



## Parasite, can dump allies anytime for gain

# PM slams Congress over ditching DMK

►PM Modi said the

**Congress's "lust for power" led it to backstab the DMK despite the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam repeatedly supporting it during crises over three decades. He added that the DMK had aided the Congress during UPA-1 and UPA-2, but was now being betrayed as political circumstances changed.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

On one hand, Vijay took oath as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister alongside his new ally Rahul Gandhi in Chennai. At the same time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing BJP workers in neighbouring Karnataka, took a swipe at the Congress, calling it "parasitic" in nature. Referring to the Congress's decision to dump its long-time ally DMK in favour of TVK, PM Modi said in Bengaluru, "It has turned into a parasitic party. They are fighting over looted money. At the first opportunity, it is ready to ditch its own ally. There is no party that the Congress has not backstabbed." Citing instances when the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam had helped the Congress overcome crises over the past three decades, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said

the Congress's "lust for power" had led it to backstab its ally. PM Modi also said the DMK had pulled the Congress out of trouble several times during the UPA-1 and UPA-2 years, but was now being betrayed after the "political winds shifted."



Stepping up his attack on Congress, PM Modi slammed the party for failing to deliver good governance in Karnataka because of its internal power struggle and of betraying people. He also said a "saffron sun"

was rising from Bengaluru as the BJP's political reach expanded across the country. Addressing a large gathering of BJP workers, PM Modi presented the BJP-led NDA as a symbol of political stability and development, and contrasted it with what he described as the Congress's "politics of betrayal" and administrative failure in states ruled by the party. Referring to Karnataka, the Prime Minister said the state government had spent more time dealing with its internal disputes than addressing public issues. "For the past three years in Karnataka, instead of resolving people's problems, most of the government's time here has been spent resolving internal conflicts. The Congress government remained gripped by uncertainty over leadership and power-sharing arrangements," he said.

## SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

### Blackmailing Syndicate Accused of Framing Jain Monk Exposed



Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Makan

Ahmedabad: A shocking and disturbing conspiracy has come to light, allegedly aimed at tarnishing the image of Jain monk Rajtilak Sagarji Maharaj and extorting crores of rupees through a planned "honeytrap" operation in Idar. According to reports and affidavits cited in the matter, the entire case was allegedly orchestrated as part of a blackmail and money-extortion racket targeting respected figures within the Jain community. Investigative reporting by Mahanagar Metro News claims to have exposed the alleged network behind the operation, triggering panic among those accused of being involved in the conspiracy. Names of Alleged Conspirators Surface—Sources connected to the investigation allege that individuals including Jagat Parekh, Vikram Singhvi, Hardik Hudiya, and Vikram Bafna were part of the alleged scheme. The report claims the group targeted influential personalities within the Jain society for financial gain. The publication further states that affidavits submitted by complainant Kiran Doshi and his wife, along with the ongoing police investigation, contradicted the original allegations and indicated that the FIR and honeytrap narrative were allegedly fabricated for extortion purposes. The monk, according to the report, has emerged without proven wrongdoing. After Exposé, Alleged Blackmailers Resort to Threats—Following the publication of the investigation, Mahanagar Metro claims that the accused individuals began spreading rumours and attempting to discredit the media house and its editorial team. The report further alleges that threats were issued against Group Editor Pawan Makan after the publication exposed the alleged blackmail network. Despite the pressure, the newspaper says it remains committed to continuing its investigation and publishing facts related to the case. "Truth Will Not Be Silenced"—Responding to the alleged intimidation attempts, Group Editor Pawan Makan stated that Mahanagar Metro "will neither bow nor be silenced," and vowed to continue exposing those involved in manipulating religion and public sentiment for financial gain. Anger Within Jain Community—The revelations have reportedly sparked outrage among sections of the Jain community, where many are viewing the alleged conspiracy as an attack not only on an individual monk but also on the faith and dignity of the religion itself. Voices demanding strict legal action against those allegedly involved in the blackmail operation are growing louder, with calls for a transparent investigation and accountability. Mahanagar Metro maintains that its campaign to uncover the truth will continue until all aspects of the alleged racket are brought before the public.

## Vande Mataram: Vijay does one better than BJP

The Narendra Modi government's directive on the national song in February had triggered a major political row, with Opposition parties sharply criticising the move. At today's ceremony, Vande Mataram was sung before the national anthem in the presence of Rahul Gandhi and Vijay, who shared the stage together.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Months after the Centre issued fresh guidelines mandating the rendition of the full six-stanza version of Vande Mataram, the song was played in full at Vijay's swearing-in ceremony before the national anthem, in line with the Union Home Ministry's directive.

Interestingly, the song, penned by renowned Bengali author Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1882, was not played at the Bengal Chief Minister's swearing-in ceremony on Saturday, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several other Union ministers were present at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground.

The Narendra Modi government's directive on the national song in January had triggered a major political row, with Opposition parties led by the Indian National Congress sharply criticising the move. At today's ceremony, Vande Mataram was sung before the national anthem in the presence of Rahul Gandhi and Vijay, who shared the stage

together. The state song Tamil Thai Valthu was played at the end, following Vande Mataram and Jana Gana Mana, in that order.

Following the election results in four states,



including Bengal and Tamil Nadu, the Union Cabinet led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved a proposal to grant the national song Vande Mataram a status equal to the national anthem Jana Gana Mana.

Back in February, then West Bengal Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee had called the directive an insult to Rabindranath Tagore, arguing that the national anthem, written by Tagore, should not be played after Vande Mataram.

The MHA directive, dated January 28, also notified that all the six stanzas that were part of the original Vande Mataram should be sung at official functions. This marked a departure from the practice of singing only the two stanzas adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1950.

The decision also did not go down well with the Congress, with the Grand Old Party saying the move went against a decision taken during its 1937 session on the advice of Rabindranath Tagore to remain sensitive to the sentiments of different communities and religions.

Amid the row, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said he found it "deeply ironic that those who today claim to be the guardians of nationalism have never sung 'Vande Mataram'..."

## Himanta Sarma To Take Oath For 2nd Term As Assam Chief Minister On May 12

Himanta Biswa Sarma will take the oath as the Chief Minister on May 12, along with members of his new Council of Ministers.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Himanta Biswa Sarma is set to become the Chief Minister of Assam for a second consecutive term after being elected as the leader of the BJP-led NDA in the state assembly on Sunday, following the alliance's sweeping victory in the elections.

Sarma will take the oath as the Chief Minister on May 12, along with members of his new Council of Ministers.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) returned to power for a third consecutive term in the 126-member Assam Legislative Assembly, securing a two-thirds majority. The BJP emerged as the dominant force with 82 seats, while its allies, the Asom



Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), won 10 seats each, taking the NDA's total to 102 seats. Union minister JP Nadda said eight BJP legislators proposed

Sarma's name as the legislature party leader. Nadda, in a post on X, congratulated Sarma on being elected leader of the BJP and NDA Legislature Party.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Shri @himantabiswa Ji on being elected as the leader of the BJP and NDA Legislature Party. The people of Assam have given their blessings for the third consecutive time to development, stability, and public welfare. Under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji, the double-engine government will play an important role in building a 'Viksit Bharat' while realizing the resolve of 'Viksit Assam'," he wrote.

# 'Multilayered election mafia at work': Akhilesh raises pitch for voting via ballot papers

Lucknow.(Agency)

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav demanded on Saturday that elections in India be held through ballot papers and appealed to his party cadres to get ready to fight against what he called a "multilayered election mafia" to save the country's democracy and Constitution.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in Lucknow, Akhilesh asserted that the INDIA alliance will stay strong in Uttar Pradesh and they will defeat the BJP with public support. His party's demand for casting votes through ballot papers and their fight to remove electronic voting machines (EVMs) will continue

former chief minister asserted. "The Samajwadi Party defeated the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections through EVMs and will again defeat them through EVMs. But we will keep working to get the EVMs removed. The BJP government is picking a hole in the public's pockets through smart electricity meters.

The smart metre keeps running even during a power outage. It has been found that these meters can also be operated through a remote control. If this can happen with smart meters, why cannot it not happen with EVMs," the SP leader added. Taking an indirect jibe at the RSS,



companions, who spent their whole lives doing espionage, create a misleading atmosphere. In the 2022 UP Assembly elections, the party conspired to delete the

Election Commission affidavits of voters whose names were deleted, but no action has yet been taken against any official responsible for this. Now, the SIR (Special Intensive Revision) has been introduced to delete votes. The Samajwadi Party is checking the voter lists across the state." The Election Commission, he alleged, is not sharing technical information such as the type of software it uses. "Votes were deleted on a large scale in West Bengal. Votes were removed by showing errors. This happened openly. The BJP is not only looting the rights of people but it is also looting votes," Yadav added. "When Samajwadi Party

KG (kindergarten) to PG (postgraduation) will be free. Our government built a world-class cancer institute on 100 acres at a cost of Rs 1,000 crore. In a Samajwadi Party government, cancer treatment will be made free," he said.

The Noida International Airport was inaugurated for selling the aviation facility, he claimed. "The BJP and industrialists have formed a gang. This party has cheated and looted people in the name of smart metres. This government did not generate electricity. It did not increase production. More bills were collected through smart metres. The Samajwadi Party will make electricity up to 300 units free when it

## News box

## Monsoon near, GMDA plans new drain line to ease DLF-2 flooding

GURGAON.(Agency)

A new stormwater drainage line connecting Sector 25 with the master drain along Sector 17-18 dividing road will soon be constructed to address the chronic waterlogging in parts of DLF Phase-2 and areas in the vicinity. Under the plan, GMDA will lay a 2.1-km-long and 1,200-mm-diameter pipeline through trenchless technology and channel it into the master drain along the Sector 17-18 road for better disposal of rainwater. The project is estimated to cost around Rs 3.6 crore and is expected to take at least seven months to complete after work begins. Since the bidding process just started, residents doubt there will be any relief from waterlogging this monsoon. "Akasheen Marg and Gulmohar Marg are among the vulnerable stretches that get flooded during heavy rain. We have raised the matter with the civic authorities multiple times," Col Anil Nanda (Retd), a resident. Locals in DLF Phase 2 have frequently flagged flooding on internal roads and stretches near Cyber City during moderate to heavy rainfall, with waterlogging often leading to traffic snarls.

## Auto hit by truck overturns, toddler & 2 women die

GURGAON.(Agency)

Two women and a three-year-old boy died after a truck smashed into an overcrowded three-wheeler from behind when it braked for a speedbreaker near Kanwarsika village on Sohna-Nuh Road early on Saturday. The vehicle, meant to carry goods but packed with 14 people, including five children, overturned in the impact, leaving several others injured.

The crash took place around 2.25am as the family was returning to Gurgaon from Agra after attending a relative's wedding. They work in the NCR city selling incense sticks. Pitarpal, one of the injured passengers, said the auto had slowed suddenly because of a speedbreaker when the truck hit it from the rear. "There were 14 people in the vehicle. As the driver braked, a truck rammed us from behind and the auto overturned. Three people seated in front died. Those sitting behind were injured. My sister-in-law also died in the accident. The truck driver fled with the vehicle," he added. Passersby alerted the police control room, after which a team from Rojka Meo police station reached the spot and shifted the victims to the civil hospital in Nuh. Doctors declared three persons dead, while some of the injured were referred to a Delhi hospital because of their critical condition. The three who died were Chndni (20), Shanti (22) and Mridul (3), all from Uttar Pradesh but were living in Gurgaon. Archana, Mridul's mother, was among those injured and is undergoing treatment.

Sub-inspector Daya Chand said police rushed to the spot after receiving information and later handed over the bodies to the families after an autopsy.

A case was registered at Rojka Meo police station under sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (causing death by negligence) of the BNS. CCTV footage from the area is being examined to establish the sequence of events and trace the truck driver.

## Man bludgeoned to death, body dumped in bushes

NOIDA.(Agency)

Body of a middle-aged man was found dumped in bushes near Basai village on Thursday night. Investigators suspect the man was murdered elsewhere, and his body was later dumped at the spot. Police said the body was found in the bushes around 9pm on May 8, as passersby alerted the police control room after noticing a foul smell emanating from the bushes, and discovered the body lying there. The person's head seemed to have been disfigured with a stone. No identity documents or belongings were recovered, due to which his identity could not be established.

