateral ties despite a complex and evolving regional landscape. India's outreach had also extended to Saudi Arabia, highlighting a broader effort to maintain balance and secure strategic interests across the Gulf.

The UAE's evolving regional posture, including its exit from OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) and reported frictions over oil policy, has added another layer of complexity. Differences with Saudi Arabia, alongside shifting alignments involving Pakistan and the United States, are reshaping energy and security equations in the region. Against this backdrop, India-UAE cooperation has gained greater urgency, particularly in ensuring stable energy supplies. While energy remains central, the bilateral relationship has expanded significantly under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership framework. The UAE is currently India's third-largest trading partner and second-largest export destination, with exports exceeding \$36.6 billion in 2024-25. India, in turn, is the UAE's second-largest trading partner. Both sides are targeting \$200 billion in bilateral trade by 2032, with a diversified basket that includes petroleum products, gems and jewellery.

Yogi Adityanath asks SP, Congress to apologise for not supporting Women's Reservation Bill

Yogi further alleged that the Congress, Samajwadi Party and the INDIA bloc are consistently attempting to ensure that the Women's Reservation Amendment Act is not implemented under any circumstances.



New Delhi.(Agency)

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday said that if the Samajwadi Party and the Congress have the moral courage, they should take part in discussions during the special session of the state assembly and apologise for not backing a bill in the Lok Sabha that would have enabled the implementation of the Women's Reservation Law.

Speaking to reporters before the one-day special assembly session, the UP CM said that a detailed discussion would be held on various issues, including the Narendra Modi government's introduction of the Constitution Amendment Bill for implementation of the Women's Reservation Law in the Lok Sabha, and the resistance meted out to it by opposition parties such as the Samajwadi Party and the Congress.

"I appeal to all members of the legislature party to participate in this discussion. If the Samajwadi Party and the Congress have moral courage, they should take part in the discussion and clarify why they did not support the Constitution Amendment Bill."

Adityanath said, "If members of the Samajwadi Party and the Congress feel that their leaders were wrong, it is their responsibility to apologise, or support the condemnation motion that will be introduced in the special assembly session today."

Accusing the Samajwadi Party of being a "habitually anti-women party that changes colours like a chameleon," he claimed that during its rule, there was a common saying that "daughters shudder when they see a Samajwadi Party member." "The country was aware of the anti-women conduct of the Samajwadi Party and the Congress, but they had an opportunity to remove this blot from their image by supporting the amendment to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. But they have missed that opportunity," the chief minister said.

He further alleged that the Congress, Samajwadi Party and the INDIA bloc are consistently attempting to ensure that the Women's Reservation Amendment Act is not implemented under any circumstances. In the special assembly session being held on Thursday, the state government will bring a condemnation motion against opposition parties for not allowing the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha.

India leads in information technology, Pak in international terrorism: Rajnath Singh

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh sharply criticised Pakistan for its ongoing support of terrorism, calling it the epicentre of international terrorism.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched a sharp attack on Pakistan on Thursday, saying the neighbouring country has consistently supported terrorism and emerged as an epicentre of "international terrorism."

Drawing a contrast between India and Pakistan, both of which gained independence at the same time, Singh said, "We have seen that countries like Pakistan have consistently supported terrorism. While India is known worldwide for its Information Technology, Pakistan has come to be regarded as the epicentre of another 'IT' - International Terrorism." "Our military industrial complex has proven that it is not only for the



period of peace, but it is also prepared for rapid supply during wartime. We were even threatened with a nuclear attack, but we did not fall for that bluff," the Defence Minister added.

Speaking at the ANI National Security Summit 2.0 in New Delhi, Singh also said India had halted Operation Sindoor, which came as India's response to the deadly Pahalgam terror attack last year, voluntarily and on its own terms and was prepared for a prolonged conflict if required.

"During Operation Sindoor, we precisely targeted those who had attacked us. And I want to clarify here again that we didn't stop this operation because our capabilities had diminished. We stopped it voluntarily, on our own terms, and if necessary, we were fully prepared for a long war," Singh said. He said the Army, Navy and Air Force had acted together under one plan, showing that India's military power no longer operated in silos

MAHANAGAR METRO | SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

A Reign of Fear Under the Guise of Faith: How Long Will the Jain Community Be Intimidated by Honeytraps and Blackmail ?

Pawan Makan (Group Editor)

Surat: A community that has long stood for non-violence, compassion, and charity is now under attack from elements operating like termites within—exploiting faith for criminal gain. The Jain community, known for donating generously towards temples and public welfare, is now facing an alarming conspiracy where its devotion is being held hostage. Mahanagar Metro exposes a network that doesn't practice faith—but profits from fear, extorting crores through intimidation and manipulation. Main Report: Protectors of Faith or Predators of Extortion? According to sources and recent developments, an organized criminal network in Gujarat has been targeting Jain associations and temple construction projects as "soft targets." Their modus operandi is deeply disturbing: Creating Obstacles: Wherever grand Jain temples are being constructed, the gang files false complaints under the pretext of illegal construction. Honeytrap Operations: Influential and respected members of the community are tar-



geted through carefully planned honeytrap schemes. Extortion Rackets: In exchange for withdrawing complaints or suppressing reputational damage, massive "settlement" amounts—often in crores—are demanded. Attacks on Monks: When their demands are not met, the gang allegedly resorts to violent tactics, even targeting Jain monks during their religious travels. Are spiritual leaders now at the mercy of criminals? Who is Behind This Criminal Empire? The network is reportedly linked to Ahmedabad-based Jagat

Parekh, an individual with a history of criminal cases and a reputation for operating with a deeply entrenched criminal mindset. Alongside him, names like Hardik Hudiya and Vikram Bafna have surfaced—individuals accused of using religion as a cover for organized extortion. In Surat's Vesu Jain temple case, similar tactics were allegedly deployed, but strong unity within the Jain community thwarted their plans. Mahanagar Metro's

Tough Questions: To Jagat Parekh and Associates: Will extortion become the norm under the spiritual legacy of Lord Mahavir? Will community donations end up funding criminal empires? To Police and Government Authorities: Why is a known offender operating openly against religious institutions? What explains the silence of the administration? Is a major incident being awaited before action is taken? To the Jain Community: How long will fear dictate your response? How long will extortion be paid in si-

lence? Unity is your strength—will you use it before it's too late? Editorial Note: Justice of Mahavir vs. Rise of Fear Lord Mahavir's message was "Live and let live." But these elements have twisted it into "Threaten and exploit." Those who attempt to defile sacred institutions must face both divine justice and the full force of law. The mask is now off—this is the beginning of the end for such criminal networks. Direct Message to Government & Home Department: Mahanagar Metro demands strict action under the "Goonda Act" against Jagat Parekh and his associates. Any individual or group obstructing religious construction and engaging in extortion must face complete legal action and social boycott. Final Word This is not just a news report—it is a warning. Silence should not be mistaken for weakness. Mahanagar Metro will continue to expose every layer of this network until those responsible are brought behind bars.

— Pawan Makan
(Founding Group Editor)

Bihar government removes Sanjay Gandhi's name from Patna zoo, dairy technology institute

New Delhi.(Agency)

The BJP-led Bihar government has renamed the Sanjay Gandhi Biological Park in Patna as "Patna Zoo" and the Sanjay Gandhi Institute of Dairy Technology as the "Bihar State Institute of Dairy Technology", decisions taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Wednesday.

The zoo, named after late Congress leader Sanjay Gandhi, son of former prime minister Indira Gandhi, was opened in 1973 and is spread over 153 acres, housing more than 800 animals across over 110 species.

The Sanjay Gandhi Institute of Dairy Technology, an ICAR-accredited institute established by the state government in 1980, offers BTech and MTech programmes in dairy technology. Among the other 61 decisions taken in the Cabinet meeting was the allocation of Rs 23,165 crore for the 'Mukhyamantri Vidyat Upphokta Sahayta Yojana', under which power consumers in the state get 125 units of free electricity every month.

Additional Chief Secretary of the Cabinet Secretariat Department, Arvind Kumar Choudhary, said the allocation will enable the Power Department to provide subsidies to consumers during the current financial year.

The scheme was announced in July last year by then chief minister Nitish Kumar, and was seen as one of several welfare measures that helped the ruling NDA return to power in the assembly elections held a few months later.

The cabinet also approved Rs 104 crore for the establishment of degree colleges under the 'Sant Nischay-3' programme in 208 blocks that currently do not have such institutions. "A total of 9,152 teaching and non-teaching posts will be created for these colleges. Each institution will also receive Rs 50 lakh for renovation of provisionally identified buildings and other expenses to begin academic sessions," Choudhary said.

The government also approved the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for the treatment of persons with autism. Land for the facility has been

News box

Woman chased, attacked by monkeys in Faridabad; sparks panic among locals

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A woman was injured after being attacked by a group of monkeys in the NIT area of Faridabad on Monday morning, triggering panic among residents and renewing concerns over the growing monkey menace. The incident took place around 10am on April 28 when the woman was walking through a residential lane towards her home. According to locals, a monkey suddenly chased her, and as she tried to flee, it clung to her clothes. Within moments, other monkeys in the area surrounded her and joined the attack.

As the woman screamed for help, she lost her balance and fell on a ramp outside a house while attempting to escape. Residents rushed out after hearing the commotion. One of them picked up a stone and tried to scare away the monkeys, following which the animals dispersed, allowing the woman to be rescued.

A resident said, "The number of monkeys in the area has increased significantly and attacks on women and children have become frequent." He added that fear has gripped the locality, with many residents hesitant to step out of their homes. Locals alleged that repeated complaints to the municipal corporation have not led to any concrete action. "The situation is worsening by the day, but authorities have remained unresponsive," the resident added.

Noida allows schools to revert to normal timings from April 30

Noida.(Agency)

After gusty winds and light rain on Wednesday brought relief from the scorching heat recorded earlier this week, the basic education department has issued an order stating that CBSE schools in Noida can revert to normal school timings from April 30 for classes nursery to VIII.

The earlier order, issued on Sunday, shifted school timings from 8am to 2pm to 7.30am to 12.30pm in response to soaring temperatures that crossed 42 degrees Celsius earlier this week.

"The order was issued for CBSE schools, including private institutions, due to heatwave conditions. Since the weather has improved, schools can now resume normal timings," Noida's basic education officer Rahul Panwar said, adding that govt schools will continue with the 7.30 am to 12.30 pm school timings.

District inspector of schools Rajesh Kumar Singh confirmed that the rollback also applies to classes IX to XII. The reversal comes a day after a delegation of parents met district magistrate Medha Roopam to protest the reduced school hours. Parents argued that the revised schedule was disrupting academic learning and creating difficulties for working families.

A parent from Greater Noida West, Manish Kumar, said, "The shortened timings have been affecting our children's academic progress and have been creating challenges for working parents. Schools already lose significant teaching days due to summer and winter vacations, weekends, pollution-related closures, fog, heavy rain and heatwave alerts."

Fire incidents surge threefold as summer sets in

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

The onset of summer is typically accompanied by a sharp rise in fire incidents, driven by high temperatures, dry conditions and increased electricity usage.

Data from the fire department shows a steady upward trend in recent months in Ghaziabad, with cases rising from 79 in Jan to 97 in Feb, 128 in March and 286 in April (till April 29), taking the total to 580 incidents so far this year.

On Thursday afternoon, a massive blaze swept through the Kanawani slum cluster in Indrapuram, reducing more than 150 jhuggis to ashes. At least 50 gas cylinders exploded, triggering panic and forcing residents to flee in a stampede-like situation. The fire also spread to a nearby dog shelter in Kanawani village, which housed more than 70 sick and stray dogs. Seven dogs were killed, while others were rescued by fire and police teams.

The fire department has identified 42 buildings — including residential complexes, hospitals and hotels — as unsafe due to non-compliance with fire safety norms. Earlier inspections between 2017 and 2022 flagged 51 such buildings; nine have since upgraded their systems, while legal proceedings against the remaining 42 are ongoing.

In the first week of April, the department also issued 150 notices to high-rise societies, hospitals and hotels, directing them to obtain no objection certificates (NOCs) and upgrade firefighting equipment following inspections.

Chief fire officer Rahul Pal said most summer fires are linked to heat-induced electrical stress. "Around 90% of incidents are caused by short circuits in homes, industries and other establishments. During summer, the use of fans, coolers and air conditioners increases significantly, putting excess load on electrical systems. This leads to overheating, sparking and eventually fires," he said.

He added that vehicle fires also rise during this period due to electrical faults and ignition of fuel vapours. Methane emissions from waste are another risk factor, as they can easily catch fire in high temperatures. Officials have urged residents to follow basic precautions, including using ISI-marked appliances, opting for copper wiring and switching off electrical devices.

Firemen on strike, roadways staffers and homeguards called in for help in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

For three weeks, 182 contractual firemen, including 46 from Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam, have been on an indefinite strike in the city. Across Haryana, the number of such firemen on strike is over 2,000. This has left the fire department in the city to work with only around 45 regular staffers to respond to 30 distress calls on an average daily across seven fire stations in Sector 29, Sector 37, Bhim Nagar, Udyog Vihar, Manesar, Pataudi and Sohna.

The fire department is banking on 51 Haryana Roadways drivers to drive fire engines, and civil defence volunteers, home guards and fire staff of private companies such as DLF, Haldiram, Hero and M3M, who are accompanying regular personnel to fire sites. They are being trained at the Sector 29 fire station, along with civil defence volunteers.

The strain has become visible through a series of incidents. On April 21, a fire

tender driven by a substitute driver went out of control and crashed into the wall of a house in Yamunanagar, injuring a home guard seated beside him. On April 26 in Sirsa's Ellenabad, a fire tender driven by a Haryana Roadways driver hit a motorcycle near Panchmukhi Chowk and crushed it, though the rider escaped. A day later, in Faridabad's Sector 15A, a home guard suffered injuries requiring 15 stitches after a heavy fire pipe fell on his foot during an operation. On April 10, farmers in Hisar blocked a road to protest the fire department's delayed response after their crops were damaged in a blaze. The strike extends across Haryana and has paralysed routine firefighting operations. The protesting firemen are demanding ₹1 crore compensation in case of accidental death, a govt job for one family member, and martyr status for those who die in the line of duty, on par with benefits given to policemen.



Twenty-two days after the strike began, Haryana govt has yet to open talks with protesters, who say they will not return to work till their demands are met.

The crisis has exposed two simultaneous battles in Haryana this summer — one against rapidly spreading fires and another within the firefighting system itself, where a prolonged labour protest has pushed an already fragile network to the edge.

The unrest traces back to a Feb 16 blaze at Shiv Steel Company and Kalkaji Lubricants in Faridabad. The fire claimed six lives, including firemen

Ranveer and Bhavi Chand and police SI Ravi, and left 37 people with burn injuries.

Ranveer was hurled into the air and slammed against a fire tender parked outside. Bhavi Chand was trapped inside, crawled out with severe injuries, and then collapsed. Three policemen, including SI Ravi, were also caught in the blast. Ranveer, Bhavi Chand and Ravi later died during treatment. For many in the department, the tragedy marked a breaking point.

Senior officers said this arrangement has slowed response times and complicated operations. Most volunteers are not trained to enter burning structures, which limits rescue efforts. A request made on April 7 for 150 home guards was rejected because they were already deployed for law and order duties with police. Fire officers said operating fire tender systems such as the "power takeoff," used to control.

No explosives found after threat emails trigger security sweep in Gurgaon schools

GURGAON.(Agency)

A security sweep was carried out across several schools in the city on Wednesday after bomb threat emails triggered panic among students, parents and school authorities.