Police took possession of the body and called teams from the forensic science laboratory and the scene of crime unit to inspect the spot and collect evidence. The body was kept in the mortuary for identification.

Police said CCTV footage from areas surrounding the crime scene was being examined to identify the accused and trace the movements of the victim before the murder.

"Efforts are being made to identify the deceased. CCTV camera footage from around the crime scene is being examined to identify the perpetrators. Along with the police station, crime branch teams are also investigating the matter," said an officer from Sector 9 police station.

## 40 farmers agree to give land for Hindon terminal extension, to get 2x rate

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Forty farmers in Sikandarpur village have consented to part with 6.8 acres of land for the expansion of the Hindon civil terminal, clearing a key hurdle for the long-pending project, a district administration official said.

"The administration, after conducting parleys with the owners, managed to convince them. The land rates were decided as per the provisions of the Land Acquisition (Rehabilitation and Resettlement) Act, 2013, according to which compensation will be twice the circle rate of the area. Based on that calculation, Rs 63 crore will go into acquiring the land parcel," the official said.

Terminal officials said work would begin after physical possession of the land. "Apart from expansion of the terminal building, we will also enhance the parking bay area, for which a DPR will be commissioned," an official said. The expansion will add check-in counters beyond the existing eight, expand aircraft parking bays from the current two, enhance security and screening infrastructure, and improve road access and drop-off zones. As an interim measure, the Airports Authority of India has already commenced expansion of the terminal building by about 700 sq metres within land already in its possession, which will raise passenger throughput to approximately 450 per hour. The terminal has also doubled its seating capacity and upgraded security systems.

# PM2.5: Sharp fall till 2020, then stagnation

GURGAON.(Agency)

The city has seen a sharp fall in fine particle pollution (PM 2.5) over the past decade, dropping by more than half from 198.44 micrograms  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2015-16 to 91.7 in 2026-27, a decline of nearly 54% over the decade, according to a dashboard built by environmental research and data analytics firm Envirocatalysts using Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

The city's annual PM2.5 levels declined to 105.17  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2018-19 and further to 90.19  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2019-20, and have since remained relatively stable between 88 and 92  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , indicating a plateau despite pollution-control measures across NCR. Despite this reduction, concentrations still far exceed both national and WHO air quality standards.

PM10—driven largely by road dust, construction, and resuspended particles—has remained persistently high over the years. Levels stood at 236.42  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2017-18 and 231.07 in 2018-19, then declined to 179.17 in 2019-20. They fell further during the pandemic to 163.68 in 2020-21, rose again to 197.36 in 2022-23, and dropped

to 167.7 in 2026-27.

The trend points to continuing dust pollution challenges in Gurgaon amid rapid urbanisation, infrastructure expansion and large-scale construction activity. Ground-level ozone—a secondary pollutant formed from nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and sunlight—showed fluctuating trends over the years. Levels rose from 32.37  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2015-16 to 53.04 in 2016-17, then to 79.77 in 2017-18. The city recorded its highest ozone concentration of 94.07  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2019-20. Though levels declined to 60.93 in 2021-22 and 48.48 in 2023-24, they rose again to 61.28 in 2025-26 before falling to 41.1 in 2026-27. Experts have increasingly flagged ozone as an emerging urban pollutant because it is formed through atmospheric reactions rather than being directly emitted, particularly during summer months. Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), associated largely with vehicular emissions and combustion sources, showed a fluctuating but overall declining trend. NO<sub>2</sub> levels increased from 17.79 micrograms  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2015-16 to 35.99 in 2018-19 before gradually declining. The city recorded NO<sub>2</sub> levels

of 21.68 in 2020-21, 22.2 in 2021-22 and 15.36 in 2024-25 before levels rose again to 22.83 in 2026-27. Similarly, Sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) levels remained comparatively low through the decade.



SO<sub>2</sub> concentrations fell from 10.25 micrograms  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2015-16 to 6.64 in 2016-17 and further to 5.57 in 2021-22. Though the city saw temporary increases in some years, including 13.06 in 2019-20 and 12.05 in 2023-24, levels again declined to 5.37 in 2026-27. Carbon monoxide levels fluctuated over the years but broadly remained stable. Gurgaon recorded its highest CO level of

2.92 milligrams  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2016-17. CO concentrations largely remained between 1.1 and 1.7 milligrams  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in subsequent years, with the city recording 1.13 in 2026-27. "A detailed analysis of the data suggests that while NO<sub>2</sub> levels have dropped slightly compared to pre-BS-VI implementation, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> levels haven't shown similar improvements and remain hazardous for Gurgaon. This indicates that overall activities across polluting sectors remain beyond the city's cumulative capacity, alongside significant contributions from sources beyond the city boundary, as Gurgaon follows the larger pollution patterns seen across other cities in the aridised," said Sunil Dahiya, founder and lead analyst at Envirocatalysts.

Dahiya said cleaner fuel adoption, tighter emission norms, BS-VI transition and industrial controls may have contributed to the decline in NO<sub>2</sub> and some improvement in PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels. However, he cautioned that pollution levels in Gurgaon continue to remain significantly above safe standards.

**2 held for shooting at cop outside ex-Fazalpuria manager's house**

Gurgaon.(Agency)

P Days after gunfire outside a Sector 45 house left a constable wounded, police on Saturday arrested two alleged shooters from Punjab, saying they had come to kill Saurabh Yadav, the former event manager of singer Rahul Yadav alias Fazilpuria. The two men, police said, opened fire outside Saurabh's house in village Kanhai on May 2 and also shot at the policeman posted there for security.

The accused were identified as Gursheer Singh alias Sura (23) and Jaspal alias Babbal (28), both from Tarn Taran in Punjab. They were arrested during a joint operation by crime branch teams from sectors 40, 39 and 17 police stations. Police said the two were in touch with foreign-based gangsters Deepak Nandal and Satta Naushera, and had allegedly been promised money to carry out the killing. According to police, constable Kulbir, who was on security duty outside Saurabh's house, suffered bullet-graze injuries to his hand and leg. He was later treated and discharged from hospital. On Kulbir's complaint, an FIR was registered at Sector 40 police station under BNS sections dealing with attempt to murder, along with other relevant provisions. Police said both arrested men had used pistols, and the source of the weapons will now be examined during their four-day police remand.

"During interrogation, Sura and Babbal admitted they had come to kill Saurabh and had opened fire at police personnel," police spokesperson Sandeep Turan said. "They were shown Saurabh's house by other accused already arrested in the case, who also arranged vehicles, weapons and logistical support for the attack." Police said the probe found that Saurabh and fugitive gangster Deepak Nandal were old acquaintances and had a monetary dispute. Nandal had allegedly threatened Saurabh earlier and demanded money from him. Earlier, police had arrested four others in the case — Ashok alias Pahalwan (35) from Rohtak, Sumit (33) from Sonapat, Manoj Kabir (36) from Rohtak and Vicky (36) from Sonapat. Ashok, Sumit and Manoj were held on May 4, and Vicky on May 5. Police said they had conducted a recon, arranged motorcycles and weapons, and stayed near the spot to help execute the plan.

## Tanker on wrong side hits bike head-on, kills youth in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 24-year-old man died after a tanker truck coming from the wrong side collided head-on with his motorcycle near Lemon Tree hotel in Sector 60. Priyanshu Yadav (24), who was riding home on his Yamaha R15, was hit when the tanker entered the wrong carriageway through a divider cut and crashed into him on Thursday afternoon. Originally from Balrampur in UP's Azamgarh district, Prayanshu was living in a rented accommodation in Noida with his elder brother. In his complaint lodged at Sector 65 police station, Priyanshu's father, Arjun Yadav, said the tanker — bearing registration number HR55AE/0945 — was being driven rashly, negligently and at high speed when it struck his son's motorcycle. "The driver suddenly came from the wrong side through a gap in the divider and directly collided with my son's bike," he mentioned in the FIR. Police said Priyanshu suffered severe injuries to the head and limbs. An emergency response vehicle first alerted the police control room about the accident, after which ASI



Suresh Kumar and constable Satendra Kumar reached the spot and found him lying unconscious on the road. He was taken by an ambulance to a govt hospital, where doctors declared him dead. The tanker driver fled, leaving the vehicle behind. Police seized both vehicles from the spot. Priyanshu's mobile phone was found damaged at the scene. To trace his

family, police removed the SIM card and inserted it into another handset. Soon after, they received a call from his elder brother, Prashant Yadav, and informed him about the accident.

The family did not immediately file a complaint as they wanted Priyanshu's father to reach Gurgaon from UP first. "They arrived on Friday afternoon, after which we received the complaint and registered a case. The body was handed over to the family after an autopsy on Saturday," a police officer said.

An FIR was registered against the unidentified tanker driver under Section 281 of the BNS for rash driving and Section 106 for causing death by negligence. "We will send a notice to the truck owner and arrest the driver soon," ASI Suresh said. Wrong-side driving continues to be a major road safety problem in the city. Police data for 2025 shows over 2 lakh motorists were fined for the offence through the year. Since Jan 1 this year, police have also begun filing criminal cases against gross violators, especially on key roads and highways.

## Co-worker held for murder of two gardeners at hostel site in Greater Noida

Noida.(Agency)

Police have solved a double murder case within 24 hours with the arrest of a 24-year-old gardener accused of killing two co-workers at a private management institute in Greater Noida's Knowledge Park-3. The accused, Abhishek Kumar, a resident of Meerut, was arrested near the Gurjarpur railway line under the Knowledge Park police station area after a police encounter. A country-made pistol and cartridges were recovered from his possession. The deceased, Sheeshpal and Indra alias Dharmendra, both 45 and residents of Meerut, were found dead with multiple injuries inside an under-construction hostel at the institute on Friday morning. According to police, the three men had come to Greater Noida earlier this week to work as gardeners at

the institute. Investigators suspected Abhishek after he fled the premises before the bodies were discovered. "Given the suspicious circumstances, police registered a case under Section 103(1) (murder) of the BNS," Greater Noida DCP Dr. Pravin Ranjan Singh said. Police said Abhishek was intercepted on a dirt road leading towards the Gurjarpur railway line on Saturday. Following his arrest, another case under BNS Section 109 (attempt to murder) and relevant sections of the Arms Act was registered against him. During interrogation, Abhishek allegedly confessed to the murders and told police that he held a long-standing grudge against Sheeshpal over the latter's past relationship with his deceased sister. According to the accused, Sheeshpal frequently taunted him over the

matter, while Indra also joined in mocking him. Police said Abhishek planned the murders before coming to Greater Noida and joined the same worksite under the pretext of employment. Police said that on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, Abhishek allegedly made both men consume alcohol while he himself drank very little to remain conscious. After the two men fell asleep in an intoxicated state, he allegedly attacked Sheeshpal with a shovel, repeatedly striking his head and body. During the assault, Indra woke up, following which Abhishek allegedly attacked him as well, inflicting multiple blows on his head and other parts of the body. The bodies were discovered on Friday morning, after which police launched an investigation that led to Abhishek's arrest within a day.

## Light rain likely to cool city down on Monday

NOIDA.(Agency)

The city recorded a maximum temperature of 36 degrees Celsius on Saturday, five notches below normal for this time of the year. At the AWS station, the maximum temperature rose to 35 degrees Celsius from 33.5 degrees Celsius recorded on Friday. The KVK observatory recorded 35.1 degrees Celsius, up from 34 degrees Celsius the day before. The NorthCap University monitoring station recorded the highest daytime temperature in the city at 37 degrees Celsius, compared to 35.5 degrees Celsius on Friday.

Meanwhile, the minimum temperature settled at 20.6 degrees Celsius, marginally higher than Friday's 19.3 degrees Celsius.