At least 10 schools in the city including Suncity, HDFC, Amity and Shriram received hoax email threats at around 8:33 PM on Tuesday morning.

After the email was received, students were evacuated from the school buildings.

Police said it swung into action soon after the alerts surfaced, deploying teams from local police stations along with dog squads, bomb disposal squads and other specialised units to the affected campuses. "Extensive checks were conducted across school premises, including classrooms, buildings and adjoining areas," an officer said.

Officials said no suspicious person or explosive material was found during the searches. The incident led to heightened security measures, with schools activating emergency protocols and authorities ensuring the safe dispersal of students. Police maintained a strong presence in and around educational institutions during the operation.

Senior officers said multiple teams are examining the emails and treating the matter with utmost seriousness. Cyber experts have been roped in to analyse the messages, verify their authenticity and trace their origin to identify those behind the threats.

Police said the overall law and order situation remains under control and urged residents not to panic or spread rumours.

Citizens have been asked to immediately inform authorities if they notice any suspicious activity, with officials assuring that surveillance on both physical locations and online platforms has been intensified.

Pre-dawn showers cool Gurgaon, minimum temperature falls 5°C

Gurgaon.(Agency)

After Wednesday's storm-driven relief from scorching heat, IMD has forecast more thunderstorm activity across Haryana, Chandigarh and Punjab over the next few days, with a yellow alert warning of thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds at isolated places.

The weather department said maximum temperatures are unlikely to see major changes over the next 24 hours but are expected to rise gradually by around 2 to 3 degrees Celsius over the subsequent three days before falling again by 2 to 3 degrees thereafter.

On Wednesday, Gurgaon recorded a sharp cooling trend after overnight rain and gusty winds, with the minimum



temperature dropping to 21 degrees Celsius at the Gurgaon AWS station and the maximum settling at 35.4 degrees Celsius, down 2.6 degrees from the previous day.

Across Haryana, average maximum

temperatures fell by 1.7 degrees and remained 1.9 degrees below normal, reflecting the broader impact of western disturbance-driven weather activity.

According to IMD's seven-day forecast, thunderstorm and lightning accompanied by gusty winds of 40 to 50 kmph are likely at isolated locations across Haryana and Chandigarh on April 30, May 2, May 3, May 4 and May 5. No warning has been issued for May 1. The forecast indicates partly cloudy skies with intermittent thunderstorm and rain episodes are likely to persist, preventing an immediate return to the extreme heat seen earlier this week when temperatures in parts of NCR crossed 42 degrees Celsius.

Stepfather strangles teen to death in Noida, then files missing complaint

Noida.(Agency)

Accused of leering at her 14-year-old stepdaughter, a 45-year-old man brutally assaulted the girl, strangled her with a piece of rope and left the body in a sack on a deserted stretch of Yamuna Pushta Road last week. Then he did what he thought would buy him time—walked to a police station and filed a missing person complaint, claiming the girl had not returned home after being sent to buy milk.

The man, Surendra, a resident of Jewar's RR Colony, was arrested on Tuesday after the initial probe revealed he had been repeatedly censured by the family for staring at Anjali, his stepdaughter from his fourth marriage.

Barely a month before he killed her, Anjali's grandmother had travelled from Delhi to confront him after the 14-year-old complained he had been leering at her and that she no longer felt safe in his home. He was told to behave. He did not.

According to police, on April 20 morning, when Anjali told her mother she wanted to go back to Delhi to live with her grandmother, Surendra made his move. While his wife was still resting, he took



the girl out in his e-rickshaw on the pretext of running an errand, drove her to an empty plot half a kilometre from their home, assaulted her and strangled her with a rope. To conceal the body, he

stuffed it into a sack, packed other sacks with sand to mimic a delivery load and drove to a deserted stretch of Yamuna Pushta Road between Kanigadhi and Jewar Khadar, where he dumped the body in the bushes.

He returned home a few hours later. When his wife asked about Anjali, he feigned ignorance. The couple spent the rest of the day searching for her. The next morning, Surendra walked into Jewar police station with his wife and filed a missing person complaint claiming Anjali had not returned after being sent to buy milk around 11 am the previous day. A case under Section 137(2) (kidnapping) of the BNS was registered, and teams were formed to trace her.

The investigation turned quickly as police analysed CCTV footage from the area. One of the clips showed Anjali with him on April 20 morning, the last time she was seen. Police said when confronted with the footage, Surendra broke down.

Haryana to conduct flood mock drill on May 14 across 13 vulnerable districts including Gurgaon and Faridabad

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Haryana will conduct a state-level flood mock drill on May 14 across 13 vulnerable districts, including Gurgaon and Faridabad, to strengthen disaster preparedness ahead of the monsoon.

The exercise is being organised by the revenue and disaster management department in coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the 2026-27 mock exercise calendar, financial commissioner Sumita Misra said.

The drill will be carried out in three stages. The first stage will be an orientation and coordination conference, which will be held via video conference on May 6. This will be followed by a tabletop exercise on May 12, where various response scenarios will be discussed and strategies tested. The final phase, a full-scale field drill, will take place on May 14 with participation from all concerned agencies.



The exercise will cover Gurgaon, Ambala, Faridabad, Fatehabad, Kaithal, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Panchkula, Panipat, Palwal, Sirsa, Sonapat and Yamunanagar. These districts have been identified based on their vulnerability to flooding due to recurring waterlogging or their proximity to rivers and canals.

Officials said that despite not being

near any river or canal, Gurgaon experiences frequent waterlogging during rains, leading to flooding of roads and residential areas.

Officials said the drill will assess disaster management plans and standard operating procedures at the state, district and departmental levels.

It will also focus on defining the roles

of stakeholders under the incident response system and strengthening coordination among emergency support agencies.

The exercise will focus on improving communication systems, resource deployment and on-ground response during flood situations. Authorities will also use the drill to identify gaps in resources, logistics, preparedness and inter-agency coordination.

The mock exercise will also emphasise building public awareness through media, local bodies, non-governmental organisations and community participation. Authorities aim to identify gaps in resources, logistics, communication and response capacity so that corrective measures can be implemented ahead of the monsoon season, she added.

Officials said such drills are aimed at ensuring a timely and coordinated response during emergencies and improving overall disaster readiness before the monsoon.

Mother of 4 welcomes triplets in rare normal delivery in MP's Satna, all stable

The case has also sparked discussion around family planning awareness. Kanchan Soni already has four children aged 11, 9, 7, and 5. With the birth of the triplets, the family now has seven children.

Satna . (Agency)

In a rare and remarkable case, a 34-year-old woman who already had four children gave birth to triplets through normal delivery at the district hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Satna, with both the mother and all three newborns reported to be stable. Kanchan Soni, a resident of Ujehi village in Panna district, was initially admitted to the Panna district hospital after experiencing labour pain. Doctors there confirmed the presence of three foetuses and referred her to Satna district hospital due to the complexity of the case. She was admitted on April 27 and delivered three babies over a span of about 90 minutes later that night. According to hospital officials, the first child, a boy, was

born at 10:34 pm. The second boy was delivered just 11 minutes later at 10:45 pm, followed by a girl at 11:57 pm.

All three births were conducted through normal delivery — a factor doctors described as particularly significant given the risks associated with multiple pregnancies.

The newborns were found to be in good health, weighing approximately 2 kg, 2.3 kg, and 2.65 kg, respectively.

Head of the gynaecology department, Dr Manju Singh, said both the mother and babies are stable and are currently under observation in the postnatal care (PNC) ward.

This is not the first such case at the hospital. A similar successful triplet delivery was

recorded in November 2025.

FAMILY EXPANDS TO SEVEN CHILDREN

The case has also drawn attention for another reason. Kanchan Soni already has four children aged 11, 9, 7, and 5 years. With the birth of the triplets, the family now has seven children. Family members were aware of the multiple pregnancy since the fifth month, when an ultrasound confirmed the presence of three foetuses.

While the case has sparked discussion around family planning awareness, the immediate focus at the hospital remains on the well-being of the mother and her newborns. Officials said statements from hospital authorities and the family are expected later.



Short news

Wedding DJ noise blamed for death of 140 chickens in UP's Sultanpur, case filed

Sultanpur . (Agency)

What began as a lively wedding celebration in Uttar Pradesh's Sultanpur took an unusual turn — with blaring DJ music from a baraat allegedly leading to the death of 140 chickens at a nearby poultry farm. The incident occurred in Dariyapur village under the Baldirai police station area on April 25, when a wedding procession passed through the locality with high-volume music. Ali alleged that the deafening sound triggered panic among the birds, creating chaos inside



the farm. In the commotion, around 140 chickens reportedly died due to shock. Following the incident, Ali filed a complaint with the police.

Taking cognisance of the matter, Sub-Inspector Bharat Singh registered a case against the DJ operator, identified as Kavi Yadav, a resident of Parsipur in the Kudwar area.

Police said an investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the deaths and examine whether excessive noise levels during the procession played a role.

5 Burnt Alive After Car Catches Fire On Delhi-Mumbai Expressway In Rajasthan

Jaipur.(Agency)

Five people were charred to death while another was seriously injured after a moving car caught fire on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway in Rajasthan's Alwar district, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place near Maujpur on Wednesday night when the victims were returning from a pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi.

Additional Superintendent of Police Priyanka Raghuvanshi said fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the blaze was brought under control in 15 minutes, but by then the car was completely gutted.

Three women, a minor girl and a man were among those killed. They were all residents of Sheopur district in Madhya Pradesh. Deputy Superintendent of Police Kailash Jindal said a short circuit is suspected to have triggered the blaze. As it was a CNG vehicle, the fire spread fast, leaving the occupants with no time to escape.

"Only skeletal remains were recovered from the vehicle, which have been preserved separately. DNA tests will be conducted to establish their identity," he said.

The car driver, identified as Vinod Kumar Mehar, managed to jump out of the vehicle but sustained around 80 per cent burn injuries. He was initially taken to a nearby health centre and later referred to Jaipur for advanced treatment, officials said.

Illegal Trade Flourishing Under 'Khaki' Protection in Ankleshwar: Signs of a Looming Tragedy or Open Nexus Within the System?

Mahanagar Metro Beuro

Bharuch/Ankleshwar: Prohibition laws in Gujarat appear to be collapsing on the ground, and one of the most disturbing examples is emerging from the industrial hub of Ankleshwar. The situation raises serious questions—has the policing system surrendered to criminals, or has the uniform itself become a shield for illegal activities? Despite the Chief Minister and Home Minister's "zero tolerance" stance, illicit liquor trade and gambling continue openly in the Chhota Bazaar area. Chhota Bazaar: A Safe Haven for Criminals and a Gambling Hub Near Ankleshwar railway station, the slum pockets of Chhota Bazaar have allegedly turned into a parallel power center run by a local operator known as "Vijay." Gambling rackets such as "Worli Matka" and "Aasra" are reportedly active, with daily transactions running into lakhs. What is more alarming is that gamblers from Vapi, Valsad, and Surat are said to be frequenting this hub, operating in full public view. Whistleblowers Allegedly Put at Risk Findings from the investigation point to troubling allegations involving sections of the local police and the Local Crime



Branch (LCB): • Breach of Trust: It is alleged that when citizens share information about illegal activities, instead of acting on it, certain officials leak the informants' identities to the accused, exposing them to threats. • 'Nil Raid' Practice: In a recent instance, despite receiving credible inputs, an LCB team reportedly visited the location but returned after showing a "nil raid" on record, raising concerns about possible compromise. Key Questions Raised Bharuch SP: Has intelli-

gence failed, or is there silent consent to the activities happening under your jurisdiction? PI Chavda (A-Division) and PI Wala (LCB): Why are these illegal operations not being curbed? Is action being delayed until a major tragedy occurs? Need for Higher Intervention: Does the situation now warrant intervention by the State Monitoring Cell (SMC) from Gandhinagar, given the apparent inaction at the local level? Warning of a Possible Disaster There are serious concerns that chemically adulterated liquor being sold in the area could lead to a major hooch tragedy at any time. Any loss of innocent lives would raise direct accountability questions for the local enforcement system. Mahanagar Metro will continue to investigate and report on this alleged nexus between illegal operators and compromised elements within the system. The campaign will persist until those responsible are held accountable under the law.

No OTP, no problem: Ahmedabad gang uses AI deepfakes to bypass Aadhaar checks

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

The Ahmedabad Police Cyber Crime Branch on Wednesday arrested four men who allegedly used artificial intelligence, including Google's Gemini AI tool, to create deepfake videos of a businessman and bypass Aadhaar biometric verification to carry out a fraudulent loan transaction without triggering OTP alerts.

The case came to light after a city-based businessman, who is engaged in import-export work, noticed he had stopped receiving OTPs from his bank for two days and approached the police suspecting something was wrong.

During the investigation, the police found that the mobile number linked to his Aadhaar had been changed without OTP verification and that his biometric data had been tampered with. The investigators also found that a bank account was also opened in his name and a loan of Rs 25,000 was taken from it. Police also discovered that the gang also accessed businessman's DigiLocker account in a bid to retrieve stored documents.

According to the officials, the gang used Google's Gemini AI tool to generate deepfake videos of the victim, which were then used to bypass Aadhaar biometric authentication and change his registered mobile number, redirecting all OTPs to a number controlled by the accused.

Using the businessman's Aadhaar number and other personal data, the gang attempted to open accounts across three banks through e-KYC. They succeeded with Jio Payments Bank, through which they took a Rs 25,000 loan.

One of the arrested men worked at a Common Service Centre and allegedly misused his access to Aadhaar systems and official kits to execute the mobile number change.

Investigators said they were surprised by the sophistication of the method used in the fraud.

Deadly storm in UP's Sultanpur kills 7, including two children; over 20 injured

The storm also caused significant damage to infrastructure. A toll plaza on the Purvanchal Expressway suffered heavy damage, leading to disruptions for several hours.

Sultanpur. (Agency)

A sudden storm and heavy rain left a trail of destruction in Uttar Pradesh's Sultanpur district on Wednesday, killing seven people, including two children, and injuring at least 21 others. Officials said multiple areas across the district — including Baldirai, Haliyapur, Akhand Nagar, Bandhua Kala, and Kudwar — were hit by strong winds and rain, leading to house collapses, falling trees, and other accidents. Among the victims was 20-year-old Mahendra Tiwari from Kudwar, who died on the spot after an electricity pole fell on him. He had returned home just 10 days earlier from out of town for his sister's wedding, scheduled for May 7, and was on his way to attend a pre-wedding function when the incident occurred. In Baldirai, two people lost their lives. Eight-year-old

Mahima, a Class 3 student, died after bricks fell on her house, while 58-year-old Rambaran was killed when a tree collapsed on his home. His wife sustained serious injuries and is undergoing treatment.

In Haliyapur, 35-year-old Rita, a mother of three, died after a mud wall and thatched roof collapsed. In Akhand Nagar, eight-year-old Sureman was killed on the spot, while two others were seriously injured and shifted for treatment.

In separate incidents, 40-year-old Sushma Gupta died after a tree fell near her house in Bandhua Kala, and 70-year-old Kewala Devi was killed when a mud wall collapsed in Kurebhar. Several others

were injured in different parts of the district, with at least 21 people admitted to



hospitals. Local health centres are treating the injured, officials said. The storm also caused significant damage to

infrastructure. A toll plaza on the Purvanchal Expressway suffered heavy damage, leading to disruptions for several hours.

District Magistrate Inderjeet Singh expressed grief over the loss of lives and directed officials to provide immediate relief to affected families. He ordered that compensation from the State Disaster Response Fund be disbursed within 24 hours.