Despite temperatures staying below normal, weather conditions remained warm during the afternoon. IMD said the city is likely to witness a gradual rise in temperatures over the coming days, with maximum temperatures expected to increase by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius over the next week across Haryana. Though weather conditions are expected to remain largely dry over the next 24 hours, IMD has forecast the possibility of light to moderate rain at isolated places in the state between May 11 and May 14. Light rain activity is likely in the city from Monday night and may continue into Tuesday at isolated locations, although no official alert has been issued for the city so far.

According to IMD, the prevailing



conditions are being influenced by multiple weather systems active over north India. A western disturbance, currently seen as a cyclonic circulation, lies over east Bihar and adjoining areas. Another upper air cyclonic circulation over central Pakistan and adjoining Punjab and Rajasthan has now shifted towards central Rajasthan. In addition, a

fresh western disturbance is likely to affect the Western Himalayan region from Sunday onward, which could trigger scattered rainfall and thunderstorm activity over parts of northwest India.

"Thunderstorm and lightning activity accompanied by gusty winds of 40-50 kmph is likely at isolated places in Haryana between May 11 and May 14.

Districts including Chandigarh, Panchkula, Ambala, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Karnal, Panipat and Sonapat are likely to witness weather activity during this period," IMD said.

For Sunday, the department has predicted a partly cloudy sky with minimum and maximum temperatures expected to hover around 25 and 39 degrees Celsius.

# Work on Gomti Barrage upgradation starts to boost drinking water supply in Lucknow

Movement on the barrage's bridge closed on Friday, Irrigation Department starts replacing old and damaged gates.

Lucknow. (Agency)

In order to strengthen the drinking water supply and flood control system in Lucknow, the Uttar Pradesh Irrigation Department has started work on the upgradation of the Gomti Barrage, the city's oldest, with the help of the latest technology, officials said.

After closing movement on the barrage's bridge on Friday, the department has started replacing its old and damaged vertical gates.

Anil Garg, Principal Secretary, Irrigation Department, said, "The barrage, built from 1980 to 1983, plays an important role in maintaining the fixed water level of 105.6 metres at the Kudia Ghat pumping station, ensuring uninterrupted drinking water supply to lakhs of people. During the rainy

season, it also helps regulate the flow of the Gomti and protects the city from flood-like situations."

"Over a period of time, biological and chemical corrosion in the barrage gates increased due to the quality of river water and continuous usage, affecting their efficiency. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had directed that the gates be replaced in phases. While two gates were replaced in 2024, four more were replaced last year. Work on constructing and installing the remaining four gates is now being carried out in the final phase," he added.

Chief Engineer (Mechanical) Upendra Singh said, "The gates were built at the ISO-certified irrigation workshop in Bareilly. Each gate has been prepared in two



sections, with the upper part weighing 16 tonnes and the lower part 18 tonnes. All 10 gates have a width of 18 metres and a height of 4.95 metres. Built with advanced technology and a strong structure, the new gates will be durable for a long time." The department's biggest challenge, he

added, was to ensure that the city's drinking water supply was not affected during the gate replacement work. Keeping it in mind, a cofferdam has been constructed upstream to maintain water level during repair and replacement work. "This will ensure that adequate water reaches the Kudia Ghat pumping station and the city residents do not face any water shortage," he said. "A shutdown has been scheduled from May 8 to June 15 to smoothly complete the repair and gate replacement work. Due to rising temperatures and the possibility of falling water levels, the department is working round the clock to complete the work before time. A special team of engineers and technical staff is continuously monitoring

the work," the Chief Engineer informed. "Preparations are also being made to operate the barrage in an automated manner through the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) technology, a critical industrial control system architecture. This will allow the barrage gates to be operated digitally," he added.

A government spokesperson said that monitoring of water levels, control of gates and quick response in emergency situations will become more effective. "It will also reduce human errors and make the entire system more secure and transparent," he said. The barrage has been the mainstay of the water supply system of the state capital. Until the early 2000s, the barrage bridge used to be the only entry point to the Gomti Nagar area.

## Short news

### Flex board war over Kerala CM post poses challenge for local bodies

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. (Agency)

The flex war among supporters of senior Congress leaders projecting chief ministerial candidates has turned into a major challenge for local bodies across the state, which had only recently completed a massive clean-up drive under the green protocol after the assembly elections.

The uncertainty over who will head the new government has left LSGs in a dilemma over taking action against the growing number of flex boards put up by supporters of senior Congress leaders.

"During the election period, there was a clear regulatory mechanism and the Election Commission had the authority to enforce strict controls. Now the election code of conduct is over, action depends largely on the support and political will of the government.

The authorities of local bodies are scared to remove the flex boards owing to the ongoing uncertainties surrounding the CM candidate. Also, they are afraid of how the party workers will react if the boards are removed by them," said a senior LSGD official.

The official said that the LSGs are ultimately responsible for managing the large quantity of flex generated during this period. "Often no one claims ownership of the flex boards, making enforcement difficult. Local bodies can remove them, but unless there is a strong policy decision and political backing, the problem continues," he added.

### Kerala HC grants interim stay in plea over proposed FIDE chess tournaments

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. (Agency)

The High Court has granted an interim stay in a petition filed by Premier Chess Academy India Private Ltd regarding approvals for its proposed 'Chess for Everyone' FIDE-rated classical chess tournaments scheduled during 2026-27. The matter has been posted for further hearing on June 4, 2026.

The petition was filed regarding the pending approval process for FIDE-rated classical tournaments proposed for June, October and January 2027 under the academy's 'Chess for Everyone' initiative.

According to the plea, the academy sought directions to the Chess Association Kerala to consider and grant approval for the proposed tournaments and forward them to the All India Chess Federation within seven days.

The petition also requested that no other FIDE-rated tournaments be scheduled or approved during the dates proposed by the academy until disposal of the writ petition.

Premier Chess Academy said the 'Chess for Everyone' initiative aims to make international-rated chess more accessible and affordable for players in the state, particularly children and emerging talents who often have to travel outside the state for FIDE rating opportunities.

The academy said the initiative is intended to strengthen the state's chess scenario by increasing access to international-rated tournaments, supporting grassroots chess development, providing affordable playing opportunities, bringing international-standard events to Kerala and encouraging participation among juniors, women, seniors and emerging players.

## Chandigarh DBA lawyers to abstain from work till May 13 to protest proposed Tenancy Act

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Regular functioning in district courts is likely to be hit, and litigants may face disruption in hearings and routine judicial work, as the District Bar Association (DBA) of Chandigarh on Friday announced a "complete abstention" from work till May 13 to protest the newly notified/proposed tenancy law for the city.

After an urgent general house meeting held on the District Courts Complex in Sector 43 here, the Bar Association also announced to move the Punjab and Haryana High Court against the legislation.

According to a resolution passed unanimously by the members, advocates will remain on strike from May 8 to 13 and won't attend court proceedings during the period. In a statement issued after the meeting, the Bar Association said, "It has been unanimously resolved that a complete strike/abstention from work is hereby called from now

onwards till Wednesday, i.e. 13.05.2026, in protest against the proposed Tenancy Act." The Bar Association has also constituted a five-member committee to file an appropriate writ petition before the high court, "challenging the tenancy law and



seeking legal recourse against its implementation". DBA vice-president Sandeep Gujjar said, "The association has resolved to oppose the tenancy legislation collectively and will pursue both legal and organisational measures against it."

Notably, the association has decided to boycott proceedings even on Saturday, when the National Lok Adalat is scheduled to be held across the country.

"It has further been decided that no matter, including Traffic Challans, shall be entertained during the strike period," the notice issued by the executive committee stated. The association further directed all members, including notaries and oath commissioners, to participate in the abstention from work, and warned of "disciplinary action" in the form of penalties on those violating the decision.

According to the notice, "Any member who appears before the Court or sends his/her intern during the strike period shall be liable to pay a fine of Rs 2,000." The Bar Association has fixed a meeting at 11 am on May 13 to decide its future course of action, depending on developments regarding the tenancy law and the response from authorities.

## Giant Trishul unveiled at Kailasagiri to boost Andhra tourism

VISAKHAPATNAM. (Agency)

A 65-foot-high Trident (Trishul) along with a Damarakam structure measuring 10 feet in height and 18 feet in width was inaugurated at Kailasagiri in Visakhapatnam on Saturday as part of efforts to promote tourism in North Andhra.

The structure was inaugurated by Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister P. Narayana, MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas and Visakhapatnam MP Matukumilli Sriharat.

The Trishul was built at an estimated cost of nearly Rs 6 crore and took around eight months to complete. Considering the high wind intensity in the Kailasagiri region, the



structure was designed to withstand wind speeds of up to 250 kilometres per hour. Developed by the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA), the installation was constructed near the iconic Shiva-Parvathi statues at Kailasagiri and is expected to

attract tourists and visitors to the region.

A special pathway zone and visitor-friendly facilities were also developed around the site. Visitors can view the landscape of Visakhapatnam city from the location. Speaking on the occasion, Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister P. Narayana said Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was giving priority to tourism development to generate revenue and create employment opportunities. He said proposals had already been prepared to develop Kailasagiri into a tourism hub. He also congratulated VMRDA officials and staff involved in the installation of the structure.

## Andhra Pradesh reports rise in juvenile crime cases: NCRB

A total of 726 crimes committed by juveniles were reported in 2024, of which 325 were related to property offences.

VISAKHAPATNAM. (Agency)

Andhra Pradesh recorded 726 cases of crimes committed by juveniles in 2024, registering an increase compared to 662 cases in 2023, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report. However, the number remained lower than the 912 cases reported in 2022.

The NCRB report on "Crime Committed by Juveniles (IPC/BNS and SLL Crimes)" stated that the overall crime rate involving juveniles in Andhra Pradesh stood at 4.8 in 2024. The State's child population, based on the 2011 Census, was estimated at 151.1 lakh.

The data showed that offences against property formed the largest category of crimes involving juveniles in the State during 2024.

A total of 325 property-related offences were reported, including 228 theft cases, 62 burglary cases, 14 robbery cases, 11 extortion cases, six snatching incidents, and four dacoity cases. The report highlighted several serious offences

involving juveniles under the BNS and the IPC.

The State registered 24 murder cases involving juveniles in conflict with law during the year. In addition, 26 cases of attempt to murder and 108 cases related to causing hurt or grievous hurt were reported. The State recorded 16 cases of causing death by negligence, two of abetment of suicide, six cases of wrongful restraint or confinement, and eight kidnapping and abduction cases. Overall, offences affecting the human body accounted for 190 cases in the State. The NCRB report further revealed that Andhra Pradesh recorded 66 offences against women and children involving juveniles in 2024. These included 29 rape cases registered under Sections 64 to 71 of the BNS/Section 376 IPC. Two cases of attempt to commit rape were reported.

Other offences included 10 cases of assault on women with intent to outrage modesty, seven cases of sexual harassment, one



case of assault or criminal force with intent to disrobe a woman, three voyeurism cases, and five stalking cases. The State also recorded one case related to insulting the modesty of a woman, two cases of cruelty by husband

or relatives under Section 498-A IPC, two cases of kidnapping and abduction of women to compel marriage, and four cases related to procurement of children.

Apart from these, the report listed 15 cases of rash driving on public roads involving juveniles, one arson case, four criminal trespass cases, and one case each related to affray, forgery, cheating and fraud, and offences relating to documents and property marks.

A total of 621 cognizable IPC/BNS crimes involving juveniles in 2024. The report categorises juveniles in conflict with law as children alleged or found to have committed offences under various provisions of the BNS, IPC, and Special and Local Laws. The NCRB compiles crime statistics annually based on data submitted by States and Union Territories across the country.

### Centre verifying cause of fire that capsized vessel near Hormuz, killing Dwarka sailor

A Dwarka sailor died, and 4 others sustained burn injuries in the incident.



Ahmedabad. (Agency)

The cargo vessel on which a sailor from Devbhumi Dwarka died Friday had capsized after a fire near the Strait of Hormuz, a source in the Union Government confirmed to The Indian Express Saturday. The source said that four other Indians sustained burn injuries and the government was ascertaining the "exact cause of fire".

Altal Talab Ker, who belongs to Jam Salaya town in Dwarka, was killed aboard the vessel Al Faize Noor Suleimani that had set out for Yemen from Dubai on Wednesday with 18 sailors on board. A passing vessel rescued the survivors, who have now been granted consular access, sources said.

"A wooden dhow, carrying general cargo, with 18 Indian crew members, capsized yesterday (Friday) close to the Strait of Hormuz after it caught fire. The exact cause of the fire is being ascertained. The crew members were rescued by a passing vessel. One Indian crew member died and four were injured," the source told this paper on Saturday.

"The injured are receiving medical treatment in Dubai and are safe. Our officials from the Indian Consulate met the rescued Indian nationals last night (Friday)," the government source added.

The Indian consulate in Dubai has sent the injured for medical treatment and is in touch with the dhow owner, "rendering all possible assistance in this matter on priority," the consulate said in a post on X on Saturday.

Adam Bhaya, General Secretary, Indian Sailing Vessels Association, wrote to the consulate seeking assistance for Ker's final rites and consular access for the rest.

## Layers within Telangana's caste pyramid

The Union government gives special grants only for those states or regions that are deemed 'backward' for their development to bring them on par with others. But what determines if a state is backward? Economic metrics such as gross domestic product and per-capita income are used to measure the relative backwardness of states. Sounds logical, right? Similarly, shouldn't social justice schemes also focus more on castes that are more backward than others? If yes, how does one measure the relative backwardness of a caste?

For the first time in India, a composite backwardness index (CBI) has been constructed in Telangana to objectively measure the relative backwardness of a caste. The analytical framework is methodologically modest in description and conceptually radical in implication: it produces a single, comparable number for the relative backwardness of each of 242 caste groups, derived from the responses of 3.55 crore people across 75 fields of information.

The CBI is built on 42 equally-weighted parameters spanning education, occupation, income, land and assets, living conditions, access to finance, gender and social discrimination. Each caste is scored on a scale of 0 to 126, where a higher score denotes greater backwardness. The least backward caste in Telangana, the Kapu community, scores 12. The most backward, the scheduled caste Dakkal, scores 116. The state average is 81. Above that line lie 135 of the 242 castes, accounting for two-thirds of the population. Below it lie 107, including all 18 general castes. The numbers, for the first time, settle questions that have so far been the province of assertion. The Mandal Commission, whose 1980 report shaped four decades of reservation policy, used 11 parameters and relied largely on field visits and judgement to classify social and educational backwardness. It was a serious effort with the tools then available. The CBI uses 42 parameters and 3.55 crore observations, distinguishes rural and urban living standards within each parameter, and produces a continuous score rather than a binary classification. The CBI provides empirical evidence of the established ugly truth of Indian society—people belonging to SC and ST communities are three times and the backward classes 2.7 times more backward than the general castes. A whopping two-thirds of Telangana's population belong to really oppressed castes that badly need help.

The index also changes the paradigm of welfare design, which has so far been built around broad clusters such as BC, SC and ST. The data shows that even within these groups, inequality is sharp. The SC Madiga community is more than double the population of SC Malas and 15 percent more backward. Shaik Muslims are five times more numerous than general-caste Muslims and 40 percent more backward. People from the Padmasali BC are actually less backward than the state average. Aggregating these communities into a single category obscures more than it reveals. Nearly a third of the beneficiaries of Telangana's flagship welfare schemes belong to castes less backward than the state average. The CBI reframes the welfare question itself: instead of filling a common well from which marginalised groups draw in proportion to their population, the state can now deliver resources in proportion to each caste's backwardness. The CBI also reveals the specific drivers of backwardness. Contrary to popular belief, it is not land ownership but access to English-medium education that is the strongest predictor of where a caste sits on the scale. People from the Lambadi tribe and Mudiraj backward group rank well on irrigated land ownership, but remain among the more backward groups. Meanwhile, the Gouds, goldsmiths and BC Christians score better than the average because of school access.

## The gloves are off in Punjab

**THE GREAT GAME: The BJP is certainly sharpening its metaphorical knives in the AAP-ruled state**

THE Punjab BJP celebrated the victory in the West Bengal elections in a five-star hotel in Chandigarh on Friday evening, barely a day after the Enforcement Directorate cracked down on three Punjabi real-estate developers in Mohali, just outside the garden city. The two incidents are separate but everyone also knows they are connected. The newfound confidence in the BJP stems from what once was an oft-repeated adage: What Bengal does today, the rest of the country does tomorrow. And so, in the air, hangs the question, "Is Punjab next?" It's a question not just Punjab, but all the country is asking. Certainly, the gloves are off.

Let's start with the map of India that has turned mostly saffron in the last 12 years since PM Modi took power. Except for Himachal Pradesh and Punjab in the north, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Karnataka in the south and Jharkhand in eastern India, the rest of the country today belongs to the BJP. No need to repeat how the dominoes have fallen. We also know the BJP likes to detail. In Bengal, the Special Intensive Revision was thrown into the "poriborton" mix of caste and gender and religion; alongside these pages, senior journalist Jayanta Ghosal writes how the BJP decided to subdue the "Jai Shri Ram" narrative it has favoured elsewhere to focus, instead, on the anti-incumbency ills associated with Mamata Banerjee. Even Bangladesh was not spared in this "no stone to be left unturned" strategy — Dinesh Trivedi, former Trinamool Congress MP who moved to the BJP five years ago, was sent to Dhaka as High Commissioner (a story broken by my colleague Ujwal Jalali) — to showcase its pro-Bengal intent. The focus on Punjab has been a long time coming. PM Modi visited Gurdwara Sachkhand Ballan in February to mark the anniversary of Sant Ravidas, revered by the Sikh Ravidassia sect, while the sect head was given a Padma Shri in January — about 22 per cent of the state's Sikhs are Dalits. Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini's forays into Punjab in a turban are well-known.

It seems the seven defector AAP MPs who recently joined the BJP will soon set up camp in Chandigarh — their staffers are already here. Even the banquet for

Vietnamese President To Lam in Rashtrapati Bhavan earlier this week was designed by Punjab celebrity chef Harpal Singh Sokhi (check out his interview and food stories-cum-recipes in The Tribune) — the menu featured Bathinda vaale aloo, Dal Amritsari, and with a nod to Haryana, Hisar bajra khichdi. With speculation gaining ground that elections in Punjab will be held towards the end of the year — Census operations are likely to start by middle-January 2027, which means they can't overlap with the conduct of polls — the state BJP is certainly sharpening its metaphorical knives. It hasn't escaped anybody's notice that the ED named the president of AAP Punjab, Aman Arora, as being linked with one of the realtors raided on Thursday morning. Oh yes, the gloves are off. The BJP is targeting the ruling

as Delhi's Lt Governor Taranjit Sandhu — grandson of Teja Singh Samundri, a blue-blooded reformer of the 1920s Gurdwara reform movement and a founder member of the SGPC — discovered, as the BJP candidate for the Amritsar Lok Sabha seat in mid-2024, that the powerful Sikh peasantry wasn't ready to let him into their villages, even to campaign. (He had much better luck with the Hindu communities.)

That big question remains, even if much else has changed these past two years. Are Punjab's Sikhs prepared to let the BJP in today? Or, perhaps, that's not the right question, because it would be folly to think the Sikhs are an undifferentiated, holistic group of people. The right question, perhaps, should be: How will the different Sikh communities, or castes, vote? And will some Sikh castes/communities let BJP candidates in, more than others? Certainly the BJP will attempt to fragment the Sikh vote, in the hope that it can wear some people away. Talk of a BJP-Akali Dal alliance, before or after the poll, refuses to go away, despite Home Minister Amit Shah's announcement the BJP will fight alone. It's clear the two parties need each other — the Akalis need the Hindu vote the BJP can provide and the BJP needs the Akali vote.

The big difference between 2024, when BJP-Akali Dal talks fractured over which party would get more seats in the Lok Sabha polls, and now is that most of the country today, including big Bengal, has been coloured saffron. In this scenario, will Shah still be willing to play second fiddle to Akali Dal's Sukhbir Badal?

Where, you might ask, is the grand old party in this political melee?

The interesting thing about the Congress, which has just dumped its old partner, the DMK, in Tamil Nadu, and won back Kerala on an anti-incumbency Left vote, is that it has a good chance of retaking Punjab — if its various factions can still come together and hang together and woo the citizenry in its favour. (At the moment, though, that seems like a really tough ask.) It may well, then, be time for Punjab to (timelessly) hum the Satinder Sartaaj two-liner: Saanu saariyaan visar gaiyaan raavan ve/Kehre paase jaiye sajana. All our paths seem to have disappeared/What direction should I take now?



AAP. CM Bhagwant Mann is hitting back at the Akali Dal — and implicitly, the BJP — by upping the ante against the 2015 sacrilege incidents that took place when the Akalis-BJP were in power. AAP will certainly fight to keep Punjab, keenly aware it is the only way it will still be taken seriously as the third pole in Indian politics. The recent passage of the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act, 2026, is also intended to whittle down the incredible influence of the SGPC (and therefore the Akali Dal), which issues AAP-critical statements every day.

Winning Bengal has certainly pumped up the BJP. And yet,

## Hung mandate: Let Tamil Nadu Assembly floor decide

**The Governor is expected to determine which formation is most likely to command the confidence of the Assembly**

TAMIL Nadu's unfolding post-election uncertainty has once again brought the constitutional role of the Governor under scrutiny. With Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam emerging as the single largest party but falling short of the halfway mark, the question before Raj Bhavan is politically explosive yet constitutionally settled: who should be invited to form the government? The Constitution does not automatically grant the single largest party the right to govern. The Governor is expected to determine which formation is most likely to command the confidence of the Assembly. However, decades of political controversies have shown how this discretionary power can become a source of suspicion, allegations of bias and charges of partisan intervention. The Supreme Court has repeatedly clarified the constitutional position, emphasising that majority must be tested on the floor of the House, not in the

Governor's subjective satisfaction. The Karnataka 2018 episode is the clearest precedent, when the BJP emerged as the single largest party but lacked a



majority. The Governor invited it to form the government and granted 15 days to prove numbers.

The SC intervened, ordered an immediate floor test to prevent prolonged political manoeuvring and possible defections. Unable to gather support, BJP's Yediyurappa resigned before the trust vote, after which HD Kumaraswamy formed the government with Congress support. In 2017, in Goa, the Governor invited a post-poll coalition because it demonstrated majority support earlier than the Congress, despite the latter being the largest party. These cases establish a crucial principle: numbers on the Assembly floor matter more than claims outside it.

If Vijay can demonstrate a workable majority, he should be allowed to take oath and face a floor test within days. Equally, if another coalition reaches the majority mark first, it too has a legitimate constitutional claim. Hung verdicts are part of democracy. Constitutional ambiguity should not be.

## UAE-Israel ties have deeper historical roots

**It is shortsighted for India to give primacy to one Arab peninsula state, as it is doing today**

RESPONSIBLE sections of the western media have reported that Israel has deployed its Iron Dome and Iron Beam anti-missile defences in the UAE during this period of intense armed hostilities, currently paused, in the Gulf. Along with the equipment, military personnel have also been sent to the Arab Gulf country. These systems have been sent, for the first time, by Israel outside its territories. Neither Israel nor the UAE have denied the reports; hence, there is no reason to doubt their veracity. The US, under the Trump 1 administration, brokered the normalisation of UAE-Israeli ties in 2020. This was under the rubric of the Abraham Accords. Under their agreement, Israel and the UAE established diplomatic, commercial and security ties. Observers are tracing the deployment of the Iron Dome and the Iron Beam systems to the normalisation of Israel-UAE ties. However, the reasons lie deeper in history. The implacable enmity between Israel and Iran goes back to the beginning of the Khomeini Revolution in 1979. In the past 47 years, Iran has refused to recognise Israel's right to exist. That was a position taken by all the Arab states until Egypt recognised Israel in 1978, under Anwar-us-Sadat, in the Camp David Accords. The Arab states considered it a sellout, as did Khomeini. This was different from the Shah of Iran's approach to Israel; the Shah fled Iran in January 1979. Khomeini returned to the country in February that year and soon took it in his iron grip. That system has continued under the Vilayat-e-Faqih framework.