Teams from the revenue and health departments have been deployed for relief and rescue operations, and an assessment of the damage is underway. The district administration has also urged residents to follow weather advisories and remain indoors during severe conditions.

Iran's new, wild card — Houthis on the Red Sea

A de facto ceasefire has been in effect in West Asia in the preceding three weeks. Outwardly, neither the United States nor Iran appears to be interested in the resumption of hostilities which were suspended by President Trump on April 7 and unilaterally extended on April 22. There is, however, no sign as yet of a permanent end to Trump's war of choice. He has since threatened that if the Iranians do not agree to renewed talks, there would be no further extensions. He has set a deadline of April 26.

The reality is that Trump has another more serious deadline to contend with. The onset of summer triggers the campaign for this year's upcoming US mid-term Congressional elections. Trump desperately needs a way out from his self-made military disaster, one whose outcome will determine the remainder of his term. This is evident from his outrageous social media rants, simultaneously threatening and pleading for talks. The Iranians can sense this desperation. But then, both sides are highly attuned to managing domestic optics. This is particularly so for Trump, given his abysmal approval ratings and a Republican base apprehensive of a trouncing this November. Iran's current headline rulers see themselves as being in a stronger strategic position. Historically keen masters of carefully assessing an adversary, the Iranians are relishing Trump's dilemmas and so, have decided to run the clock. This week marks the 60-day period of Trump's illegal war, waged with neither Congressional nor United Nations approval. Under the US War Powers Act of 1973, a President has to seek Congressional approval for continuation of a war he initiated. Alternately, Trump can seek a 30-day extension by providing adequate justification, a challenging task but doable. Iran's ruling security establishment has thus settled into a wait-and-watch mode. It is comforted by reports in the Persian media of a strong "rally around the flag" domestic sentiment. On the other hand, it realises the monumental challenges of Iran's post-war reconstruction, concealed within which are portents of future social instability. This is, therefore, a critical determinant in its need to levy a revenue collection toll on the Strait of Hormuz.

Meanwhile, there is no reliable information regarding Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei's whereabouts and health condition. He has not been seen in public and is said to be seriously injured, perhaps with debilitating life-threatening injuries he suffered on the first day of the war. Mojtaba's injuries have strengthened the dominance of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, which today lays down Iran's tough negotiating conditions. Against the above background, a flurry of activity is taking place. First is the renewed military build-up in the region. The US has deployed a third carrier strike group (CSG) to the region, but it is not clear if one of the CSGs is in rotation. However, under the cover of the ceasefire, the US is steadily pre-positioning a range of military, naval and air assets, replenishing its ballistic and air defence systems and air-refuelling tankers. While this is seriously weakening the US force posture in other theatres, especially the critical Indo-Pacific, the indications are of US preparations for a final, debilitating strike on Iran. The calculation is that if successful, a big if, this could give Trump a legacy-defining victory and possibly reverse his political difficulties. On the other hand, Iran too is readying itself for just such a probability and replenishing its military stores, including by unblocking tunnels behind which are hidden more ballistic missile batteries.

The military awaits a fair deal

Either dispense with NFU for all Services, or give it to all, including the defence forces

ACCORDING to media reports, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court recently. Citing the findings of a "high-level committee" constituted to review the demands for salary upgradation of armed forces personnel, the MoD informed the court that "...the complexities in implementation, possible legal complications and significantly large financial implications do not favour the grant of NFU (non-functional financial upgradation) to armed forces personnel." Given that one of the signatories to the affidavit is a serving Major General, the unstated acquiescence of the military must be assumed, and no dissent should emerge from our disciplined armed forces. However, NFU has played a major role in distorting the relativity between the civilian Services and the armed forces, and has become an irritant in civil-military relations. There is good reason, therefore, for retired Army officers to seek redressal from courts. The professional hierarchy that drives the government's administrative machinery — all recruited via the Union Public Service Commission — is three-tiered. The first among equals are the three All-India Services which serve at the Centre as well as in states: the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Indian Police Service (IPS) and the Indian Forest Service (IFoS). At the next rung are the Central Group 'A' Services, that include the Foreign, Revenue, Audit, Postal and other Services. The third tier is occupied by the technical/specialised services, providing expertise in medicine, engineering, science, etc. Most of these Services have distinct cadre rules and are formally classified as Organised Group 'A' Services (OGAS). This categorisation assumes significance since it has come to form the basis of decisions taken by the 10-yearly Central Pay Commissions (CPC) in deciding salaries and allowances of Central government employees. Since the status of the armed forces has been (deliberately?) kept vague and undefined, successive CPCs, maintaining that they do not fall into any "recognised category", have employed whimsical logic to depress the emoluments and, consequently, the status of the military relative to the Civil Services.

At the heart of the NFU contention lies the "remunerative edge" granted to the IAS and the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) by the 4th CPC (1986), which manifests as additional increments across three senior grades. Other Central Services agitated against this "edge", terming it discriminatory, and argued that this preferential treatment was iniquitous since all candidates were recruited through a common UPSC examination and

contrary to the principle of "equal pay for equal work." Consequently, NFU was introduced in 2006 by the 6th CPC in order to address the disparity between the IAS and other Central Group 'A' Services. Whenever an IAS officer (the benchmark) is empanelled for a particular grade at the Centre, all officers of the OGAS would automatically be granted the same pay scale after a delay of two years, regardless of whether a vacancy existed for their actual promotion. Initially, the government granted NFU only to the OGAS. However, following representations, it was extended to the IPS and IFoS in



2010. The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) then approached the courts (2012-19), and after a protracted legal battle, the apex court held that the CAPFs met all criteria for "Organised Group 'A' Services" and directed the government to grant them NFU retrospectively from 2006. The armed forces, even though aggrieved by all these decisions, had no avenue for seeking redressal till the convening of the 7th CPC in 2014 offered them a rare opportunity. In the Joint Services Memorandum (JSM) presented before the CPC, they stated that by extending NFU to the OGAS, but denying it to the military, the 6th CPC (2006) had created a severely anomalous situation. Commenting on the JSM, a member of the CPC stated that he "...agrees with the view that exclusion of Defence Forces from NFU has been unfair. The gap between career progression in the Defence Forces in comparison with 49 Organised Group 'A' Services and IPS/IFoS, which was already large, has been stretched beyond reasonable limits... there is no basis for denying them NFU simply on the ground that they are not classified as an Organised Group 'A' Service... This has undermined

the status and morale of the Defence Forces, and has been a matter of concern for them for the past decade."

The JSM had further pointed out that such changes, by downgrading them relative to the IAS, IPS and the CAPFs, had undermined the status of military commanders. Moreover, civilian personnel of organisations such as the Border Roads, Military Engineering Services and Naval Armament Services — created to support the armed forces — having overtaken their military superiors in terms of pay grades, were now demanding an altered relationship.

Then, as now, the MoD seems to have acted as a "spoiler" and its negative intervention served to torpedo the JSM. Against this backdrop, a striking aspect of the 7th CPC report is the discussion (and dissonance) that emerges between the Chairman and two members of the commission, Vivek Rae (an IAS officer), and the economist Dr Rathin Roy, regarding NFU.

In the Chairman's considered opinion, "...since NFU has been in existence for the last ten years and is being availed by all the Organised Group 'A' Services, it should be allowed to continue. The same will be available not only to all organised Central Group 'A' Services but also members of CAPFs, ICG (Indian Coast Guard) and Defence Forces." The two members of the commission have, however, recorded their dissent with this opinion.

Elaborating on the case for withdrawal of NFU from Organised Group 'A' Services, Rae said, "In the view of the undersigned, it was a mistake to grant NFU to 49 Organised Group 'A' Services, IPS and IFoS till HAG (Higher Administrative Grade) level on untenable grounds of parity with IAS. Exclusion of Defence Forces and CAPFs only aggravated the mistake." Dr Roy, strongly supporting the case for withdrawal of NFU, said: "I join the dissent of my colleague Mr Vivek Rae and recommend that NFU at the Group 'A' level be completely done away with." While the MoD may have summarily dismissed the armed forces' case, the 7th CPC's rigorous deliberations point to two logical alternatives: either abolish NFU for all Services or extend it to military personnel. Relying on the courts or passing the buck to the 8th CPC is unlikely to provide a solution. Nor will dilatory tactics — citing "complexity" or "financial implications" — make the problem go away. An objective examination must be undertaken urgently to find a fair and equitable resolution to this imbroglio created by years of indifference towards our military fraternity.

Women fight chitta: The anti-drug battle begins at home

Families, neighbourhoods, gurdwaras, schools and village panchayats must become active participants in prevention and rehabilitation

WHEN a village is officially marked a "red zone" for drug abuse, it is a social alarm. In parts of Shimla, that alarm has been answered not first by the police or politicians, but by women who refused to watch their homes and communities collapse under the weight of the chitta menace. Mothers, sisters and wives have stepped beyond the private sphere to lead public resistance. They have formed vigilance groups, conducted night patrols, intercepted suspicious activity and pressured addicts towards de-addiction centres. Their intervention is rooted in lived experience. Women are often the first to notice behavioural changes, emotional breakdowns and financial distress caused by addiction. They understand before official reports do that drugs destroy families. This grassroots mobilisation offers an important lesson. Drug abuse cannot be treated solely as a policing issue. Raids and arrests may disrupt



supply, but they do not heal damaged homes or dismantle the social acceptance that allows narcotics to spread. Community vigilance is indispensable and

women are uniquely placed to lead it. The Himachal Pradesh government's "Chitta-Virodh Walkathon" and official appeals to mahila mandals are welcome steps, but symbolism must be matched with institutional support. Women confronting peddlers face intimidation and risk. They need responsive policing, stronger witness protection, rehabilitation facilities and sustained awareness campaigns.

Punjab, too, should take note. The state, known for its spirit of seva, where people come together to help in times of distress — as seen during floods, accidents and other crises — can draw upon this same collective compassion to fight the menace of drug addiction. Just as communities rally to save lives during emergencies, they must unite to save young people from addiction. Families, neighbourhoods, gurdwaras, schools and village panchayats must become active participants in prevention and rehabilitation.

All eyes on Bengal as BJP goes all out to defeat Mamata

Bengal verdict would have a strong bearing on the Opposition's fight against Modi government

The high-stakes poll battle in West Bengal between the powerful BJP and the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress hogged the headlines this past week. Neither in Bengal where one phase of polling still remains, nor in Punjab where elections are due less than a year from now, will the BJP leave anything to chance. It believes it has a shot at power in both these states that bookend the country, where it has never ruled before and will give everything it has to rule them, writes Editor-in-Chief Jyoti Malhotra in her weekly column The Great Game article From Panipat to Bengal. You can love or hate Bengal, but you cannot ignore it. Both PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah understand this fundamental truth well, she writes. In 500 years since the First Battle of Panipat, much has changed but so much still remains the same — the betrayal in the AAP and the high-voltage politicking in Bengal.

Since 2019, Mamata has been on high alert. She knew what was coming and she knew she had to fight to defeat the BJP, writes senior journalist Shikha Mukerjee in her Op-Ed article Mamata's decisive moment. The choice for voters is not between the best and the worst; it is a compromise that voters are trying to figure out. There is no denying that the Trinamool Congress as a party is not the best choice in 2026, she avers. The Trinamool Congress never was the best choice; it was the only alternative in 2011 when it zoomed to power by defeating the crumbling Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Front bastion of 34 uninterrupted years in power, she opines. With the SIR in West Bengal raising a furore among the political class, here's how West Bengal BJP spokesperson Debjit Sarkar justifies the electoral exercise in his article Why SIR is important to save West Bengal. The geographical and political realities of West Bengal are different from many other states in the country, he writes. Controversies

surrounding voter lists are not new in West Bengal. Allegations of fake voting, names of deceased voters, or outsiders being brought in to vote have surfaced repeatedly. Post-election political conflicts over results have also been witnessed. In this context, the SIR was important because a neutral and intensive revision before elections can address many of these allegations. The cleaner the voter list, the more credible the election process becomes, he argues.

Continuing with the political ambience in the country, the Opposition stalled the government's efforts of bringing in the delimitation linked-women reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha with aplomb. While earlier the Congress was under the delusion of being India's preeminent party, and was indifferent towards the burgeoning regional forces, the INDIA bloc should build on these gains from this pushback, writes senior journalist Radhika Ramaseshan in her Edit article Ray of hope for Opposition unity. The onus will be on the Opposition to take on the government both inside and outside Parliament with the tenacity it displayed, or risk losing the small advantage gained. The "asli khel" from the Opposition's perspective will begin on May 4, when the results of the Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and other states will be announced, she writes. The Pahalagam terror attack's first anniversary fell on April 22. It became an occasion for a sober reflection on terrorism, its regional and international manifestations and global patterns. Unwilling to shun terrorism, can an engagement with Pakistan be an answer, asks former Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Vivek Katju in his Edit article Lessons from Pahalagam. Regular contact on bilateral humanitarian issues should be undertaken, but full engagement will have to await Pakistan's abandonment of terrorism, he writes. Now, with its mediation between the US and Iran, Pakistan's integration into the

international community is evident. This presents problems for India and requires a new persuasive narrative on Pakistan without delay, he writes. Pakistan's increasing role as a mediator raises questions



on India's diplomacy, writes former Manipur Governor and former J&K Gurbachan Jagat in his Edit piece Strong headwinds test India. During the 1999 Kargil war, India had tremendous diplomatic support; during Op Sindoor 2025, it appeared to be a different world. Why has this come about? Is it because having been chastised and facing bankruptcy, Pakistan discovered humility while we in the hubris of our economic rise chose to be transactional, he asks. Through all the recent wars and conflicts in the world, we have kept quiet (and it was supposed to be a strategic silence). Somewhere

the plot has been lost as we are not part of the negotiations in major conflict zones, he laments.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump who will visit Beijing next month goes there chastened by his Iran experience, writes ORF Distinguished Fellow Manoj Joshi in his Op-Ed piece Shadow of rivalry hangs over Trump-Xi meet. At the upcoming summit, we can expect modest progress in trade and the tariffs issue, but no grand bargain. The meeting is unlikely to see any structural change in their intense competition for technology supremacy, he writes. Trump's hostility to China has not decreased, but his tone has been repackaged. Trump being Trump, wants the summit to be a gaudy victory with a "big beautiful deal" as its crowning achievement, while Beijing, ever the realist, knows that it is dealing with a lame-duck President who has been handed a defeat of sorts in Iran, as well as in the US Supreme Court on account of tariffs. So, China is unlikely to give him the deal he wants, and instead, may give him a packaged version that will pander to Trump's ego, but deny him a real victory.

With the West Asia crisis continuing to simmer, the common man continues to feel the heat. Conflict no longer stays where it starts. It pulses through supply chains. A war in one region empties granaries in another. The Law of Flow cannot remain a strategic insight. When flow breaks, the first to suffer are always those least equipped to absorb the shock, writes former Western Army Commander Lt Gen SS Mehta (ret'd) in his Edit article Nobody asked the fisherman. Every system we have built — the United Nations, the Law of the Sea, climate accords, trade frameworks — rests on a shared premise that humanity has a common stake in continuity. Hormuz reminds us that a strait we may never see determines the price of bread we must still buy, he writes.



We spend major part of our lives at the workplace. Hence the environment should be such that we should be able to look forward to work and not dread it.

Among several other things that make your workplace tolerable, the most important are the people or colleagues as we call them. We do have our loyal set of friends, both from childhood and college. However, we do meet some interesting people at our workplace too who go on to become our best buddies for life. There are all kinds of people at work and the list can be exhaustive. However, here are a few interesting ones that are part of every organisation.