The UAE's animosity towards Iran has historical roots. It arose from the traditional cultural superciliousness of Persians towards the Arab bedouin and the disdain with which the Shah treated them. This was exhibited when he occupied the Greater and the Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa just days before the UAE was formed in December 1971. The Tunbs were disputed between Iran and Ras al



Khaimah and Abu Musa between Sharjah and Iran. The Iranian action further embittered relations, but the extent and persistence of negativity became clear when in early 1997, the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (and now Foreign Minister) Abdullah bin Zayed conveyed an astonishing position to India's then External Affairs Minister IK Gujral. I know this personally and it would be timely to disclose it in more detail than he has done earlier. Gujral visited Tehran and decided to spend a few hours in Abu Dhabi to meet his counterpart on his

way back to Delhi. In Tehran, apart from bilateral ties, he focussed on the situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban had captured Kabul some five months before his visit. Both Iran and India along with Russia were assisting the anti-Taliban alliance. While an exchange of views on Palestine took place, the situation in the Gulf and Iran-Gulf relations were not on the agenda; there was no need for them to be so. After the Abdullah-Gujral meeting had gone on for some time, after discussions on bilateral ties, the former asked to meet the latter alone.

All officials present, including me, left the chamber. Gujral and Abdullah were together for around 20 minutes. Gujral came out and looked troubled. When some of the accompanying officials were alone with him and could talk to him in confidence, they asked what had happened. His words are embedded in my memory. He said that Abdullah had cautioned him on Iran and then had added these words: "We can imagine ourselves to be in the same trenches with Israel against Iran!" In the context of the times, this was a bombshell. While it was known that Sheikh Zayed, UAE President and Abu Dhabi ruler, as well as some rulers of the six other UAE sheikhdoms did not have positive feelings for Iran, the possibility of their making common cause with Israel against Iran had never been contemplated in Delhi. A little under three decades later, Israel and the UAE have made common cause against Iran and how!

The UAE has moved away in its approaches to society and diplomacy from other Arab Gulf states in recent years. A substantial degree of antipathy has emerged between Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ), the current Abu Dhabi ruler. UAE senior officials have openly complained that none of the other Arab Gulf states came to their country's support when it was facing a far higher degree of missile and drone attacks by Iran since the beginning of the present conflict.

This is not far from the facts. In a kind of response, the UAE left OPEC and OPEC+. Having the sixth largest oil reserves and producing over 3 million barrels per day of oil, the UAE is a significant factor in the hydrocarbons world. It will try to chart its own path, but OPEC+ countries will continue to dominate the oil markets. It is likely that the UAE will get more elbow room for taking independent decisions on its oil production, but it will have to align itself on other issues with OPEC+.

# Beginners' guide

## to growing orchids at home

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

### BEGINNERS' CHALLENGE

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

### ORCHIDS WHICH ARE GOOD FOR BEGINNERS

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

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

### LIGHTING

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

### TEMPERATURE

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

### HUMIDITY

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

### NUTRITION

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

### WATER

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

orchid,

### PRUNING

Beginners often wonder how to prune orchids.

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



# This is what Indian offices need to change

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

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

Floating furniture is a new concept that has been introduced in the interior space. While in the recent past, rigid and bulky furniture were the norm at workspaces, the new-age concept of floating furniture has changed functionality of an office.

One such product is E-Stilts Desk System. This product can be modified to not only function as a staff workstation, but as a manager workstation or conference table. The system offers the utility of a sturdy desk, while allowing agility of a compact workstation at the same time. It was also built to solve one of the basic challenges faced by small offices - a cluttered workspace with numerous pieces of furniture & accessories.

The modern designing techniques using cutting-edge technology, by not completely tarnishing the traditional furniture look has increased the demand for floating furniture in the markets.

### What kind of changes do you think Indian offices need currently and why?

In order to successfully create a rich working environment, it is essential to make employees feel comfortable and at ease, while being efficient and productive. With open workspaces, flexi-seating, and ergonomically enhanced furniture, Indian offices today are in the process of re-invention. It is important that workplaces that can help enhance productivity are introduced. For example, many companies like Google, Facebook have opted for new age offices that have employee friendly environment. While the country is still adapting itself to this new concept, start-ups have started to pave the way. They have redefined commercial interior spaces in the country by breaking the monotony and cutting the clutter associated with traditional workspaces.

### What is radical seating all about?

The term 'Radical' in its simplest form, means a departure from tradition. For us, it represents change and departure. Change from routine and departure from monotony at the workspace. Radical design has slowly started to gain acceptance in offices. The scenario has changed from restrictive to refreshing,

confined to comfortable and passive to portable.

Radical design doesn't mean only futuristic. If interpreted correctly, it could be a mix of traditional and modern decor. That is the beauty of this concept, it lets you decide how 'radical' you want to be.

While radical design and seating has transformed large offices, it has also come as a boon to small offices and has changed how small spaces are planned. The question of small working spaces confining the application of radical designs has been solved by creating multipurpose furniture and systems that fit the needs & budget of clients.

### Which is the most difficult corner in Indian offices that you always fail to modify?

It wouldn't be right to generalize; however, we have seen that the Indian Companies are still paper intensive and this leads to a huge requirement for storage. There are statutory obligations

that require some of the contracts, legal documents to be preserved for 10 years. High numbers of storage units limit the flexibility and openness in the office. We are suggesting ways to combat this by providing Compactor storages for dead and movable storage caddies for personal storage. This partially helps to achieve the balance between storage needs and flexibility.

### What changes do you wish to make to Indian Government offices?

Indian Government offices are the perfect example of traditional work-spaces. With private organisations adapting new age office concepts, the government workspaces also need to transform to become attractive to young talent. For starters, the work environment and the office design can become more transparent. The area could be distributed more equitably between cabins and open work areas. Technology could be integrated more closely in the office design. An efficiently planned, well lit, well ventilated workspace can really help to enhance productivity regardless of the sector.

## Set up your own terrace Vegetable garden

Have you, inspired by what Jyotika did in 36 Vayadhinile, wanted a terrace veggie garden of your own? It's a good idea, actually, to grow everyday spices and herbs, so that you have them at hand — fresh — whenever needed. But if you're among the many who don't know how to go about setting up this garden, read on...

### Choose the right space

Go to the terrace, take a good look. Judge the play of the sun throughout the day. And then, select a place that is shady, but at the same time, gets direct sunlight for some part of the day. You've

### to ensure that the plants get at least five hours of sunlight daily. But mind you, herbs are delicate leaves, so be careful that the sunlight is not so strong that the leaves get scorched by the heat.

### Get this...

The state government, as part of its environment and green cover initiatives, provides coir peats that come in plastic bags, which means you can grow the veggies in them, without having to bother about spending on pots. To begin with, wet the peats, place them on a sheet in the terrace. Keep watering them regularly, and in about a week, you'll see what looked like a small brick would've expanded to look like debris, and filled the bag. Now, to plant the seeds...

### Prepare the soil

Get some soil and natural manure from any nursery, and mix it well with the peats. If you want to keep it organic, add cow dung or goat dung manure to the mix.

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

Pick the right veggies



To start with, try out just one or two vegetables, and then go in for more veggies. Tomatoes, chillies and keerai (spinach) are easy to grow, so start with them. Sometimes you might need to net out the seeds and the saplings as they grow, to keep pesky sparrows and other birds from feasting on them.

### Watering is the key factor

Water the plants regularly, as and when needed. Excess water often causes damage and decay to plant roots, and it also washes away the nutrients of the soil. Also, post every heavy rainfall, remember to add manure to the soil.



# Monsoon

## décor decoded



This season with its damp, humid and overcast days needs a soul-stirring freshness to revive it. Monsoon should be about refreshing vibes with earthy colours and floral prints. Doing up your home or modifying your existing decor to get the

glow of nature into your house is one the best way to crack this. Interior specialist Sonam Gupta, Design Head of Tangerine shares some easy decor trends that flawlessly sync with the season and make your little abode, peaceful and attractive.

### Go earthy

Refurbish homes with loom woven dhurrie or wool infused kilims as rugs and mats to create a natural and unrefined look. These are hand washable and safe during the rainy days and gives the space an added dimension

### Go vibrant

Despite low sunlight and grayish tone of the ambiance, one can go effervescent by adding together colors using multihued soft furnishings, kitchenware, serve ware, table, bed and bathroom linen. They bring a lovely change with additional tints and twinkle

### Go floral

Floral prints together with geometric, paisley, damask, chevron and scroll as well as the traditional, Indian lifestyle, food, costumes and cultural blueprints create an impressive array of furnishings and designer crockery and cutlery ware for the kitchen, making it look sophisticated and eye-catching

### Go radiant

Adding a series of decorative lights, lanterns, gel and wax, scented and enhancing candles bring

much desirable illumination and makes the place beam with insignia. These also append an alluring and stimulating fragrance to the room

### Go organic

In the humid season of rains, adopting skin friendly linen made of cotton and silk is highly advisable. They absorb perspiration, is organic and safe to the skin and environment while is capable of carrying varied hues, prints and handwork like embroidery and zari. The cotton fabric is easy to maintain and looks rich at home Monsoon decor is all about keeping the space animated, clean and in the pink. Add vivacity using quirky ornamental products that are season-friendly and enjoy adorning your drenched homes.



## Three golden rules to water your Garden right



The most important element to have a beautiful, growing garden is to water the plants. However, there is a way to do this correctly. Follow these watering tips for a nice green growing garden.

### 1. Water properly

Pour enough water so that it reaches the roots of the

plant. This can be ensured when you see water draining out of the container into the saucer below.

### 2. Water at regular intervals

Keep a tab on which plant needs how much watering since there are some which can do without water for

couple of days and for such plants you should avoid over watering. However, if it is a plant that needs daily watering and you avoid doing that then the soil becomes too dry which is not good for the plant's growth.

### 3. Go with the seasons

Watering needs will change as per the seasons so summers means more water is needed for the plants while the cold and rainy season does not require much watering of plants.



## Uses of salt in home care

While salt is an absolute necessity in any meal, there are many other potential uses of salt. So, apart from its use in the kitchen, here's how you can put salt to some good use in other parts of the house.

To fight odour - Mix salt with lemon juice to make a paste and rub it on clothes. Keep it to dry in the sunlight and wash it off later.

To remove grease - Cover the pan which has grease with a layer of salt and put water over it. After 20 minutes the grease can be wiped off easily.

To deodourise your shoes - Sprinkle salt over your stinking canvas shoes / sneakers. The salt will absorb all the moisture from the shoes and make them smell good.



## The art of finding lost things



Lost your house keys? Can't find your specs? Your daughter can't find her favourite doll? Try some findology to prevent losing things around the house. According to Findologist Michael Solomon, author of How to Find Lost Objects: "Don't get frantic and keep searching around. There are no missing objects, only unsystematic searches and clutter."

Solomon says if everything is in its place, nothing will be lost. Meaning: design spaces for specific things. So, your keys, spectacles, mobile, its charger and all thingamajigs must have designated spaces - and then, consistently put the objects there.

### Clutter begone

While designing a house, it's important to keep it free of clutter. Because amid clutter, things become invisible and virtually unfindable. Solomon says, "Keys are among the most common objects we lose. And a missing set of keys can bring our day to a sudden and infuriating halt." But if you have lost something key, the big tip to finding it is to remain calm. "The moment you calm down, the lost object shows up," he says.

Solomon says that there's also "The Camouflage Effect" - a common situation in which your missing object is where you thought it was, or

where you remember last having seen it. But it has become hidden from view, due to some other object having been inadvertently placed on top of it. The way out: look underneath things.

### Make up for lost time

The basic reason people should use findology while designing houses is to stop wasting time that goes in looking for things. Interior designer Namita Sharma says, "People want specific corners in cupboards for placement of things in the kitchen and bedrooms." In smart houses, Sharma mentions that they try to create uncluttered spaces where there's no scope for an object just disappearing. Her take: "Lost keys, books, eyeglasses, jewellery, many times simply vanish and resurface after years. We want to reduce the frustration and trauma."

The 12 principles of finding lost objects

1. Don't look for it.
2. It's not lost - you are.
3. Remember the three C's: be comfortable,



calm and confident.

4. Its where it's supposed to be.

5. Domestic drift. If an object is missing

from its designated space, it's probably where it was last used.

# Unstoppable Gurgaon: Between Jan & April, 27,000 crore pumped into new real estate projects

Along stretches such as the Dwarka Expressway and Golf Course Extension Road, new residential towers keep rising as developers commit fresh capital to one of India's most active housing corridors.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Geopolitical tensions in West Asia have begun to ripple into global real estate markets, with even high-flying hubs like Dubai showing early signs of uncertainty. Elsewhere, technology firms are cutting jobs, hiring has slowed, and households are becoming more cautious about big-ticket purchases. But in Gurgaon, developers continue to bet heavily on real estate.

Along stretches such as the Dwarka Expressway and Golf Course Extension Road, new residential towers keep rising as developers commit fresh capital to one of India's most active housing corridors.

In the first four months of 2026 alone, nearly Rs 27,000 crore flowed into new real estate projects in the city, according to

Gurugram Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) data until April 30.

The investment push has coincided with Gurgaon continuing to outperform much of the National Capital Region (NCR), supported by infrastructure expansion and a perception that projects are executed faster in the city when compared to nearby markets.

According to a status report submitted by RERA to Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on May 4, the authority has cleared all complaints pending up to 2024, significantly reducing its backlog and streamlining the dispute resolution process for homebuyers. Industry



executives said this has helped restore confidence in the market. "Gurgaon continues to hold a clear edge within

NCR. The employment base is strong and infrastructure is catching up at a pace that actually moves the needle," said Manik Malik, CEO and president of real estate company BPTP (Business Park Town Planners).

He added that luxury launches across infrastructure-led micro markets were being driven by "real buyers, not just investor activity".

Rishi Raj, CEO of Conscient Infrastructure, said the rise in project approvals and registrations reflected growing confidence among both

developers and homebuyers.

Some developers described the current momentum as a sign that Gurgaon's market has matured. Jitender Yadav, director of Roots Developers, said the scale of investment in just four months indicated that the city was moving beyond its earlier boom-and-bust cycles. He pointed to rising demand for plotted developments alongside high-rise projects, particularly in New Gurgaon and along the Dwarka Expressway.

According to the status report, as of May 1, RERA Gurugram has approved 1,057 projects to date, of which 825 are residential. In a statement, the authority noted that the last couple of years have been significant for project registrations in the region.

## Express Special: Data 'leaked' to China-based firms, Customs officer detained

New Delhi.(Agency)

A Customs department official has been detained by the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit of Delhi Police for allegedly selling sensitive data to private companies, including firms based in China, The Indian Express has learnt.

The case pertains to an FIR registered by the IFSO unit on March 10 under provisions of the Information Technology Act, the Customs Act, and sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including conspiracy, cheating and breach of confidentiality.

Sources said the accused, identified as Rahul Sinha, is currently in police custody and is being questioned. When contacted, DCP (IFSO) Vinit Kumar confirmed that the matter was under investigation. "The case is under investigation. No further information can be divulged at the moment," he added. Police said a complaint was filed with the IFSO unit on February 27, alleging the unauthorised access, extraction, disclosure and commercial sale of sensitive customs data from notified protected systems classified as critical information infrastructure. The complaint was submitted by the Joint Director (Data Centre and Cyber Security), Directorate General of Systems.

The complaint alleged that someone had illegally accessed and sold customs data from government systems. The data, pertaining to trade details and confidential information, may have been extracted by misusing passwords, insider access or third-party access, it added. The FIR mentioned that the data stolen was important, as it was processed and stored in central government databases, and comprised both personally identifiable and commercially sensitive information.

"It includes detailed insights into pricing, sourcing patterns, supplier relationships, trade volumes, logistics chains and the market positioning of exporters and importers. If accessed and misused unlawfully, such data can act as economic intelligence, allowing competitors or data brokers to analyse transaction-level pricing and undercut businesses by strategically lowering prices," the FIR said.

## Carrying hope: Against medical odds, woman delivers baby after rare cancer diagnosis

New Delhi.(Agency)

On May 7, as doctors wheeled her into the operation theatre, Kalpana Gupta knew she was fighting two battles at once. Hours later, a baby girl weighing 1.28 kg was delivered and immediately shifted to specialised neonatal care — a fragile but life-affirming moment that marked the end of a journey defined by fear, endurance and medical precision. For the 32-year-old from Madhya Pradesh, the arrival of her daughter carries a deeper meaning. Kalpana earlier lost a child to stillbirth. When she conceived again, hope returned — only to be upended midway through her fifth month by a diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL), an aggressive blood cancer that required urgent treatment.

The diagnosis turned her pregnancy into a medical emergency, forcing doctors to carefully balance the mother's survival with the safety of the unborn child. What followed was a months-long race against time, marked by constant monitoring and coordinated care.

Kalpana was treated at BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, where doctors opted for a calibrated approach — initiating chemotherapy while attempting to prolong the pregnancy for as long as it remained medically safe.

"Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia during pregnancy is an extremely rare and high-risk condition. The challenge lies in controlling an aggressive cancer while carefully balancing foetal safety. Through coordinated multidisciplinary care and timely chemotherapy, we were able to stabilise the disease and safely prolong the pregnancy to improve neonatal outcomes," said Dr Dharma Choudhary, chairman, haemato-oncology, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital.

For several months, Kalpana underwent treatment under continuous supervision as doctors tracked both disease progression and foetal development. At 32 weeks, however, foetal monitoring showed growth restriction and altered blood flow patterns, prompting doctors to take an immediate decision to deliver.

Led by Dr Alka Sinha, head unit, gynaecology and laparoscopic surgery, the medical team performed an emergency caesarean section on May 7. "This was a highly sensitive pregnancy, not only medically but emotionally, given the patient's previous pregnancy loss," Dr Sinha said. "Our focus was to safely extend the pregnancy for as long as possible while continuously monitoring both mother and baby."

## Two die as car hits their bike: Three friends, two IPL passes, and a crash that changed everything

New Delhi.(Agency)

Childhood friends Ajay, Rohit and Hemant had reached the stadium on Friday evening to watch an IPL match, excited for a night of cricket. Rohit, who worked at a tours and travels agency, had arranged the passes. But as they stood at the entry gate, they realised there were only two passes instead of three.

While Rohit and Hemant stayed back to watch the match, Ajay decided to head back home. Hours later, Ajay received a call informing him that Rohit and Hemant had been killed after a car allegedly rammed their motorcycle from behind near Bhajanpura Metro station in Northeast Delhi while they were returning home early Saturday.

Rohit (31) and Hemant (33), both residents of Karawal Nagar, died in the collision. Police said the accused driver, Himanshu (27), has been arrested. This is the second fatal crash involving IPL spectators

after receiving information about the accident and found a damaged Bullet motorcycle and a Maruti Celerio car involved in the collision.

The two men suffered grievous injuries and were taken to Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital, where doctors declared them brought dead, they added.

"A forensic team inspected the scene and collected evidence. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem. The driver of the car, Himanshu, has been arrested and the offending vehicle seized," an officer said.

A case under sections 281 (rash or negligent driving) and 106 (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been lodged.



## Tragedy re-run: Returning from IPL match, 2 childhood friends die after car hits bike in Delhi

New Delhi.(Agency)

Two childhood friends were returning home on their Bullet motorcycle after watching the Delhi Capitals versus KKR IPL match on Friday night. The young men had come down the Signature bridge flyover in northeast Delhi's Khajuri Khas around 11.30 pm.

A speeding car, a silver Maruti Celerio, rammed the bike from behind near the service lane close to the Bhajanpura metro station. While the impact flung both riders into the road, the pillion rider was thrown 15 metres away. The car reportedly spun around three times before crashing into a nearby divider. Doctors declared the two brought dead.

The accident bears similarities to a hit-and-run reported earlier last month when two cousins aged 20 and 14 were killed while returning home after watching an IPL match on a motorcycle in central Delhi's Ashoka Road. The bikers who died in Friday's accident were residents of Karawal Nagar. They were identified as Rohit

Kashyap (31), and Hemant Sharma (33).

The car driver, identified as Himanshu (27), a lawyer, was beaten up by locals. People said he was driving over 80 kmph and appeared intoxicated. DCP (northeast) Ashish Kumar Mishra said, "The accused driver has been arrested,

and the offending vehicle has been seized." His blood sample has been sent for testing. Police said the accused was going to a friend's house in Dayalpur. When saw the seized car, it bore a Delhi High Court Bar Association sticker, and a band tie was hung on the rear-view mirror. Cops are verifying whether Himanshu, a resident of Holambi Kalan in northwest Delhi, is a practising lawyer. A 20-year-old local resident said, "Neither of the bikers were wearing helmets and had suffered severe head injuries." Another resident, a 45-year-old woman, said, "One of the two men was still a little conscious when we saw him. He kept calling out to us."



## Central Ridge gets 'reserved forest' tag. 'A milestone... move was pending for 3 decades,' says Delhi CM

New Delhi.(Agency)

**Central Ridge has been declared a 'reserved forest', giving stronger legal protection to 673.32 hectares of one of Delhi's most important green zones.**

In a significant move that gives stronger legal protection to one of the Capital's most important ecological zones, the Delhi government has declared approximately 673.32 hectares of the Central Ridge area — that comes under the Western Forest Division and covers parts around Sardar Patel Marg and the President's Estate — as 'reserved forest' under Section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. "The decision would prove to be a milestone in strengthening Delhi's natural heritage, biodiversity, and ecological security," Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was quoted as saying in an official statement by her office on Saturday. The move comes nearly 32 years after Delhi's Ridge areas were first notified under Section 4 of the Indian Forest Act on May 24, 1994. Section 4 is the preliminary notification that starts the process of constituting a reserved forest. Section 20 is

the final notification that gives the area its enforceable reserved forest status after the claims and settlement process is completed. In the statement, the CM was quoted as



saying, "The declaration completed an important process that had been pending for more than three decades."

Other Ridge areas of the Capital would also soon be notified as reserved forests under Section 20 and that the process is being

expedited, the official statement underlined.

The Central Ridge is one part of the larger Delhi Ridge system, which the Forest Department divides into four main segments — Northern, Central, South-Central and Southern Ridge. Of these, the Southern Ridge is the largest, while the Central Ridge accounts for about 864 hectares in official records. According to the statement, an area spanning approximately 4,080.82 hectares of the Southern Ridge was declared 'reserved forest' on October 24 last year. With the present notification of 673.32 hectares, the current government has so far granted the status to 4,754.14 hectares of Ridge areas. The CM said, "The move would help prevent encroachments, illegal activities, and ecological degradation. It would also strengthen conservation and scientific management initiatives being undertaken by the Forest department in Delhi's Ridge areas."

## Pidilite signals further price hike as West Asia war fuels input inflation

MORBI.(Agency)

Adhesives and construction chemicals maker Pidilite Industries is considering another round of price hike due to inflation in raw materials from the ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia, the company's Managing Director, Sudhanshu Vats, said.

The company, which owns popular brands such as Fevicol, Dr Fixit, FeviKwik and M-Seal, had announced a price hike in April, followed by a second round in May. The company's raw material basket, which is closely linked to crude derivatives, has seen a weighted-average increase of around 40-50 per cent due to geopolitical tensions in West Asia, Vats said. "The West Asia crisis, like for many other businesses, has had an impact on our business as well. It came towards the end of the quarter. So therefore, we were able to manage a bit of it, and I think it did not reflect in the numbers, but I think moving forward, our raw material prices have gone up indeed," said Vats in a post-earnings briefing. In line with its philosophy, Pidilite will look at the "weighted average increase" on its raw material, which is quite strong. So we are going to look at absolute rupee terms there, and we will continue to pass that on in a calibrated fashion to the market," he said, adding, "We will continue to remain focused on growth while remaining in our guided EBITDA corridor of 20 to 24 per cent."