Altruistic: This person would go out of his way to make others happy, sometimes at the cost of getting himself in trouble. People take undue advantage of him for their selfish gains. **Chamchi:** She loves to be in the good books of the boss. She's willing to go the extra mile to make the boss happy. She will spy on colleagues, sweet talk you into giving out information only to pass it on to the boss. She always speaks in favour of her superior and also covers up for her absence. However, it's not difficult to spot one at work. People can easily identify her and know better than to confide in her. The life expectancy of a chamchi in the organisation will last only till the boss exists.

Reliable: This person is the best of the lot. Want someone to work on your weekly off? She's only too willing to lend her supporting hand. You can confide your secrets in her and be sure they won't be shared.

Couch potato: He's the hungry jack. Always munching something or the other. His desk is filled with food items of all sorts

— chips, cup noodles, biscuits, chocolates. He loves to eat and keeps ordering food from outside. Be on good terms with him as he can be your saviour when you are hungry.

Noncommittal: Such people mind their business and choose to be blind to the happenings around. All they want is to be paid at the end of every month. They might offer lip sympathy, but never expect them to stand by you during crisis.

Backstabber: He's very social and talks to everybody. But his intentions aren't genuine. You never know when he'll let you down. He might let you down when you least expect it. Should he land in crisis, he will use you to get out of it. For instance, if the boss is unhappy with your work, he'll conveniently place the blame on you to save his a**.

Rumour monger: She's always hungry for interesting gossips so she can pass it on to others during lunch or coffee break. She's interested about your personal life, problems and everything about you. Rumours floating around your love life? You know the culprit.

Flirt: No, you don't have to stay away from him as he's harmless. He thinks he's the reincarnation of Lord Krishna and loves to be seen around with women. He doesn't miss an opportunity to complement you. He makes you feel like the most beautiful person on earth. Many feel such people boost your confidence.

Humorous: He has a great sense of humour and very witty. He makes boring work life so much better and tolerable. You literally chill out when he's around.

The joy of cooking with your kids



Cooking is a wonderful way to bond with your kids

Who says cooking is a chore? Turn it into a fun and learning experience for your kids. Whip up a lip-smacking meal along with your kids and see what a joyous experience it's.

Bonding time: Cooking time gives a chance to bond with your kids. Kids while being a part of cooking session with parents, feel involved and responsible. It's also a time to strike an intimate rapport with them and know what's going in their mind and lives. It is relaxing when the entire family involved.

Knowing about different cuisine and cultures: Food shows in television have

brought the world into our kitchens. But when you cook together, try out new recipes, it's a new learning experience. Tell stories regarding a particular cuisine or origins of food traditions. Cooking helps children learn about different cultures and that's a wonderful way to learn. In India, we have so many different kind of regional cuisines and cooking dishes from different parts of the country gives a chance to the kids to broaden their mind and understanding geography, traditions, festivals, availability of local ingredients and more.

A sense of confidence and self-esteem: Cooking gives a sense of accomplishment. It's a joy when you make a delicious dish. It

boosts one's self-esteem and gives a sense of confidence. So, when your kids join you in the kitchen it's a happy occasion that will also create memories for all times to come. In cooking, one needs to use one's senses, so it's a good practical lesson too.



9 people who make work life interesting



5 types of Women men should avoid

Here is a list of women guys should stay away from...

Definitely men do not want a woman who is totally dependent on them, but when a confident woman allows herself to depend on them, man get flattered.

Miss chatter-box

For a man, a talkative woman is neither good nor bad. Most women are accused of being too talkative when, in reality,

is a big mix of insecurity, possessiveness, and other self-esteem issues. Men generally end up identifying such women only when they can are well into a relationship. Though such women initially appear to be independent, once they are in a relationship and feels safe, her neediness begins to manifest.

Miss I, me, myself



captured by this strength and view winning them over as conquest. These women have both, the competitiveness of a man and the sensitivity of a woman. In an instant, they can switch from being seductive to emotionally distant. In fact, they use their hatred for men as a shield to avoid being hurt.

Miss I'm the best

It is believed that successful women are the ones men tend to feel threatened by and to an extent it holds true. Actually, men are not threatened by successful women, but are of the opinion that successful women do not need them. A lot of women often say that they do not need a man to make them happy, as they earn good money, own a house, and have a wonderful social life. Such women do not depend on men and this is what puts them off the list.

they are speaking more simply because they are discussing a subject that is of great interest to them and not just because women talk more. In a woman's world, everyone speaks together. In the world of men, it is considered rude to speak out of turn and one is not to be interrupted by the other until he's done. Therefore, when a woman asks a man a question and he proceeds to answer her - and then she begins to interject her opinions for the next 10 minutes - he'll just quit trying.

Miss read my mind

For some reason, a woman expects her man to know exactly what she's thinking at all times. As a result, she constantly tests him, using his responses to gauge his level of love. This type of behaviour should be avoided, as very few men are interested in dealing with the constant guessing games.



Women are always quick to state what they hate about men, trying to prove that it's them who should work towards keeping the relationship going. However, it's not always men who are to be blamed. Let's face it, as there are things women hate about men, there are also

quite a few things that men hate about women. Here are few kinds of women that men tend to stay away from: **Miss clingy** Believed to be every man's worst fear, this type of woman frequently verbalises how desperate she is to get married. Clinginess

Unlike other women, these are the ones most men will give chance and try to win over, simply because these women are a challenge. Because of the strength these women possess most men tend to avoid commitment with them. However, they are

Why we break up with Our best Friends



Swearing never to talk to an old pal has more to do with poor conflict resolution skills than ego. A few months ago, Mumbai-based clinical psychologist Hvovi Bhagwagar was approached by a 33-year-old MNC professional after a break-up had left him rattled. It wasn't a split of the romantic kind. He had had a nasty fight with his best buddy of many years. "Interestingly," says Bhagwagar, "he was going through a divorce at the same time. It wasn't the end of his marriage but the end of his friendship, that made him seek help." It's not discussed often, especially when men are involved, but it's not uncommon for adults to stop talking to friends whom they shared everything with. The reasons could vary. Bhagwagar's patient had a fight with his friend while the two were discussing his turbulent marriage. Well acquainted with the gradual deterioration of his friend's

relationship, the friend offered him his frank opinion — you can't blame your wife for everything that goes wrong in the relationship. Take some responsibility too. "He couldn't handle the criticism and the fact that his friend wasn't supporting him. They nearly came to blows, and cut off all

contact," she adds. While breaking up with a best friend is common across all age groups, the loss is more acute in adulthood, say psychologists. While in childhood, a friend often refers to just a playmate, in adulthood, friends equal family. "When you are young, friendship is more about who you spend time with, but as you get older, friends are not merely people you speak to every day," says psychiatrist Dr Samir Parikh. "In fact, sometimes, you may not even talk to them every day. But they are your support system and offer unconditional, nonjudgemental acceptance." The bereavement in such a case equals the trauma

faced at the loss of a family member or spouse. "People invest as much in close friendships, whether it's time or emotion, as they would in romantic engagements. And like marriages, these too are expected to continue for a lifetime." Thus, when it's the end, anger and frustration take over.

Patching up is tougher Reconciliation among fighting pals is tougher than between family members because the ties are not legal or genetic. So it's easier to make a complete break and not talk for years.

Intervention can help, though. In the case of the 33-year-old, therapy helped him understand that his reaction to his friend's criticism was extreme. "We realised through therapy that he had a problem in conflict resolution. This had slowly eroded his marriage and was responsible for the fight

with his friend too," says Bhagwagar. When he offered an olive branch, the friend responded curtly, but her patient persisted. Eventually, they met, discussed the problem and buried the hatchet. "His marriage was beyond repair, but at least he got back with his friend," says Bhagwagar. A healthy relationship is one where friends aren't afraid to disagree because they do it with the goal of coming to an understanding. "They thrash things out so that their friendship remains a safe place where they can be themselves."

Talk it out Had a fight? Here's a 4-step plan to patch up:



1. Cool down and view the situation using both, logic and emotion. For instance, if your friend didn't support you through a trying period, ask why. Perhaps there's a genuine reason.
2. Begin conversing in the least awkward way: phone/email/text.
3. Gradually move to face-to-face communication. Set up a meeting only when ready.
4. Solve the problem. Apologise, confront and find a win-win option.

Friends, foes, friends again

The cold war between once best friends Shah Rukh Khan (left) and Arjun Rampal (right) began when Rampal began praising Salman Khan, with whom SRK shares a less than cordial relationship. Friends of the two actors — who were spotted with each other often — admitted that the two were avoiding each other at parties. But a few days ago, the two are believed to have made up at an awards function when SRK, on his way to his vanity van, spotted Rampal hanging out with Chunky Pandey, went up and hugged him.



Disadvantages of open-plan Office revealed

There are advantages and disadvantages to an open-plan office - a single giant room where there is not much to separate you from a co-worker seated next to you.

According to the International Management Facility Association, 7 in 10 US office workers have to contend with these distraction-rich environments. Global design and architecture firm Gensler has released the results of a survey of some 2,035 workers in different kinds of offices, across 10 industry segments. The study found that employees working in open-plan offices reported having

difficulty to focus, and hence difficulty working effectively, ABC News reported. Gensler said that those surveyed represented a broad range of demographics, including education, age, gender and location and included knowledge workers working in an office some or all of the time. Diane Hoskins, one of Gensler's co-chief executive

officers, wrote that the trend toward open offices was building since the 1970s, driven by the need for greater collaboration and better communication. In a 2009 paper, Professor Tonya Smith-Jackson, chair of the industrial and systems engineering department at North Carolina A and T State University and co-author Katherine Klein, found that irrelevant speech contributed to mental workload, poor performance, stress and fatigue. They wrote that the open-plan offices were identified as problematic. Smith-Jackson added that they saw performance decrements and reduced productivity overall and the reason was twofold: distractions (verbal and visual) reduced employee's focus, and, at the same time, upped their mental workload.



Couples 'lack passion' after just one year

Relationships start to lose their spark after just one year, a new study has revealed. The survey conducted by Lloyd'spharmacy Online Doctor suggested that 15 per cent of couples make love every day, in the first 12-month "honeymoon" period of a relationship, the Daily Express reported.

Around 53 per cent of the respondents admitted that within four years, action in the bedroom takes place only a few times in a week.

It was found that beyond that point, for 43 per cent of couples it dwindles to just a few times a month. The study also suggested that for people, who stay together for 15 years or more, 15 per cent have sex no more than a few times a year.



When asked how they might spice things up in the bedroom, 17 per cent could only suggest "turning off the light". However, nearly 30 per cent confessed that at times they have problems "getting in the mood".

Most men prefer women who dress respectfully

If you thought you could attract a man with a low neckline and short hemline, think again! A study reveals that a majority of men prefer women dressed in a respectable way.

British money saving website VoucherCodesPro.co.uk conducted the survey and found that 45 percent of male respondents were more likely to approach a woman who is dressed nicely, as opposed to just 31 percent of men who said they were more attracted to a woman wearing revealing clothes, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The remaining said they didn't care about a woman's clothes as long as they were attracted to her. "Surprisingly, more men preferred to approach women who were wearing reserved and classy attire rather than a revealing outfit," said George Charles of VoucherCodesPro.co.uk.



"As the results prove, it shows that men do notice women's clothes, so perhaps keep this in mind when planning your next party outfit! Tailoring your look before going out and perhaps toning it down will make you feel more comfortable, which is the most important thing," he added.

I-PAC director gets bail day after Bengal polls as ED does not oppose plea

A day after the conclusion of the West Bengal polls, the director of Trinamool's political strategist consultancy was granted bail after the ED said it would not oppose his plea.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi's Patiala House Court on Thursday granted bail to Vinesh Chandel, co-founder and director of the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), a political strategy consultancy linked to Trinamool Congress, in a money-laundering case. The court granted relief a day after the conclusion of the West Bengal Assembly elections, after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) did not oppose Chandel's regular bail application. He had sought interim relief on humanitarian grounds, citing his mother's deteriorating health as she suffers from dementia.

Recording the ED's stand, the court noted that the agency did not oppose the plea in view of Chandel's "voluntary and purposeful cooperation" during the



investigation. However, the central agency sought conditions, and the court directed Chandel not to tamper with evidence or influence witnesses.

"In view of the voluntary and purposeful cooperation extended by Vinesh Chandel during the investigation and without prejudice to the rights and contention of ED, ED is not opposing the present bail

application," the central agency told the court.

The bench further ordered that he must cooperate with the probe, furnish all details sought by investigators, and remain accessible throughout the investigation.

Senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, appearing for Chandel, said the ED had raised no objection to the bail plea, citing his cooperation with the investigation.

"We filed a regular bail application a few days ago, and the ED was supposed to file a reply. Yesterday, they filed their reply and raised no objection to the grant of bail, primarily on the grounds that he has cooperated with the investigating agency and has provided voluntary and purposeful cooperation," he said.

According to the ED, Chandel's consultancy was involved in a money laundering case, with the investigation uncovering multiple instances of financial irregularities, including the receipt of both accounted and unaccounted funds, unsecured loans lacking legitimate business backing, issuance of bogus invoices, and the routing of funds through third parties.

Chandel was arrested on April 13, just days ahead of the state Assembly elections, and was later remanded to judicial custody. The court had allowed the ED to interrogate him in custody, noting there were grounds to believe he was actively involved in the generation, diversion, and possession of proceeds of crime worth several crores in connection with an alleged coal scam in West Bengal.

India pulls off a power miracle. A big thanks to the Sun

New Delhi.(Agency)

When India's power demand surged to a record high, it wasn't only the coal-fired plants that kept the lights and fans on. The Sun quietly blessed and delivered its share. Amid the searing heatwave, the country saw power demand soar to an all-time high of 256 gigawatt (GW), which was achieved without a shortage. Even as thermal power dominated with a 66% contribution, solar stepped in a big way with a 21% share. The country's energy story is beginning to reflect a subtle but significant shift towards cleaner, daylight-driven power.

The subtle shift helped in the miracle at 3:38 pm on April 25, when India achieved its all-time highest peak electricity demand of 256.1 GW without any shortage, and simultaneously maintaining electricity exports to neighbouring countries. Solar power contributed 57 GW of total energy generation during the peak demand. According to data released by GRID India, a government enterprise under the Ministry of Power that operates the national grid, at 12.30 pm on the same day, the solar plants and rooftop systems (RTS) energy generation reached about 81 GW, which accounts for one-third of the total electricity generated, 242 GW.

Previously, the all-time high power demand in India was recorded at 250 GW on May 30, 2024. One gigawatt equals one billion watts. One gigawatt of electricity is enough to power a crore (10 million) 100-watt bulbs.

ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION SPIKED IN APRIL 2026, PRESSURE ON POWER GRID

The demand for electricity in India typically peaks during the summer months of June-July. This demand is largely driven by the widespread use of fans, air coolers and air conditioners (ACs) in homes and commercial spaces. This year, however, the surge has arrived as early as April, signalling an early onset of heat stress across key regions. The last time the annual peak demand was recorded this early was in the year 2022-23. It is generally seen in May.

20 AI-enabled CCTVs to enhance security at Taj Mahal: ASI

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a move to improve security and visitors' management, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is set to install 20 AI-enabled CCTV cameras across the Taj Mahal complex.

The new cameras will feature advanced, edge-based analytics capable of face recognition, pedestrian tracking, crowd movement analysis, heat mapping, queue management, and sound detection, ASI sources said. The initiative aims to strengthen surveillance and improve real-time monitoring at the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The agency has planned to procure 16 high-resolution bullet or dome, two Pan-Tilt-Zoom (PTZ) and two Internet Protocol (IP) cameras.

According to sources, the cameras will be strategically installed to cover blind spots across the complex. The advanced surveillance gadgets will ensure comprehensive security coverage for the visitors and the monument, said the sources. Considering the security risk assessment, the

Uttar Pradesh Rajkiya Nirman Nigam has installed 140 cameras in 2016 at vantage points—the gates and the periphery of the monument. At least 50 of them were placed in the main tomb complex.

Last major camera surveillance upgrade took place in 2018. The closed circuit cameras were first installed in and around the mausoleum built by Mughal emperor Shahjahan in 2005. Integration of artificial intelligence into the surveillance system is expected to streamline operations and help in crowd control during peak tourist seasons. It will further enable authorities to respond swiftly to unusual activities or emergencies.

"There is no threat but the decision to upgrade has been taken to keep a close watch on uncovered areas in view of the rising footfall. There were some points which were out of the surveillance," said a source. The face recognition helps identify suspects or track persons of interest and pedestrian tracking is to monitor footfall, which is helpful in prevention of overcrowding.

US returns 657 stolen artefacts worth \$14 million to India

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Manhattan District Attorney's Office has returned 657 antiquities, collectively valued at nearly \$14 million, to India following multiple investigations into international trafficking networks. District Attorney Alvin L Bragg Jr announced the restitution during a ceremony attended by Consul Rajlakshmi Kadam from the Consulate General of India in New York.

Authorities recovered the artefacts through ongoing probes into criminal networks linked to alleged trafficker Subhash Kapoor and convicted trafficker Nancy Wiener. Officials highlighted the scale of cultural theft targeting India, noting that more than 600 items were returned in this single operation.



"The scale of the trafficking networks that targeted cultural heritage in India is massive," Bragg said, adding that further efforts are required to return stolen artefacts.

Consul General Binaya Pradhan acknowledged the role of US agencies, including the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and the Department of Homeland Security, in recovering culturally significant objects. Among the returned pieces is a bronze figure of Avalokiteshvara, valued at \$2

million. The sculpture, originally housed in the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum in Raipur, was stolen and smuggled into the United States by 1982 before being seized from a private New York collection in 2025. Another major recovery includes a red sandstone Buddha statue worth \$7.5 million.

Smugglers transported the damaged statue into New York through Kapoor's network, where authorities later seized it from a storage unit. Officials also returned a sandstone statue of a dancing Ganesha, looted from a temple in Madhya Pradesh in 2000. Traffickers sold the piece through false provenance documents and auctioned it at Christie's New York in 2012. A private collector later surrendered the artefact earlier this year.

CBI takes over probe into 'digital arrest' of 73-year-old Delhi man from Special Cell

New Delhi.(Agency)

The CBI has registered a case in connection with the "digital arrest" of a 73-year-old retired engineer from Rohini who was allegedly cheated to the tune of 10 crore, officials said on Wednesday. Delhi police's special cell was probing the

was reportedly carried out by callers from abroad, but their associates in India helped them obtain information about the target. According to the complainant, he received a call regarding a parcel from Taiwan. The caller told him that the parcel, with his name on it, has been intercepted at the



Mumbai airport. The caller further told him that the parcel contained banned drugs and that Mumbai Police Crime Branch officials would talk to him.

The victim was told to download Skype for a video call. He was kept on digital arrest for at least eight hours, and the accused allegedly forced him to transfer Rs 10.3 crore to separate accounts. On being informed, his family approached the police in

October, and the case under relevant legal provisions was registered. The accused threatened him that his two children who live abroad will also be targeted.

Delhi E-Rickshaw Rides To Get Costlier, Minimum Fare To Be Hiked To Rs 20

New Delhi.(Agency)

The federation of electric vehicles in the national capital said that the fares have remained unchanged since they started services in 2010.

Passengers travelling by e-rickshaws in Delhi will soon have to pay higher fares. The federation of electric vehicles in the national capital has decided to increase the minimum fare to Rs 20, citing rising inflation and no change in prices for a long time. Anuj Sharma, the chairman of the federation, said that while e-rickshaws have been operating in Delhi since 2010, their fares have remained unchanged, even as auto-rickshaw and taxi fares have been hiked twice during the same period.

He said that they have decided to increase the fares from next month. The announcement was made following a joint meeting of e-rickshaw drivers, dealers, and manufacturers with Delhi Transport Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh on Wednesday.



Currently, over 2 lakh e-rickshaws are officially registered in Delhi, while about 1.5 lakh unregistered e-rickshaws run in the city, providing last-mile connectivity in many areas.

At most places, e-rickshaw drivers charged Rs 10 for the first two kilometres and Rs 5 thereafter for subsequent kilometres.

Meanwhile, the Delhi transport department withdrew its 2022 circular that permitted companies to register multiple electric carts and electric rickshaws in their names.

"By preventing the concentration of ownership in the hands of a few companies or firms, the government aims to promote self-employment and reduce exploitation of economically weaker sections," Pankaj Singh said. He said key advantages of the decision include greater economic opportunities for owner-drivers, reduced risk of monopolistic control over the e-rickshaw sector, and enhanced support for self-reliant employment models. "By putting the vehicle back in the hands of the individual driver, we are strengthening self-employment and protecting the backbone of Delhi's last-mile connectivity," he said.

West Asia crisis may trigger supply shock, push inflation higher: Finance Ministry

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Finance Ministry has warned that the ongoing West Asia crisis could trigger a supply shock for the Indian economy and fuel inflation if disruptions in oil supplies persist, according to its monthly economic review for April. The ministry said damage to oil and gas production and supply infrastructure in the Gulf region could take several months to repair.

It noted: "Repairing the damage to the oil and gas production/supply infrastructure in the Gulf region may take several months. If such a gradual recovery is not supported by a good kharif output (a weather shock /below normal monsoon as predicted by the IMD - possible El Nino conditions), it is likely that the price shock felt at the headline inflation might spill over to the core measure through the cost-push channel."

The report said that if a delayed recovery in global oil supplies coincides with a weak kharif season due to below-normal monsoon conditions, inflationary pressures could intensify. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has indicated the possibility of El Nino conditions, which may result in lower rainfall across several regions. It added that India is entering FY2026-27 with strong domestic fundamentals but facing external challenges. The economy recorded real GDP growth of 7.6 per cent in the previous fiscal year, supporting a projected growth range of 7-7.4 per cent for the coming year.

However, the outlook has been clouded by uncertainty arising from the West Asia conflict. The ministry observed that a supply shock is already visible, with rising prices and concerns over demand compression. Higher input costs, particularly in the petroleum sector, are expected to affect multiple industries.

Big EPFO update: Minimum pension may rise 7.5 times, ATM withdrawals soon

New Delhi.(Agency)

EPF subscribers may soon see big changes. The government is considering a sharp hike in the minimum pension, while EPFO is also working on allowing ATM withdrawals, thereby making access to money quicker and simpler.

PENSION HIKE UNDER DISCUSSION

The government is mulling a sharp increase in the minimum pension under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS-95). The current minimum pension of Rs 1,000 may be raised to Rs 7,500, according to sources. The demand for this increase has been gaining momentum, with labour unions strongly pushing for a revision. A parliamentary committee has also recommended raising the pension amount. A final decision is expected soon.

INTEREST RATE AND WITHDRAWAL RELIEF

Alongside pension changes, EPFO is likely to offer an interest rate of 8.25% to account holders. The proposal is currently awaiting approval from the Finance Ministry. Once cleared, the interest amount will be credited to subscribers' accounts. Another key change in the works is the introduction of ATM-based PF withdrawals. This move is expected to make accessing funds easier and quicker for members.

EPFO SETS NEW RECORD

EPFO has reported strong performance in claim settlements. In the financial year 2025-26, it settled 8.31 crore claims, a significant rise from 6.01 crore claims in the previous year. Out of these, 5.51 crore claims were related to advance or partial withdrawals, showing increased usage of the facility by members.

Sensex opens 700 points lower, Nifty below 24,000; IndiGo down 2%

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices opened lower on Thursday, reacting to the sharp jump in crude oil prices, affecting investor sentiment. Rupee also weakened in early trade, adding to market pressure.

The &P BSE Sensex was down 947.08 points to 76,549.28, while the NSE Nifty50 lost 317.60 points to 23,860.05 as of 10:01 am. Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said that there are two headwinds which can impact the market in the near-term.

"One, Brent crude at \$120 threatens to worsen India's macros; the downside risk to growth and upside risk to inflation will rise if crude price remains elevated at this level. Two, the results from AI majors in US and South Korea are better than expected; this, in turn, might strengthen the ongoing AI trade for some more time. This means further portfolio outflows from India, impacting our markets," he added.

Selling was seen across sectors. Nifty Auto fell 1.94%, Financial Services declined 1.25%, and PSU Bank index dropped 1.64%. Realty was down 1.56%, while Metal slipped 1.29%.

Consumer Durables fell 1.23%, Oil & Gas index declined 0.93%, and FMCG was down 0.83%. Even relatively defensive sectors like healthcare slipped 0.48%. The broader market also remained weak. Nifty Midcap 100 declined 1.09%, while Nifty Smallcap 100 fell 0.49%.

India VIX rose 4.55% to 18.23, indicating rising volatility and nervousness among investors.

SENSEX STOCKS: FEW GAINERS, MANY LOSERS

Among Sensex stocks, only a handful were trading higher. Bajaj Finance led gains, rising 3.23%, followed by Bajaj Finserv (1.13%). Infosys and Tech Mahindra were marginally positive.

Stock markets dive in early trade as oil prices surge above USD 120 per barrel

New Delhi.(Agency)

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty fell sharply in early trading on Thursday, pressured by a surge in crude oil prices, weak global cues, and continued foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 821.79 points to 76,674.57 in early deals, while the 50-share NSE Nifty 50 declined 287.3 points to 23,890.35.

Among Sensex constituents, major losers included InterGlobe Aviation, Eternal, UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, and Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone. On the other hand, gainers included Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, and Power Grid Corporation of India.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 4.08% to USD 122.8 per barrel, intensifying inflation concerns and weighing on investor sentiment.

"The markets opened today on a sharply

negative note, reversing the recent recovery trend, as escalating geopolitical tensions weighed heavily on investor sentiment. The earlier optimism surrounding the temporary US-Iran ceasefire has faced after talks collapsed over the weekend, raising fears of a prolonged conflict and potential supply disruptions in the Middle East," said R Ponnudi, CEO, Enrich Money, an equity research and wealth tech company.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers, offloading equities worth Rs 2,468.42 crore on Wednesday, as per exchange data.

Across Asia, markets showed a broadly negative trend. South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225, and Hong Kong's

Hang Seng Index traded lower, while China's SSE Composite Index posted

Average closed lower as oil prices continued to climb. Meanwhile, the Federal Reserve kept interest rates unchanged, offering limited support to riskier assets.

According to market expert Hariprasad K, persistent geopolitical tensions—particularly those affecting supply chains—are dampening risk appetite and keeping markets highly reactive to news developments.

In the previous session on Wednesday, markets had closed on a positive note.

The Sensex gained 609.45 points (0.79%) to finish at 77,496.36, while the Nifty advanced 181.95 points (0.76%) to settle at 24,177.65.



marginal gains.

In the US, equities ended mostly in the red on Wednesday. The Dow Jones Industrial

8th Pay Commission: What worker bodies have demanded ahead of salary review

New Delhi.(Agency)

As the first round of meetings of the 8th Pay Commission began in Delhi, employee representatives have placed a wide set of demands before the panel, calling for higher pay, pension reforms and better service conditions. A note issued by Shiva Gopal Mishra, Convenor - NC (JCM) Staff Side | General Secretary - AIRF | NRMU, after the April 28 meeting gives a detailed account of what was discussed and what employees are seeking.

"The first meeting was held today on 28/04/2026," the note said, adding that discussions "concluded positively" while calling for "more meetings with the 8th CPC".

Has also reported from the ground on Day 1 of the 8th Pay Commission meetings, capturing on-ground developments and conversations around the process.

The report includes exclusive inputs and an interview with Shiva Gopal Mishra, offering deeper insight into how employee representatives are approaching the discussions and what they expect from the Commission.

CORE DEMANDS ON SALARY

At the centre of the demands is a sharp



revision in minimum pay. "The requirement for essential technological expenditure etc have derived Rs 69000/- as Minimum Pay," the note stated, laying out the staff side's

calculation for a five-member family.

Alongside this, the staff side has proposed a fitment factor of 3.83.

"Minimum Pay from Rs 18000/- has been increased to Rs 69000/- therefore 3.833 is taken as the fitment factor," the document said. Employees have also demanded a higher annual increment.

"Employees should get 6% of their basic pay as annual increment which is fully justified," the note added.

STRUCTURAL AND CAREER DEMANDS

The document also pushes for changes in career progression and pay structures. "Five promotions in a time scale manner within 30 years of service" have been proposed to address stagnation, it said. On pay structure, the staff side has recommended merging pay scales "to reduce the number of pay scales" while considering qualifications, skills and experience.

Where should a 25-year-old invest to build wealth: SIPs, stocks or crypto?

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

You get your first salary, and suddenly money feels very real. There's rent to pay, plans to make, maybe a small splurge, and then comes that quiet, slightly confusing question, i.e., what should I actually do with the rest so it grows? I was reminded of this recently when one of my colleagues, who is 25 and has just started his first job, asked me for advice. "Where should I invest? SIPs, stocks or crypto? What's the right way to build real wealth?"

Honestly, it's not just his dilemma. A lot of young people today are asking the same question. Scroll through social media, and everyone seems to have an

answer—quick returns, stock tips, crypto bets. But clarity is often missing. So, instead of relying on noise, I



reached out to experts to understand what really works when you're just starting out.

START SIMPLE, NOT SMART

If there's one idea that cuts through the clutter, it's this: don't try to be clever too early.

For Aswini Bajaj, CEO of Leveraged Growth, investing is deeply personal and context-driven. "Investing is contextual. Income, liabilities, family support, and future expenses matter more than thumb rules. There is no standard formula."

But when it comes to building wealth over the long term, say 10 to 15 years, his advice is refreshingly simple. "Start simple. Build a portfolio using ETFs such as Nifty 50, midcap, and small cap, and add 5-15% to gold and silver ETFs. The focus is not on being smart initially. It is on being consistent."

OnEMI Technology IPO: Is it a good long-term bet or should you wait?

Founded in 2016, OnEMI operates in the fast-growing digital lending space. It offers personal loans and loans against property with quick approvals and minimal paperwork—something that has clearly clicked with young borrowers.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The IPO market is buzzing again, and this time it's OnEMI Technology Solutions, the company behind the digital lending platform Kissht. But for investors looking beyond listing-day gains, the real question is simple: does this offer long-term value or is it better to wait and watch? The company plans to raise Rs 850 crore through a fresh issue, mainly

to strengthen the capital base of its lending arm, along with Rs 75.9 crore via an offer for sale. Post listing, promoter holding will fall from 35.2% to 24.8%.

A FAST-GROWING DIGITAL LENDER

Founded in 2016, OnEMI operates in the fast-growing digital lending space. It offers personal loans and loans against property with quick approvals and minimal paperwork—something that has clearly clicked with young borrowers.

As of December 2025, the company had over 28.7 lakh active customers and assets under management (AUM) of Rs 59,557 crore. Its typical customer is relatively young, with an average age of 32, and a decent credit profile, reflected in a median CIBIL score of 746.

A large share of its users, around 68%, earn between Rs 25,000 and Rs 75,000 a month, showing its strong focus on the salaried middle-income segment.