Pidilite has already raised Fevicol prices by 1215 per cent, citing surging input costs, particularly for Vinyl Acetate Monomer (VAM), a key ingredient sourced from crude oil.

"Our weighted average increase has come close to 40 to 50 per cent. We believe this weighted average increase, the absolute amount that is there, we will pass on in rupee terms through price increase," he said, adding "our focus is on growth and demand generation, but as far as West Asia crisis is concerned, we have to manage it week to week and month to month because everyday the situation is changing."

## Retirement choice: FD or SCSS, which will give me higher monthly income?

Kolkata.(Agency)

Bank Fixed Deposits (FD) or Senior Citizen Savings Scheme? This is a question that keeps tormenting those who are about to retire or have just retired. For most retirement brings extreme caution in investment for the amount of money becomes limited with no fresh regular inflow like a monthly salary. But expenditures keep growing, thanks to inflation. So ensuring a steady flow of income is a key priority after working life is over. Therefore, both the security of capital and a significant interest rate assume paramount importance. It is significant that both instruments are guaranteed-return instruments but they differ in interest rates, payout format and a vital parameter — ceiling on investment. Let's have a look as to how bank FDs and SCSS fare against one another in terms of efficacy on these two and some other parameters.

FD vs SCSS: Interest rates

For most, this is the single most important parameter. And here SCSS has a slight edge over the bank FDs in the current economic conditions of the country. SCSS offers 8.2% per annum interest rate now. The finance ministry reviews the rate of interest on SCSS once every quarter, though for the past several quarters this rate has been left unaltered. This rate make SCSS more attractive for many since no bank is offering this rate of interest in the country now.

While the rate of interest for SCSS is the same across the country, the interest rates paid to senior citizens by banks vary from bank to bank. Most banks are now offering between 7% to 7.75% per annum, depending on the tenure of investment. Some banks, especially small finance banks, offer rates closer or slightly higher than 8% on one or two tenures only.

SCSS enjoys sovereign guarantee. Therefore, it enjoys a slightly higher safety than bank FDs. It is not possible to have a higher safety of capital than offered by SCSS. However, FDs are safe too, especially FDs with major public sector banks.

## Strait trouble: Global oil tanks running dry at unprecedented pace as Hormuz remains choked

New Delhi.(Agency)

Oil pipelines across the globe are running dry, depleting at an unprecedented rate as the ongoing Iran war severely disrupts crude flows from the Persian Gulf, rapidly eroding the buffer that usually protects markets from supply shocks.

The sharp fall in inventories has triggered rising concern across governments and energy markets, with the loss of more than a billion barrels of supply over roughly two months of near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz leaving the system increasingly exposed. Analysts cited by Bloomberg have warned that the thinner cushion not only fuels the risk of price spikes and shortages in the near term, but also extends vulnerability well beyond the end of the conflict.

Data from Morgan Stanley shows global oil inventories dropped by around 4.8 million barrels per day between March 1 and April 25. This marks a faster decline than any previous quarterly drawdown recorded in International Energy Agency data. Crude oil accounted for nearly 60% of the fall, while refined products made up the rest of the decline.

Inventories draining aid Middle East heat

Experts say oil systems cannot function without maintaining minimum stock levels, meaning what is termed the "operational minimum" is reached long before inventories hit zero. "Inventories are acting as the shock absorber of the global oil system," said Natasha Kaneva, JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s head of global commodities research. She added, "not every barrel can be drawn."

# US proposes H-1B minimum wage hike, likely to make hiring foreign workers costlier

**The US Department of Labour has proposed sharply higher prevailing wages for H-1B and related visa programmes. The draft rule has drawn both support and opposition ahead of the May 26 comment deadline.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

The US has proposed to increase the minimum wages paid to hire an employee under the H1B visa program by 30 per cent over the previously fixed limits, a move the administration claims will help prevent foreigners from undercutting wages of US nationals. The new rule,

proposed by the US Department of Labour on March 27, seeks to increase the minimum wages for four categories from the entry-level to the most-experienced, contending that the existing wage levels were fixed 20 years ago and fail to adequately protect US workers. According to the proposed rule 'Improving Wage Protections for the Temporary and Permanent Employment of Certain Foreign Nationals in the United States', the prevailing wage for entry-level foreign workers was USD 73,279 per annum, USD 98,987 (Level II), USD 121,979 (Level III) and USD 144,202 (Level IV). The new rule, which is now open to public comments till May 26, seeks to increase the prevailing wages for entry-level workers to USD 97,746, a hike of 33.39 per cent over the old rates, USD 1,23,212 (Level II, 24.47 per cent), USD 1,47,333 (Level III, 20.79 per cent), and USD 175,464 (Level IV, 21.68 per cent).

The prevailing wages differ from city to city.

According to the Department of Labour, the current methodology allows employers to hire foreigners at wage levels significantly below those paid to similarly employed US. The proposed changes will dramatically increase the



prevailing wage levels used in the H1B, H1B1, E-3, and PERM labour certification programs. The proposed rules have received mixed

responses, ranging from overwhelming support to opposition, contending that smaller companies may no longer be able to hire freshers for entry-level jobs, given the higher prevailing wages.

The window for public comments closes on May 26, following which the Department of Labour will examine the responses and

notify the final rule. The Trump administration, in its first term, had initiated changes to the prevailing wages in 2020 without prior notice or comments, and the move had to be shelved after it ran into legal challenges.

Last year, the administration imposed a USD 1,00,000 fee for H-1B candidates outside the US through a presidential order issued on September 19, 2025.

The same presidential order directed the Secretary of Labour to initiate rulemaking to revise prevailing wage levels under the H-1B program.

## Titan unfazed about gold supply issues as exchange programmes aid sourcing

New Delhi.(Agency)

Leading branded jeweller maker Titan Company is unconcerned about short-term gold supply issues due to West Asia conflict as its gold exchange programme and contingency sourcing plans are helping mitigate risks.

Titan, whose FY26 topline crossed Rs 75,000 crore, said the company's gold exchange programme has been running successfully since the third quarter and it has further strengthened sourcing flexibility for its jewellery businesses.

"...our gold exchange programme is very, very successfully being run from the last quarter three onwards. We always used to run this but now we have another level," CFO Ashok Sonthalia said while responding to a query around gold supply. He said the company has measures in place to respond to any supply-related challenges if required. "On a short notice we can, if required, further ratchet it. Some of the other Plan Bs are already ready," he said.

"We are at least not concerned in the short term as far as gold supply is concerned for Titan, Tanishq and CaratLane," said Sonthalia. The industry sources a considerable part of gold from the West

Asia, and there were reports of a delay in the renewal of import licences by the government. There was some slowness on the customs front which is picking up and "we are pretty much quite covered for quarter 1," he said. Besides,



Titan doesn't see any increase in cost in gold loan at least in the short term as tenure has been increased from 180 to 270 days, Sonthalia added.

Replying to another query, Titan CEO - Jewellery Division, Arun Narayan said now it is running the exchange campaign as a standalone campaign, particularly for Tanishq. "You may have seen that a lot of our Tanishq campaigns, which are new collection campaigns, also have an exchange section in the same campaign. In a

sense, it's getting reinforced with every campaign that we run," he said.

The company expects the exchange programme to continue supporting buyer growth, especially among wedding customers and consumers looking to refresh jewellery collections.

"The sentiment of the campaign has resonated very well with people because it has a certain public service message and nationalistic angle to it. All in all, we think it is a good thing to run, and it will give us rewards even going forward," he added.

Tanishq offers a comprehensive gold exchange programme designed to help customers swap old, worn-out, or unused gold for new jewellery designs

According to Narayan, Titan reported an 8 per cent buyer growth in the fourth quarter, compared with a flattish trend in the previous period, as customers who had deferred purchases amid rising gold prices returned to stores. Gold rates have gone up from festive onwards. Diwali onwards, it's been climbing. There are many customers who were waiting on the sidelines who came in to buy in quarter four," he said.

## Nalco's alumina exports to West Asia hit by geopolitical tensions: CMD

SYDNEY.(Agency)

State-run National Aluminium Company Ltd's exports to West Asia have been affected by geopolitical tensions in the region, according to its CMD, Brijendra Pratap Singh. West Asia accounts for 40-50 per cent of the company's alumina shipments. National Aluminium Company (Nalco) also said that a shift in export destinations due to supply disruptions in West Asia has contributed to a decline in global spot alumina prices, which have now fallen to \$305-310 per tonne. Alumina is a white, granular material refined from bauxite ore, primarily used as the feedstock for producing aluminium.

The Nalco Chairman and Managing Director, in the earnings conference call, said, "Our alumina export to the Middle East ... a lot of around 40 per

cent, 50 per cent of our export was going to the Middle East, which has been affected. But now, from Indonesia and other places also, orders are there. Of course, that has resulted in a reduction in the spot prices."

Nalco further said that smelters in West Asia are currently operating at reduced capacity and will not reach full capacity immediately. So once these smelters of the Middle East, the production curtailment is there till they reach the fullest capacity, there will be an effect on the alumina pricing in the spot markets," the company said. The aluminium value chain has been affected by the West Asia conflict, as spot alumina prices have dropped in some regions due to oversupply, while refined aluminium prices have surged due to production shutdowns and

shipping disruptions, analysts said. Nalco produced 23 lakh tonnes of alumina in 2025-26, of which 13.08 lakh tonnes were exported. Nalco reported a 16.6 per cent drop in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,722.44 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2026, on the back of lower revenue and higher expenses. The company had posted a consolidated profit of Rs 2,067.23 crore in the year-ago period. Revenue declined to Rs 5,012.82 crore in the fourth quarter of FY26, compared to Rs 5,267.83 crore in the year-ago period. National Aluminium Company Ltd is one of India's leading integrated aluminium complexes, with operations in bauxite mining, alumina refining, aluminium smelting, power generation, and coal mining.

# Missed your PPF contribution? Know the penalty, revival rules and account impact

**PPF is not a flashy investment. It does not promise spectacular returns or overnight wealth. What it does offer — a government-backed, tax-free, long-term savings vehicle — is exactly the kind of quiet, dependable foundation that most financial plans are built around.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Missing a PPF deposit is one of those things that happens quietly. Life gets busy, the financial year slips by, and somewhere in the middle of everything else, that one small transfer just did not happen. If that sounds familiar, do not panic — the account is not gone, and fixing it is far simpler than most people expect. A PPF account asks for very little. Just Rs 500 every financial year — that is the minimum needed to keep it ticking. If that amount does not go in before March 31,

the account does not close, but it does go into a kind of freeze. You cannot deposit fresh money, you cannot take a loan against it, and partial withdrawal — the kind that comes in handy during an unexpected emergency — is off the table until things are sorted out.

The account balance does not disappear and interest keeps building on whatever is already sitting there. But your ability to actually use the account goes away until you fix it. That distinction matters. How to Get It Back on Track

The revival process is not complicated, but it does require a physical visit. Head to the bank branch or post office where your PPF account is held and submit a written request for reactivation. Along with that letter, you pay Rs 500 for every financial year you missed — that is the minimum contribution — plus a penalty of Rs 50 per missed year. So if three years went by without a deposit, the math looks like this: Rs 1,500 in missed contributions plus Rs 150 in penalties, totalling Rs 1,650. Not a painful amount by any stretch, but a completely avoidable one. Once the payment goes through and the

branch processes your request, the account is active again. Everything returns to normal — deposits, loan facility, partial withdrawals, the works.

**A Common Misunderstanding Worth Clearing Up**

Many people assume that an inactive PPF account eventually closes on its own. It



does not. It simply sits there, earning interest on the existing balance but locked out of most of its useful features. Some people discover this years later when they try to make a deposit or apply for a loan and are told the account needs to be revived first. Catching it early saves unnecessary paperwork.

**The Easiest Way to Make Sure This**

**Never Happens Again**

Given that the minimum deposit is only Rs 500 a year, this is genuinely one of the more preventable financial slip-ups out there. Set a calendar reminder every February — well before the March 31 deadline — or better yet, set up an automatic transfer for a small fixed amount each April so the yearly minimum gets covered right at the start of every financial year. You do not need to contribute Rs 1.5 lakh to keep the account healthy. You just need to make sure that Rs 500 finds its way in before the year closes.