STRONG GROWTH NUMBERS

OnEMI's financial growth has been impressive. Its AUM has grown at a sharp pace, rising 80% annually to Rs 4,086 crore between FY23 and FY25. Net profit has also jumped 141% to Rs

160.6 crore. Margins have improved as well. The net interest margin stood at 21% as of December 2025, up from 18.6% in FY23, indicating better profitability in its lending business.

These numbers show that the company has been scaling up quickly in a competitive market.

RISKS THAT INVESTORS SHOULD NOT IGNORE

Despite the growth, there are a few concerns that stand out. One key risk is asset quality. The company's gross non-performing assets (NPAs) are around 3%, which is relatively high for a lender focused on unsecured loans.

Another major issue is its heavy dependence on personal loans. Nearly 94% of its AUM comes from unsecured lending, which typically carries higher risk, especially during

Short news

24 Hospitalised After Chlorine Gas Leak At Defunct Water Plant In Pune



Pune.(Agency)

At least 22 residents and two firemen were hospitalised after a chlorine gas leakage at Kondhwa in Pune after midnight on Thursday, fire officials said.

The leak originated from an abandoned tank containing chlorine at a defunct water purification plant godown in the Gangadham area around 1 am, they said.

"Following the leak and the subsequent spread of gas, residents in the vicinity complained of breathlessness. Upon receiving the call, fire teams were dispatched. Several citizens were evacuated, and the leaking tank was patched using safety equipment," a fire official said.

During the operation, 22 residents and two fire personnel complained of breathlessness and were rushed to the hospital, he said. A man who previously operated the water purification plant at the site said he had dismantled the unit, but the tank containing chlorine appeared to have remained unattended and developed a leak.

"All the affected residents and the two fire personnel are out of danger and currently under observation at Sassoon General Hospital," the official said.

CM Mohan Majhi launches 187 projects, e-bus service in Keonjhar

KEONJHAR.(Agency)

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi launched 187 development projects worth over Rs 1,330 crore in Keonjhar district on Wednesday.

The CM laid foundation stones for 62 projects worth around Rs 705 crore in different parts of the district. Similarly, he inaugurated 24 projects built at a cost of about Rs 251 crores. A package of about Rs 375 crore for 101 new projects was also announced.

On the occasion, 25 modern e-buses along with an 'Ama Bus' depot, built at a cost of Rs 17 crore, were dedicated to the public. Majhi said women will be employed as drivers and guides in these e-buses. The AC buses are equipped with CCTV cameras, panic buttons and GPS system so that passengers, especially women, can travel safely.

The CM further said the biggest feature of this new e-bus service is its affordable fare. Since the bus fare starts from just Rs 5, it will be beneficial for the lower and middle-class people. Digital payment facilities will also be helpful for students. From an environmental point of view, this e-bus service will help reduce carbon emissions.

In the coming days, this service will be expanded to other cities of the state and an expenditure of about Rs 238 crore has been announced for maintenance of the e-buses. This initiative will make Odisha a leading state in the country in the field of 'green mobility', he said.

Fresh agitation by kendu leaf workers on May 1 and 2 in Odisha

SAMBALPUR.(Agency)

Kendu leaf workers have decided to launch fresh protests on May 1 and 2, opposing the delay in announcement of the procurement price, bonus, and wages for the ongoing season. Members of Odisha Kendupatra Karmachari Sangh (OKKS) on Wednesday said while collection of kendu leaves began on April 10 across 19 divisions, the government is yet to fix the price per bundle (kerry), declare bonuses for pluckers, or announce minimum wages for seasonal and binding workers, triggering widespread dissatisfaction.

Criticising the delay, OKKS president Bijay Kumar Mohanty said, "For the first time in recent history, the government has failed to announce the kendu leaf price and bonus even after the start of the collection season. This has pushed lakhs of workers into uncertainty."

Despite the government notifying revised minimum wages in July 2024, there has been no corresponding fixation of monthly wages for nearly two years. Binding workers are still waiting for a revision in bundle rates, he said.

"There have been phased protests across the state over the demands. In February, mass demonstrations were held in nearly 100 forest ranges to draw attention to our demands. However, the demands are yet to be met," said organising secretary of OKKS Sanjit Mohanty. He informed that lakhs of kendu leaf pluckers, seasonal employees, and labourers will wear black badges on May 1 to protest against the 'government apathy'. This will be followed by mass demonstrations.

Teen, Lover Kill Her Mother. They Wanted Her Dead Father's Rs 45 Lakh, Job

Ranchi, Jharkhand.(Agency)

In Jharkhand's Ranchi, when Nahida Parveen died, her teen daughter called the extended family and informed them that her mother had fallen in the bathroom and was found dead.

Parveen's relatives, residing in Uttar Pradesh and Hazaribagh, arrived in Ranchi to pay their last respects and participate in the burial ceremony on Sunday. Two days later, the body was exhumed following which the minor girl, along with her boyfriend, was detained for Parveen's murder.

Rs 45 Lakh And The Dream Of A Luxurious Life

Nahida Parveen, a resident of Manirola, lived with her 17-year-old adopted daughter. Following the death of her husband four years ago, who was employed with the Electricity Department, Parveen received a financial settlement of Rs 45 lakh, with her daughter as the sole nominee. The teenager would often withdraw money from the bank account and give it to

her lover, 20-year-old Arbaz. When Parveen discovered this, she put a stop to it, drawing flak from her daughter and her boyfriend. The young couple decided to remove Parveen, who they saw as a hurdle between them and



the money. The plan was to gain access to the money, secure the job offered on compassionate grounds, seize the property and lead a life of luxury.

A Rs 12 Lakh Murder

On April 24, the teenager, along with her

boyfriend, Arbaz, and his three of his friends, killed Parveen by suffocating her with a pillow. The girl allegedly paid Rs 12 lakh for the hit.

According to the investigation, the accused executed the plan on Friday night, when Parveen was asleep. One of the accused pressed a pillow over Parveen's mouth, while another held her hands, and a third restrained her legs.

Parveen resisted and sustained a deep wound to her neck. She began bleeding and subsequently died of her injuries. The body was placed in a deep freezer while the bed was removed and hidden near a tree located close to the house.

A Call For Mourning

The next morning, the teenager called her relatives and informed them of Parveen's sudden death due to a fall in the bathroom. The next day the body was buried. But some relatives grew suspicious after they noticed injury marks on Parveen's neck.

Bengal Sees 92.47% Voter Turnout, Highest Since Independence

As of 7.45 pm, poll participation in West Bengal in Phase II of the Assembly elections stood at 91.66 per cent.

West Bengal.(Agency)

West Bengal has registered a record 92.47 per cent voter turnout in the two-phase Assembly polls, the highest in the state since Independence, the Election Commission said on Wednesday. In 2013, Tripura had recorded the highest ever voter turnout in an Assembly election at 93.61 per cent.

As of 7.45 pm, poll participation in West Bengal in Phase II of the Assembly elections stood at 91.66 per cent. In Phase I of the elections on April 23, the poll participation was 93.19 per cent. "The combined poll percentage over the two phases stands at 92.47 per cent," the poll watchdog said.

West Bengal has a voter base of 6.81 crore. Previously, the highest voter turnout in the state was 84.72 per cent in the 2011

Assembly polls. In Phase II, the participation of women electors was marginally higher compared to men. According to the Election Commission (EC), 92.28 per cent of the total



percentage of polling in West Bengal since Independence, the EC salutes each voter of the state." On April 9, Assam and Puducherry surpassed their highest-ever poll participation by recording a voter turnout of 85.38 per cent and 89.83 per cent, respectively.

According to the EC, previously, the highest poll participation in Tamil Nadu was 78.29 per cent (in 2011). In Tamil Nadu, women's participation was recorded at 85.76 per cent as compared to 83.57 per cent for men.

In West Bengal, 92.69 per cent of women voters turned up at the polling stations in the first phase, compared to 90.92 per cent of men. Tamil Nadu, where all the 234 seats went to polls on April 23, has 5.73 crore voters, whereas in the 152 seats in West Bengal, where polling was held on the same day, the voter

base was 3.6 crore. The counting of votes for all five Assemblies that went to polls this month - West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Assam - will be taken up on May 4.

4 Chhattisgarh Cops Detained In Guwahati For Taking Bribe From Accused

Guwahati.(Agency)

Four Chhattisgarh Police personnel, including an inspector, were detained in Guwahati for allegedly demanding and accepting bribes from three cybercrime accused arrested from Assam, officials

said on Wednesday. A police team from Raipur arrived in Guwahati this week in connection with a cyber fraud case registered in Chhattisgarh. The team had reportedly tracked several suspects across states and arrested an individual in Bihar before moving to Assam, where three more persons were detained from Guwahati.

The situation took a dramatic turn when two of the detained suspects approached Dispur Police Station with allegations that they were released after

giving money. The complainants further alleged that another accused was kept in custody until the demanded amount was arranged. Following the complaint, Guwahati Police launched an inquiry and registered a case against



four members of the Chhattisgarh Police team under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The accused officers - comprising an inspector, a head constable and two constables - were subsequently brought

to Dispur Police Station for questioning late Tuesday night.

Police sources said the officers underwent preliminary interrogation before being released on notice, as the charges invoked in the case are bailable in nature. However, they have been directed to appear again as the investigation progresses.

A senior police official said Assam Police acted immediately after receiving the complaint from the cybercrime accused and initiated an operation to verify the allegations. Investigators are now preparing a detailed report that will be submitted before the court.

Officials also indicated that the findings of the inquiry could prompt departmental action from the Chhattisgarh Police authorities.

Meanwhile, the cybercrime accused who remained in custody was later released on a personal recognisance bond.

Rs 27.98 crore sought for Sagar canal repair works in Andhra

ONGOLE.(Agency)

The Irrigation Department has prepared proposals seeking Rs 27.98 crore to take up 340 repair and renovation works on Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) canals in Prakasam district.

Officials plan to carry out jungle clearance and repair works during the summer to ensure smooth supply of irrigation and drinking water once NSP authorities release water from the project.

As per official sources, 4.30 lakh acres of ayacut fall under the Nagarjuna Sagar Ongole Branch Canal, Addanki Branch Canal, Podili Branch Canal and Darsi Branch Canal limits in Santhanuthalapadu, Darsi, Addanki, Ongole and Markapuram Assembly segments.

Officials said the absence of regular maintenance and jungle clearance led to the growth of trees and weeds, obstructing water flow in several stretches of major and minor canals. Irrigation Department Superintending Engineer Varalakshmi said the department had identified around 340 works for repair and renovation.

"After assessing the present condition of the NSP canals, we prepared proposals seeking Rs 27.98 crore to complete works. We will begin the works immediately after receiving government approval," she said.

12 Dead, 20 Injured As Van Crashes Into SUV In Madhya Pradesh

Dhar.(Agency)

Twelve labourers were killed and 20 others injured when the pick-up van carrying them overturned and collided with an SUV in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday night, an official said. The incident occurred at 8:30-9 PM.

According to preliminary information, 35 labourers were returning home in a pickup van from Baggad in Dhar district when the driver lost control of the vehicle near Chikliya crossing. The vehicle overturned and collided with an SUV coming from the opposite direction.

"Twelve people died on the spot, while



approximately 20 others were injured," said Dhar district's in-charge collector, Abhishek Choudhary. The seriously injured persons were referred to Indore after initial treatment, he said.

Tirna police have registered a case and are investigating the accident. Prime

Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident. A compensation of Rs 2 lakh each from PMNRF would be given to the family of the victims, and the injured would receive Rs 50,000.

"Deeply pained to hear about the loss of lives in an accident in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to those who have lost their loved ones in this mishap. Prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured," the Prime Minister stated on X.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expressed condolences.

"The road accident near Chikliya Fata on

the Indore-Ahmedabad National Highway in Dhar district is heartbreaking," he stated on X.

Yadav said instructions have been given to provide Rs 4 lakh each to the families of the dead, Rs 1 lakh each to the seriously injured, and Rs 50,000 each to the injured. "May God grant peace to the departed and strength to the bereaved families to bear the loss. We pray for the speedy recovery of the injured," he added.

The Indore Divisional Commissioner and Inspector General have been instructed to go to Dhar to oversee the treatment of injured persons. All the injured will be treated free of charge, Yadav said.

NEWS BOX

PUMA Unites Two Worlds: Virat Kohli, Christian Pulisic Swap Jerseys In Epic RCB x AC Milan Crossover



Mullanpur. (Agency)

USA football icon Christian Pulisic and star cricketers Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, and Phil Salt traded sports and jerseys in a cross-continental crossover between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and AC Milan. In Milan, Pulisic rocked the new RCB jersey, picking up a cricket bat and swapping dribbles for a drive, while Kohli, Patidar, and Salt, from India, returned the exchange with a cool football trick, as per an official release. Playing out across two cities and two sporting worlds, the moment connected elite athletes and teams through a shared competitive edge. Reacting to the crossover, Kohli said, "Iconic clubs do iconic collabs. Ciao." Bringing together AC Milan, seven-time European champions, with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, reigning Indian champions, the moment places the star-studded RCB jersey at the centre of global sporting culture.

With Milan's legacy and Pulisic's star power in play, the exchange takes the jersey beyond cricket and into the world of elite European football. Fittingly, AC Milan's origins trace back to its founding as a football and cricket club, making this crossover a nod to the club's multi-sport roots.

Built on a behaviour where fans take the jersey beyond matchdays and into everyday life, #RCBEverywhere sees PUMA turn that instinct into a global movement. By placing the RCB jersey in new environments and unexpected sporting contexts, the brand continues to amplify how far fandom can travel, connecting cultures, communities and disciplines through a single symbol.

As #RCBEverywhere builds, PUMA continues to drive the RCB jersey into new arenas, from global icon Usain Bolt cheering for the sport to cricketer Faf du Plessis taking it beyond the pitch, pushing it across sports, cities and cultures, and turning fan expression into moments that travel far beyond the game.

No. 1 Jannik Sinner beats rising star Rafael Jódar in Madrid and declares 'what a player'

MADRID. (Agency)

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner proved too much for Rafael Jódar, the latest tennis sensation from Spain. Jódar's run was halted by a 6-2, 7-6 (0) loss to Sinner in the quarterfinals of the Madrid Open on Wednesday.

The 19-year-old Jódar has been quickly rising up the rankings and had impressed in Madrid with victories against better-ranked opponents. "What a player," Sinner wrote on the lens of the on-court camera after the match at the Caja Magica center court.

"In the beginning he was maybe a little bit, felt a bit of tension, which is normal," Sinner said. "But after, it came out as a good match. I had a little bit of experience, you know, a little bit more of experience than him in crucial moments, but it was a good match." Sinner had praised the Spaniard a few other times before and was court-side to see Jódar defeat fifth-seeded Alex de Minaur in the round of 64.

"That's also one of the reasons why I went to watch him, you know, him and João Fonseca," Sinner said. "I like to watch because I know that they are going to be potentially the future opponents most of the time. Everyone is a very different player, and you need to adjust yourself."

The 24-year-old Sinner said Jódar has "everything what's needed" to be among the top players.

At the end of the day, you know, the player has to make the step forward, and then we see. But what he's doing, it's incredible," Sinner said. "But in the same time, don't push him too much, you know. Because sometimes it's getting into your head and it's very tough to get out. He's a very, very good kid, he has a great family behind him. The father seems very, very humble. He has a small bubble, which is great for him. I think he's going to make some incredible results in the future."

The 42nd-ranked Jódar was playing in the quarterfinals of a Masters 1000 tournament for the first time. He had already become just the third Spaniard — after Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz — to earn a main-draw win in Madrid before turning 20. Jódar earlier this month won in Marrakech for his first ATP Tour title, then reached the semifinals in Barcelona. He was outside the top 600 in the rankings just a year ago and entered the top 100 in March.

GT vs RCB preview: Gujarat Titans hope to erase mistakes of the past vs red-hot RCB

GT vs RCB, IPL 2026 preview: Gujarat

Titans are set to face Royal

Challengers Bengaluru in their

reverse fixture on Thursday. GT need

to come out of their shell and adapt

the modern T20 template if they

want to beat a red-hot RCB.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Gujarat Titans and Royal Challengers Bengaluru are at two extremities when it comes to approaching a T20 game. RCB, having adapted to the new batting requirements of T20 cricket, are packed with batting firepower throughout the line-up. The arrangement of their batting order won them the Indian Premier League last season, where they looked equally adept at setting targets and chasing games.

At RCB, the No. 8 batter is Krunal Pandya, who is an adept ball striker in T20 cricket and capable of finishing games. In sharp contrast, GT's No. 8 is Rashid Khan. While an adept ball striker himself, you would not put your money on Rashid finishing games.

That difference is reflected in the rest of the middle order as well. RCB are power-packed with Jitesh Sharma, Tim David and Romario Shepherd, ready to go hammer and tongs if the top order does not provide the desired outcome on a given day.

On GT's side are Shahrukh Khan, Rahul Tewatia and Jason Holder, who have been criticised for their batting this season.

While the contrasts are steep, the similarities between the two sides are quite apparent as well. RCB have relied on their masters of swing in the powerplay. Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood have been their go-to men. Ask Delhi Capitals, they were blown out of the water just days after

registering one of the highest scores in the tournament this season.

Similarly, Gujarat have relied on Kagiso Rabada and Mohammed Siraj, who have bowled some terrific spells this season.



BLOWN AWAY IN BENGALURU

But Gujarat's bowling can only do so much. In their first encounter against RCB this season, played at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, GT lost despite their opener Sai Sudharsan scoring a century. Sudharsan got the plaudits from select sections of experts, but in reality,

a century at a strike rate of 172 did more harm than good to Gujarat.

Sudharsan anchored the innings for GT, while others struggled to score. The left-hander played nearly half the balls in 20 overs, but barely attacked in his last 15 balls. The result: GT scored 205 runs at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. In response, RCB went hammer and tongs from the very start of their chase. Devdutt Padikkal, coming in at No. 3, started his innings by smashing a six. He got out trying to hit a six as well, having played less than half the balls that Sudharsan did. There were anchors in the RCB innings as well. Kohli, dropped early in the game by Washington Sundar, ended up scoring 81 in just 44 balls, guiding the hosts to a successful chase in less than 17 overs.

And that is the gulf that the two sides have in this edition of the game. Even with that kind of cricket, Gujarat have won four out of their eight matches. The teams that they have beaten this season are Lucknow Super Giants, Kolkata Knight Riders, Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals.

Get well soon, sir: Vinod Kambli's Wankhede appearance during IPL match warms hearts

New Delhi. (Agency)

In the cathedral of Mumbai cricket, where the roar of the crowd usually belongs to the modern icons of the IPL, a quieter, more poignant moment stole the spotlight on Wednesday night. Vinod Kambli, the man who once dominated this very turf with flamboyant strokeplay, made a rare and emotional return to the Wankhede Stadium. The occasion was the big-ticket clash between Mumbai Indians and Sunrisers Hyderabad on April 29. However, for a section of the fans near the pavilion, the real story wasn't the scoreboard, but the sight of the former India left-hander back in his natural habitat. Kambli's arrival was a testament to his enduring spirit. Dressed in a simple white checked shirt, brown trousers, and sports shoes, the 54-year-old looked frail. Battling well-documented health issues, he required the assistance of two companions to navigate his way through the stadium premises.

Yet, despite the visible physical struggle, the trademark Kambli cheer remained intact. As he made his way toward his seat, the fans — many of whom grew up on tales of his record-breaking partnerships — reached out with words of encouragement.

"Get well soon, sir," called out one fan from the stands. Kambli didn't just pass by; he paused, made eye contact, and offered a firm thumbs-up and a "thank you." It was a brief exchange, but one that resonated deeply with those present, signalling that while the body might be weary, the connection to the game and its people remains unbroken.

DEFYING THE RUMOUR MILL

This public appearance serves as a significant reassurance to the cricketing fraternity. The month of April 2026 has been a turbulent one for the Kambli household, marked by a flurry of distressing reports regarding his condition. Earlier this month, rumors swirled that the former cricketer had been admitted to intensive care. Concerns were specifically raised about a blood clot in his brain and the potential risk of a stroke. However, his wife, Andrea, was quick to dispel the gloom.

Travishek Blueprint: The simple secret behind IPL's most destructive opening pair

New Delhi. (Agency)

In the modern T20 landscape, where coaching manuals are thick with data and tactical complexity, the Sunrisers Hyderabad opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma is thriving on a remarkably primitive philosophy. On Wednesday night at the Wankhede, that philosophy laid the founding stone for their record chase against Mumbai Indians in IPL 2026.

Facing a daunting 245-run chase against Mumbai Indians, Travishek produced a Powerplay for the ages. They hammered 92 runs in the first six overs, eventually stitching together a 129-run stand in just 8.4 overs. Even the league's gold standard, Jasprit Bumrah, was not spared as the pair effectively ended the contest before the halfway mark of the innings. The victory was SRH's fifth on the bounce, a streak fueled by the relentless starts provided by



the Australian veteran and the young Indian left-hander. Since they first paired up in 2024, they have amassed 1,639 runs at an average of 49.66. It is the most by an opening pair in the last three years of the IPL. This season alone, they lead the charts with 529 runs at a staggering average of 58.77.

'SEE BALL, LIFT BALL'

While fans and analysts look for deep tactical secrets, Abhishek Sharma revealed that their success is rooted in a mindset of

uncomplicated aggression.

"I mean, I always try to get out something of Head, but he's just very quiet and he likes to do it with the bat most of the times," Abhishek said after the match. "But still, I think whenever I ask him something, when he's outscoring, he just have one answer, just do whatever the ball you lift and just go for it. And that's the one, I think, philosophy we've been using in the few years now, is just lift the ball and hit it." Abhishek's insight suggests a partnership built on instinctive reaction rather than over-analysis.

"Whenever you're in pressure, just talk to the other partner, get some confidence, and then just do it. To be very honest, we always just congratulate each other on fifties and hundreds at a partnership. That said, that's we just figure out on the big screen and nothing else. We just watch the ball and react."

Bumrah entitled to have a bad IPL season: Kieron Pollard's big message to critics

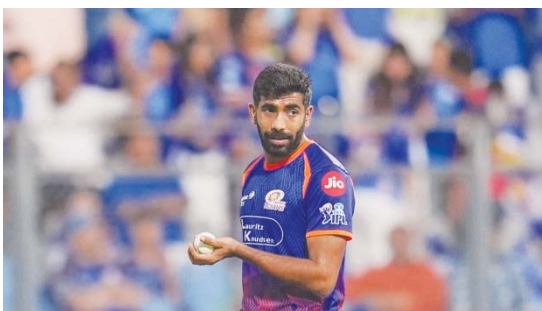
New Delhi. (Agency)

In the unforgiving ecosystem of the IPL, where a bowler is often only as good as his last four overs, even a titan like Jasprit Bumrah is finding that past glory offers little shelter from a modern-day storm. On Wednesday night at the Wankhede, the man widely regarded as the world's finest looked startlingly human.

After Bumrah was dismantled by a relentless SunRisers Hyderabad — conceding 54 runs in a wicketless four-over spell — Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard stepped in to serve as a human shield. His post-match message was a rare appeal for perspective in a league that rarely grants it: "He is allowed to have a bad day, and he is allowed to have a bad season."

Tasked with defending a massive 245, Mumbai looked to their spearhead to kill the contest early. Instead, the SRH openers treated Bumrah with a lack of

reverence that bordered on the surreal. Introduced in the second over, he was immediately targeted by Abhishek Sharma, who sent him deep into the stands. By the end of his second over in



the Powerplay, Bumrah had leaked 32 runs, helpless against a 92-run opening stand by Travis Head and Abhishek.

The discomfort followed him into the death overs. Usually the master of the yorker, Bumrah struggled with his lengths and lines. In the 14th over, Heinrich Klaasen

punished him for a towering six, and in the 18th, the ultimate indignity arrived when youngster Salil Arora cleared the boundary with ease. With final figures of 0/54, it was a performance that suggested a bowler who is not just out of rhythm, but perhaps out of gas.

THE STATISTICAL ANOMALY

The numbers for IPL 2026 are jarring. In eight matches, Bumrah has managed just two wickets, languishing with an average of 132 and an economy of 8.80. For a player who has consistently crossed the 15-wicket mark every season since 2016, the drop-off is a genuine shock. It is a puzzling

dip considering his heroics in the recent T20 World Cup, where his four-wicket haul against New Zealand secured the trophy for India. Whether it is the physical toll of that campaign or the mental fatigue of carrying a struggling MI attack, the spark is currently missing.

Champions League: Mikel Arteta cries foul over VAR call as Arsenal held by Atletico

Champions League semi-final

first leg: Coach Mikel Arteta

hit out after Arsenal's

penalty was overturned by

VAR in Madrid. He said the

decision denied a potentially

decisive win.

Madrid. (Agency)

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta lambasted the referee's decision to overturn a penalty he had originally awarded his side that denied them victory in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final against Atletico Madrid on Wednesday.

After consulting the VAR, referee Danny Makkelie overturned the penalty he had awarded when Eberechi Eze appeared to have his toe stepped on in the second half, and the game ended 1-1.

Arteta argued that there was clear contact and said the fact that the referee had to watch the replay several times before reversing his decision was proof that it should have stood. s difficult, and the second leg will be too." "What I'm incredibly fuming about is how the hell the penalty on Ebs gets overturned," Arteta said. "If you have to watch it 13 times... That's a goal that can change the course of the season. This cannot happen."

MORE SUBDUED AFFAIR

After Tuesday's nine-goal thriller between Paris St Germain and Bayern Munich in the first semi-final in France, the Metropolitano was treated to a far more tactical affair,

although the home crowd did their best to provide some early theatre by greeting the teams with an avalanche of toilet paper thrown from the stands on to the pitch.



Atletico enjoyed more possession early on but handed Arsenal the lead in the 44th minute when Gyokeres was brought down by David Hancko inside the box. The Sweden striker

struck the penalty firmly past Jan Oblak to send Arsenal in ahead at halftime.

Atletico equalised in the 56th minute after the VAR spotted a Ben White handball inside the box from Marcos Llorente's shot. Alvarez fired the resulting penalty into the top left corner beyond David Raya.

Antoine Griezmann rattled the crossbar a little later while Arsenal were awarded a late penalty that was overturned by the referee after a VAR review. Arteta said that he accepted the penalty awarded to Atletico after the ball bounced off Ben White's leg on to his hand, even though it would not have been awarded in the Premier League.

Julian Alvarez converted, equalising in the 56th minute. "The same way we have to accept Ben White's penalty, Ebs's is a clear penalty," he said.

Kritika Kamra

On Falling In Love With Gaurav Kapur: 'Never Discussed Who Fell First'

Kritika Kamra and Gaurav Kapur recently tied the knot in an intimate wedding ceremony at the latter's Mumbai residence on March 11, in the presence of their close friends and family members. Now, a month after their marriage, the actress has opened up about their love story and how she decided that he is the one.

Kritika on falling in love with Gaurav Kapur

Speaking to Miss Malini, Kritika Kamra spoke about how their relationship started with friendship and shared, "People say friendship is very important in love. I absolutely agree. It's a great feeling to be with someone who feels like your best friend." Kritika, while dismissing the idea that opposites attract, shared, "I think you need more in common to enjoy someone's company, to live with them and understand them. Attraction doesn't always consider that, but alignment is



important. Your heart and your head need to be aligned, it's not just fun and games."

"I don't know. We've never discussed who fell first. It kind of grew naturally. It started with a great friendship and instant chemistry, but the realisation that this is someone I want to be with for life took time. As the relationship evolved, that happened almost simultaneously for both of us," Kritika added, revealing that their relationship evolved over time and they never discussed who fell first.

More about Kritika and Gaurav's wedding

Kritika and Gaurav got married on March 11 in an intimate wedding setting with their families and a close circle of friends in attendance. They had a registered wedding at home. Kritika made her acting debut in 2007 with Yahan Ke Hum Sikandar. In 2009, she played a singer, Arohi, in Kitani Mohabbat Hai opposite Karan. She was then seen in Pyaar Ka Bandhan, Kitani Mohabbat Hai 2, and Kuch Toh Log Kahenge.

Kritika Kamra on work front

In 2015, Kritika played a reporter, Ananya Kashyap, opposite Rajeev Khandelwal in Reporters. She was then seen as Princess Chandrakanta in Prem Ya Paheli – Chandrakanta. She made her film debut in 2018 with Mitron. In 2021, she played a college student, Sana, in the web series Tandav.



Aamir Khan Compares Junaid Khan To Himself, Says 'Voh Lambi Race Ka Ghoda Hai, Failures Don't Faze Him'



Aamir Khan, who is backing his son Junaid Khan's upcoming film, has opened up about how his son is a "lambi race ka ghoda". Junaid Khan made his acting debut with Maharaj, and his performance was largely appreciated in the film. He was then seen in Loveyapa, which proved to be a box office disaster. Now, he will be seen in Ek Din alongside Sai Pallavi.

In a recent chat with Radio City India, Aamir Khan spoke about how he doesn't shield Junaid. He said, "Junaid aisa nahi hai, vo mujhe kabhi kuch karne nahi dega. He is a very independent guy, very strong-willed and doesn't give up easily. Voh lambi race ka ghoda hai, jo mere baare mein bhi bola jaata tha jab main pehle pehle aaya tha. Failures don't faze him, and he's very honest with himself."

Aamir also said, "He has also followed his character in Ek Din with full honesty. Although it's not a very heroic character, he has never tried to step out of it. That shows his honesty towards his work." Aamir said that Junaid fully becomes the character he is playing on screen.

Meanwhile, Aamir Khan Productions' upcoming film, Ek Din, is gradually building strong anticipation among audiences. Touted as a tender and heartfelt love story, the film has already resonated with viewers, thanks to its captivating trailer and soulful music.

Ek Din reunites Aamir Khan with filmmaker Mansoor Khan after a significant hiatus, reviving one of Hindi cinema's most cherished creative partnerships. Together, they have gifted audiences unforgettable films like Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak, Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, Akele Hum Akele Tum, and Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na.

With Ek Din, the duo returns to the romance genre, sparking fresh excitement among fans. Their coming together once again has heightened curiosity, with audiences keen to witness the charm they recreate on screen.

Produced under the banner of Aamir Khan Productions, Ek Din stars Sai Pallavi and Junaid Khan. The film is directed by Sunil Pandey and produced by Aamir Khan, Mansoor Khan, and Aparna Purohit. The film is set to release in theatres on 1st May 2026.

Akshay Oberoi Reuniting With Siddharth Anand In King: 'I Feel More Confident; The Scale, Discipline...'



Actor Akshay Oberoi, who has reunited with Siddharth Anand after two years for "King," starring Shah Rukh Khan, has spoken about the comfort he shares with the filmmaker, and added that he feels more confident stepping into the sets of the upcoming film. Reflecting on their association, Akshay, who worked with the filmmaker in "Fighter," expressed gratitude for being called back for another project.

Akshay said: "It's been almost two years since Fighter, and collaborating with Sid again for King feels very special. With him, there's a certain level of trust that already exists. When Sid calls, I don't ask too many questions, I just arrive, because I know he will always look out for me as an actor and make sure I'm in the right place creatively."

"That's exactly what happened with King as well. He has this incredible ability to understand his actors and bring out something new in them," he added. Akshay said that working on Fighter really strengthened his wings as an actor.

"The scale, the discipline, and the kind of performance Sid expects from everyone pushes you to grow. I learned a lot during that film, and I feel more confident stepping into King now."

He says that to him it feels like the journey that began with Fighter has helped him evolve.

"I'm thankful to Sid for trusting me again and giving me another opportunity to be part of his cinematic world."

Fighter released in 2024. It stars Hrithik Roshan, Deepika Padukone, Anil Kapoor, Karan Singh Grover, and Akshay Oberoi. The film follows Shamsheer Pathania as he fulfills his lifelong dream and becomes a member of the Indian Air Force. As he faces rigorous challenges, he must rise above his own limitations to become a true hero.

Kangana Ranaut

Marks 20 Years In Bollywood, Shares Glimpses Of First Portfolio That Helped Her Land Gangster



Actress Kangana Ranaut completed 20 years in the entertainment industry on Tuesday. Commemorating the occasion, Kangana dropped a glimpse of her first portfolio shoot on the Stories section of her Instagram handle. Kangana revealed that it was these pictures that helped her land her role in her debut movie, "Gangster". "Today I completed 20 years in the film industry, this is my first portfolio by @jatinkampani that landed me the role of Simran in Gangster," wrote the 'Queen' actress on the photo-sharing app.

Marking 2 decades of "Gangster" release, Kangana also uploaded a picture from her first magazine shoot. Made under the direction of Anurag Basu, "Gangster" has been jointly produced by Mahesh Bhatt and Mukesh Bhatt of Vishesh Films.

The primary cast of the 2006 romantic thriller includes Kangana, Emraan Hashmi, and Shiney Ahuja in lead roles. The music from "Gangster", which still remains fresh in the memory of music lovers, has been composed by Pritam. Bobby Singh looked after the camera work of the drama, while Akiv Ali was the head of the editing department.

After a successful debut, Kangana went on to be a part of some exciting projects such as "Woh Lamhe..." (2006), "Life in a... Metro" (2007), "Fashion" (2008), "Raaz: The Mystery Continues" (2009), and "Once Upon a Time in Mumbai" (2010).

In 2011, she received a lot of praise for her comic timing in the movie "Tanu Weds Manu" (2011), co-starring R Madhavan. Kangana went on to bag not one, but two consecutive National Film Awards for 'Best Actress' for "Queen" in 2014 and "Tanu Weds Manu Returns" in 2015.

Following this, she went on to lead "Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi" in 2019 and "Panga" in 2020.



NEWS BOX

The Saudi-Pakistan Factor Behind UAE's Exit From OPEC

Dubai. (Agency)

The United Arab Emirates' decision to exit the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) after almost 60 years is as much a political as a business move -- one that could not only deal a significant blow to the oil cartel and its de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, but also to Riyadh's defence partner, Pakistan.

Tensions have been simmering between Abu Dhabi and Riyadh for a while, but were partially covered by their shared anger with Tehran over its attacks on the Gulf states since the start of the US-Israel war on Iran.

"The Emirates were not happy to have to constrain themselves, particularly when they wanted to pump more, and the Saudis wanted to pump less," Firas Maksad, director of Middle East at Eurasia Group, told The Financial Times.

The UAE has also been frustrated with Pakistan, partly because of its deepening ties with Saudi Arabia, but also because of what it considers Islamabad's meek role as a mediator between the US and Iran, and not holding Tehran accountable for attacks on the Gulf during the war.

Pakistan's role as mediator annoyed the UAE, as it "sees things in kind of black and white at the moment", Neil Quilliam, an associate fellow at Chatham House, told the UK-based financial daily.

"There's no neutrality in this [from the UAE perspective], there's no middle ground, and if you're mediating, then you are in the middle ground," he added.

How OPEC Exit Helps The UAE

The UAE, OPEC's third-largest producer, joined the oil-producing cartel in 1967. But the cartel's production quotas have long been controlled by its de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, preventing it from exporting greater quantities of oil. In the short term, the exit will give Abu Dhabi the freedom to respond quickly to a long-term prospect of constrained supplies and to maximise profit.

Two Jewish men stabbed in London, police call it terror attack

World. (Agency)

Two Jewish men were stabbed and injured on a London street on Wednesday in what police called an act of terror. Police arrested a 45-year-old man on suspicion of attempted murder in the city's latest antisemitic attack.

The Metropolitan Police said the attack in the Golders Green area left two men, ages 34 and 76, hospitalized with knife wounds. Counterterrorism police are investigating whether the stabbings are linked to recent arson attacks on synagogues and other Jewish sites in the British capital. Detectives are investigating a potential Iranian link to those attacks, but police said that it's too soon to say whether Wednesday's stabbing is connected.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer held a meeting of the government's emergency committee and vowed to "deal with the roots of antisemitism and extremism." Buckingham Palace said that King Charles III was "deeply concerned." Metropolitan Police chief Mark Rowley said that it was "another horrendous act of violence directed against our Jewish communities."

But some British Jews expressed anger at authorities' failure to keep them safe. Rowley faced shouts of "shame on you" and "resign" from bystanders when he made a statement to media at the scene of the stabbings.

Attacker immobilized by police The security organization Shomrim said that a suspect "was seen running along Golders Green Road armed with a knife and attempting to stab Jewish members of the public."

From Mecca to Syria, Epstein obtained Islamic objects for his island 'mosque'

World. (Agency)

Convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein spent years cultivating connections across West Asia, leveraging them not only for business ambitions but also to acquire rare and religiously significant Islamic artefacts, many of which were used to adorn a controversial structure, which he called a 'mosque', on his private Caribbean island.

Tapestries embroidered with Quranic verses in gold, known as the Kiswa, were shipped from the Kaaba in Mecca. Handcrafted tiles were sourced from a mosque in Uzbekistan, and a golden metal dome was designed to echo architectural styles from ancient Syria, according to a report by The New York Times, which analysed millions of pages of records released in January by the US Justice Department.

The Kiswa holds deep religious significance. Produced annually by hundreds of artisans, it incorporates roughly 1,500 pounds of silk and 250 pounds of gold and silver thread, and is typically distributed in parts to institutions or dignitaries after it is replaced. Emails cited in the records suggest Epstein's associates coordinated shipments of these artefacts, describing them as intended "for the mosque".

At the centre of the collection was a peculiar blue-and-white striped structure on Epstein's private island, Little Saint James. Long speculated to be a temple or pavilion, newly released correspondence shows Epstein himself referred to it as a "mosque." Although its design drew heavily from Islamic architecture, there is no evidence it was used for religious worship.

Romanian artist Ion Nicola, who worked on the project, confirmed that Epstein consistently described the building as a mosque. In one email, Epstein even suggested replacing Arabic inscriptions of "Allah" with his own initials. In a message marked by his characteristic spelling errors, he wrote: "Remember we saw the arabic writing in black and white, instead of allah, i thought j's and e's."

Nepal Airlines shows J&K as part of Pakistan in map, apologises after backlash

Nepal Airlines apologised after a network map in a recent post showed all of Jammu and Kashmir as part of Pakistan. The image triggered global backlash.

New York. (Agency)

State-owned carrier Nepal Airlines has come under fire for a recent post that shows the entire Jammu and Kashmir as part of Pakistan on its "network map". After global backlash, the airlines issued an apology for the incorrect map of India within 24 hours, calling it a "cartographic inaccuracy". The controversy erupted on Wednesday after the airline's social media handle shared a route map in which the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were shown as part of Pakistan's

territory. The image didn't take time to go viral on X and Facebook, drawing flak from Indian users.

Soon, the hashtag #BoycottNepalAirlines began trending, with users urging the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Aviation Ministry to lodge a diplomatic protest with Nepal. Several users highlighted how India, over the decades, kept Nepal's economy breathing by giving jobs to lakhs of Nepalis, giving it trade access, fuel, funding power projects, and providing disaster relief.

The Himalayan country, which went to the polls recently, saw Balendra Shah, the former mayor of Kathmandu, taking over as Nepal's youngest-ever prime minister.

NEPALAIRLINES FACES BACKLASH Among the several Indian users slamming the airline was Bhojpuri actor-singer

Khesarilal Yadav, who indicated that it might be a deliberate act intended to provoke. "Can anyone tell me what prompted Nepal Airlines to tamper with

As the backlash intensified, Nepal Airlines deleted the post and issued an apology, emphasising that it does not reflect the official stance of Nepal or the carrier. "We sincerely apologise for the error in the network map... The map contained significant cartographic inaccuracies regarding international boundaries," it stated. The carrier said an internal review had been ordered. "We deeply value our strong relationships with our neighbours and friends in the region and regret any offence the post has caused," the airline further said.

The controversy comes at a time when Nepal Airlines is looking to expand its flights in India. In

March, it announced an expansion of its flight services on the Kathmandu-Delhi route. Currently, a single daily flight is operational. Nepal Airlines is looking to expand this to 10 flights every week.



India's map like this, and that too regarding Jammu and Kashmir? This isn't a trivial matter; it seems like a deliberate act. They call this kind of thing provocation," Yadav tweeted.

Pak reels under oil shock, weekly crude bill jumps to Rs 7600 crore amid Iran war

World. (Agency)

Pakistan is facing a sharp energy cost shock as the ongoing West Asia conflict drives global oil prices higher, significantly increasing its import burden.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif revealed that Pakistan's weekly oil import bill has surged from \$300 million before the conflict to nearly \$800 million, marking a steep 167% increase. Speaking at a federal cabinet meeting, Sharif said the spike is directly linked to rising global fuel prices triggered by the Iran conflict. Despite the surge in costs, Sharif said that fuel consumption has slightly declined in recent weeks, indicating demand-side adjustments. The government is closely monitoring the situation, as sustained high prices could put further

pressure on Pakistan's fragile economy.

"Crude oil prices are once again soaring, and as Friday approaches, we will have to determine new prices again. Given the current situation in global markets,

Sharif also praised Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, his secretary, and the entire team for their coordinated efforts.

"As a result, unlike in some other countries, there have been no long queues or rationing here, and the situation remains relatively stable and satisfactory," he said.

Highlighting the scale of the crisis, Sharif said, "Before the war, our weekly bill was around \$300 million, but now it has risen to \$800 million."

To manage the impact, the government has initiated conservation efforts, formed a task force, and implemented austerity measures. Sharif said the task force is monitoring the situation daily and working around the clock, even as fuel prices continue to be reviewed on a weekly basis.



this is a very challenging scenario," Sharif said. He added that through "collective wisdom and joint efforts," the government has managed the situation as effectively as possible.

Hope they don't have a heart attack: Iran teases US with new weapon as talks stall

World. (Agency)

As peace negotiations between the United States and Iran drag on, with Donald Trump rejecting Tehran's latest proposal, the Iranian military has claimed it will soon unveil a new weapon that its adversaries are "deeply afraid of". Iran's Navy Commander, Shahrām Irāni, said the Islamic Republic would "very soon" confront its enemies with a weapon located "right next to them," warning, "I hope they won't have a heart attack".

Amid increasingly combative rhetoric and continuing tensions between the two sides, the Iranian military dismissed what it described as enemy expectations of a swift victory in the latest phase of the conflict, saying such assumptions had become

"a joke". "The enemy thought that in the shortest possible time, such as three days to one week, it could reach a conclusion in a war against Iran, and this assumption of theirs has become a



joke in military universities," the Navy commander was quoted as saying by Iranian media.

Irani further claimed that the country's

Armed Forces had launched at least 100 waves of retaliatory strikes against American and Israeli targets across the region since hostilities intensified on February 28. These operations, he said, targeted "sensitive" sites across a wide geographical area in West Asia.

He warned, "if American obstinacy and delusions continue and Iran's conditions are rejected, the enemy should soon expect a different kind of response". The Navy commander also accused the US of expanding its military footprint during the conflict, including deploying additional destroyers and missile platforms after initial naval-based strikes failed to achieve their intended results. "Even so, they remain stalled," Irani asserted.

World's largest aircraft carrier to return to US after record 300-day deployment



World. (Agency)

The world's largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R Ford, will be heading home following a record-setting deployment of more than 300 days that included participating in the war against Iran and the capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, two US officials said Wednesday. The Ford will be leaving the Middle East in the coming days and returning to its home port in Virginia in mid-May, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to detail sensitive military movements. The Washington Post reported the development earlier. The arrival of the USS George HW Bush to the region last week meant three American aircraft carriers were deployed to the Middle East — a number not seen since 2003 — during a tenuous ceasefire in the Iran war. USS Abraham Lincoln also has been in the region since January as tensions with Tehran ramped up.

This month, the Ford broke the U.S. record for the longest post-Vietnam War deployment, a nearly 10-month span after leaving Naval Station Norfolk in June.

The ship's 295th day at sea surpassed the previous longest deployment by an aircraft carrier in the past 50 years, when the Lincoln was sent out for 294 days in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to data compiled by U.S. Naval Institute News, a news outlet run by the US Naval Institute, a non-profit organisation.

The Ford's long deployment has raised questions about the impact on service members who are away from home for long periods as well as increasing strain on the ship and its equipment, with the carrier already enduring a fire that forced it to undergo lengthy repairs.

Asked about the Ford's long deployment in a hearing Wednesday before the House Armed Services Committee, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said he consulted with the Navy and those officials did mention readiness and maintenance trade-offs.

Disrespectful, embarrassing: Trump criticised for walking ahead of Queen Camilla

US President Donald Trump sparked a royal protocol stir after stepping in front of Queen Camilla while she was greeting officials at the White House, leaving her momentarily taken aback.

World. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump committed an awkward royal blunder when he walked in front of Queen Camilla while she was greeting officials during a White House event. On Tuesday, Queen Camilla and King Charles III returned to the White House after a private welcome from Donald

Trump and the first lady. A long line of US officials stood waiting on the South Lawn. Television footage showed the 78-year-old queen immediately beginning to shake hands. She greeted Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth, Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, and White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles. At that moment, Donald Trump stepped in and began shaking hands directly in front of the queen. She appeared slightly taken aback. As he greeted Yvette Cooper, the queen stepped back, stopped greeting officials, and watched him finish.

King Charles III also became caught in the apparent breach of royal protocol. At one point, he reached out to shake a hand, but Donald Trump grabbed it first. The king's hand lingered briefly in the air before he withdrew, and the group then moved inside.

The official website of the British monarchy

states that there are no obligatory codes of behaviour when meeting members of the royal family. However, accepted practices exist, including a widely observed norm



against walking in front of the king or queen.

TRUMP REPEATS ROYAL MISSTEP

This incident marks the second time Donald Trump has drawn attention for such a breach. During his state visit to the United Kingdom in June 2018, he walked ahead of

Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle. At the time, the then 92-year-old monarch greeted him after he arrived 12 minutes late. As they inspected the Queen's Guard, she appeared to gesture him forward. He walked ahead and then abruptly stopped, forcing her to sidestep around him.

The incident drew criticism from the British public and royal experts. Royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams told CNN that Donald Trump looked like he "might as well have been wandering up and down a golf course." He added that the confusion "gave the impression of dis-coordination" and suggested that Trump did not rehearse because he believed he did not need to.

Following that visit, Donald Trump claimed that Queen Elizabeth II had reviewed her honour guard for the first time in 70 years. However, she had been on the throne for 66 years at the time and regularly reviewed guards of honour, making the source of his claim unclear.