**Why It Is Worth Protecting**

PPF is not a flashy investment. It does not promise spectacular returns or overnight wealth. What it does offer — a government-backed, tax-free, long-term savings vehicle — is exactly the kind of quiet, dependable foundation that most financial plans are built around. Whether you are saving for retirement, a child's education, or simply building a corpus that compounds safely over time, letting a PPF account go inactive over a Rs 500 oversight is simply not worth it.

## Short news

## Centre clears boiled rice procurement for Andhra Pradesh

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla Manohar on Saturday announced that Andhra Pradesh has received the Centre's approval for boiled rice procurement for the first time, enabling the State to purchase nearly two lakh metric tonnes during the ongoing Rabi season. He said the decision would provide significant relief to farmers as the government aims for a record procurement of 70 lakh metric tonnes of paddy this year.

The minister made the remarks after inspecting procurement operations at



Ramavarappadu and Gollapudi in NTR district. He reviewed moisture-testing procedures at RSK centres, interacted with farmers and examined arrangements for transportation and storage. Farmers informed the minister that payments for procured paddy were being credited to their bank accounts within 30 minutes to 17 hours. Manohar said the coalition government had already transferred ₹4,410 crore to farmers, with 94 per cent of payments made within 24 hours.

During the visit, the minister identified issues such as high moisture content in paddy and damaged gunny bags. He directed officials to ensure adequate supply of lorries and gunny bags.

## Maternal care crisis at Kota medical college: 2 more women develop kidney issues, moved to private hospital

Jaipur.(Agency)

A woman who is five months pregnant and another who recently gave birth were the latest to experience kidney-related issues after being admitted to Kota's New Medical College and Hospital, where two other women died earlier this week following post-delivery complications.

The women were moved from the government facility to a private hospital and have been put on ventilator support. On Friday night, District Collector Peeyush Samariya visited the private hospital and inquired about the condition of the women.

Azaz Khan, a relative of the 20-year-old woman who is five months pregnant, told The Indian Express that she had gone to the Kota medical college hospital, the second largest government medical facility in Rajasthan, after doctors said she needed to undergo a procedure. "According to the doctors, she needed stitches in her uterus. On May 6, she received stitches, after which we got her home in the evening. On the morning of May 7, she complained of anxiety and chest pain, and she started bleeding... We called the doctor, who said she is fine, and that this happens sometimes. But her condition worsened, so we took her to the hospital, where she was admitted, but by evening, her urine stopped."

## Bihar Governor's '5-hour teaching' rule sparks faculty revolt, DU teachers back protest

Patna.(Agency)

The Federation of University Teachers' Associations of Bihar (FUTAB) has launched a formal protest against the Bihar Governor's recent directive mandating five hours of daily teaching. The teachers' body claims the order is a "contravention" of University Grants Commission (UGC) 2018 norms, which define the five-hour rule as "stay-in hours" rather than "direct teaching hours."

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) has now stepped in to express solidarity, writing to the Bihar Governor-Chancellor, Syed Ata Hasnain, urging the withdrawal of the controversial order.

The dispute centres on a letter dated April 7, 2026, issued by the Officer on Special Duty (OSD-Judicial) of the Governor's Secretariat. The letter directed Vice-Chancellors of all state universities to ensure that

"all faculty members... mandatorily attend classes for a minimum of five hours per day, subject to not less than 40 hours of workload in a week". FUTAB president K B Sinha and general secretary Sanjay Kumar challenged this interpretation in a letter to the Governor's Secretariat on April 13. They argued that while the OSD interprets the clause as five mandatory lecture periods per day, the UGC guidelines imply five hours of physical presence on campus. According to the UGC Regulations 2018, the workload for full-time teachers is 40 hours per week over 30 working weeks per year. Teachers must be available for at least five hours daily at the university/college.

## Sell fish, meat around Ahmedabad airport, face 3 months' jail: Civic body shuts market to prevent bird strikes

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

The Holi Chakla area on Civil Hospital Road, where one can see the underbelly of planes taking off from the Ahmedabad airport, is also known for its bustling fish market. Earlier this week, however, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) banned the sale of fish and meat in the Chamanpura fish market and the Holi Chakla area in an attempt to tackle an over-decade-old problem. Violations of the ban could attract up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000.

The move came in response to repeated safety concerns raised by airport authorities. The concerns were heightened after the Air India crash last year that killed 260 people on June 12, when a Boeing 737 headed to London crashed minutes before take-off.

The civic body has directed vendors operating in this temporary fish market, barely 5-7 kilometres from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport (SVPI), to stop selling

fish if they do not want to relocate.

On Thursday, the AMC put up boards in these areas imposing the ban under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, stating, "Fish, chicken and meat attract birds like hawks and vultures which increases chances of bird strikes with airplanes. Since the said area is a plane take-off and landing way, as per Section 25 (2) of The Indian Aviation Act-2024 and Rules 91 of The Aircraft Rules-1937, in order to prevent any disaster from happening here within a radius of 10 km from the aerodrome



reference point, it is hereby expressly prohibited to allow vendors and shopkeepers selling fish and meat in the said place."

The temporary fish market in Asarwa falls in the funnel area of the airport route that involves landings and take-offs, and has been controversial since 2012 due to bird activity. With women mostly engaged in vending, and the market being temporary, no concrete steps had been taken until now.

'Dogs, monkeys and birds spotted on runway'

The decision to remove the fish market was taken in the last meeting of the Airport Environment Committee held on March 10, authorities revealed. Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner Banchhanidhi Pani told The Indian Express, "Bird activity increases due to the fish market, which is not permissible near the airport area. Thus, the sale of fish has to be stopped. There have been communications from the airport authorities and the environment committee.

## National Lok Adalat disposes of over 19,000 cases in Chandigarh, Rs 14.25-crore settlements reached

Chandigarh.(Agency)

More than 19,004 cases, including pre-litigation matters, pending disputes and traffic challans, were disposed of during the National Lok Adalat held at the District Courts Complex in Chandigarh's Sector 43 on Saturday, with settlements amounting to over Rs 14.25 crore.

Organised by the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Chandigarh, under the aegis of the National Legal Services Authority, the National Lok Adalat, comprising 13 benches headed by serving judicial officers, took up matters relating to criminal compoundable cases, cheque bounce cases under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, bank recovery matters, motor accident claim cases, matrimonial disputes, labour disputes, arbitration matters, municipal issues and traffic challans. According to

officials, a total settlement amount of Rs 14,25,45,851 was reached during the proceedings.

Among the matters disposed of were 10,595 pre-litigation cases involving an amount of Rs 6.95 lakh, 17 labour dispute cases involving Rs 20 lakh, and 63 matters before the State and District Consumer Commissions involving settlements worth Rs 5.46 crore. In addition, 26 cases before the Debt Recovery Tribunal-II, Chandigarh, involving Rs 9.71 crore, were settled. The



Tehsildar (Revenue), Chandigarh, also disposed of 2,102 mutation cases during the Lok Adalat.

The proceedings were conducted under the guidance of Punjab and Haryana High Court's Justice Harsimran Singh Sethi, while Chief Justice Sheel Nagu is the Patron-in-Chief of the State Legal Services Authority, Chandigarh.

During the Lok Adalat, Justice Sethi also intervened in a matrimonial dispute pending before the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge Puneet Mohan Sharma and stressed that "the welfare of a minor child remains the paramount consideration in such disputes". The parties sought time for an amicable resolution. Officials said four matrimonial disputes were settled during the Lok Adalat, with the parties agreeing to reconcile and resume living together. One case pending for more than 10 years was also disposed of.

## 'Tipu Sultan circle' naming row sparks violence in AP's Kadapa

As tension escalated in Almaspet, Kadapa police conducted a lathi-charge after members of two communities allegedly began pelting stones at each other.

KADAPA.(Agency)

Several persons, including Taluka CI Narasimha Raju, sustained injuries after members of two communities allegedly pelted stones at each other in the Almaspet area of Kadapa city on Saturday, forcing police to conduct a lathi-charge to restore order.

Police said members of Hindu and Muslim groups gathered near a traffic circle in Almaspet and raised slogans against each other for several hours. As tension escalated in Almaspet, Kadapa police conducted a lathi-charge after members of two communities allegedly began pelting stones at each other.

The CI sustained head injuries in the violence and police shifted him to hospital. Several constables and members of both groups also suffered injuries. The clashes damaged police vehicles, while stones and water

bottles littered roads.

According to local sources, the dispute began over the naming of a newly modernised traffic circle. Muslim groups demanded that authorities



name the junction "Tipu Sultan Circle".

During the Assembly election campaign, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had announced the same, and the YSRCP-led civic body passed a resolution supporting proposal. However, municipal

authorities never notified the name. BJP, RSS and VHP leaders opposed the proposal, intensifying tensions ahead of Hanuman Jayanthi celebrations. Hindu organisations later objected after unidentified persons allegedly pasted stickers on flex referring to junction as 'Hanuman Circle.'

Vigil strengthened after Almaspet unrest

Collector Sridhar Cherukuri and SP Shelke Vishwanath on Saturday said authorities had tightened security and imposed preventive measures to maintain law and order in Kadapa district following unrest in Almaspet Circle. Cherukuri, Vishwanath and Joint Collector Nidhi Meena visited the affected area and reviewed the situation. The officials said anti-social elements appeared to have triggered the violence and described the incident as unfortunate in a city known.

## Poll bets go viral in Kerala as man gifts cow, boy shaves head after election results

Videos of supporters honouring their bets after the election results are now flooding social media, turning political rivalry into a festival of humour, sportsmanship and viral moments.

MALAPPURAM.(Agency)

The assembly election campaign witnessed several unusual and friendly bets among rival supporters, many of which are now going viral on social media after results were announced.

In Poonjar, NDA candidate P C George had boldly declared that he was ready to bet Rs 1 crore on his victory. In Beypore, UDF candidate P V Anvar promised to shave his head, wear earrings and walk through SM Street if he lost the election. Though both leaders later toned down their statements, party workers and supporters, especially from the LDF camp, went ahead with their own dramatic wagers linked to the poll outcome. In Tirur, a dairy farmer and CPM

sympathiser handed over his cow, reportedly yielding 16 litres of milk a day, to his friend, an IUML worker, after losing a friendly election bet. K Mahesh, a native of Niramathur Pathambad, had promised to gift one of his cows if the LDF lost power. The wager was made with Kunmath Mustafa, a Muslim League activist from Vettam panchayat in Kannur.

"I was confident that the welfare and development projects implemented by the Left government would translate into votes and help the LDF return to power for a third term. Otherwise, I had promised Mustafa one of my five milch cows," Mahesh said. "Mustafa had also promised



me his cow if the UDF failed to win. After the results were announced, I called him and asked him to come and collect the cow." In another incident in Tirur, an eight-year-old boy named Muhammed Zain Aman shaved his head after CPM candidate V Abdurahiman lost the

election. The boy had placed a bet with his father that he would shave his head if Abdurahiman lost. True to his word, Aman went ahead with the head shave after the results were declared. "I will keep my word. I'm a comrade," the boy said proudly.

The incident gained attention after his father shared a video of the tonsure on Facebook. Aman's declaration quickly won admiration among CPM workers on social media. CPM state secretary M V Govindan even called the boy to congratulate him. Meanwhile, CPM sympathiser and influencer Iqbal Thillankery, based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia shaved half his head and beard.

## Widening organ mafia finds willing partners in some private hospitals in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

A gang busted for organ trafficking in Kochi has cast a long shadow over a section of private hospitals. Investigators and health officials said the racket could not have functioned without hospital support, pointing to a systemic failure at the heart of the state's organ transplant oversight.

Kerala State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (KSOTTO), the government agency overseeing transplantation, has revealed that some private hospitals are facilitating organ donations from unrelated donors in violation of regulations.

The modus operandi, according to officials, involves mafia networks luring economically backward people with money to part with their organs for transplanting into patients who can afford the procedure. Of the 59 licensed transplant hospitals in the state, some are suspected of bypassing the approval process entirely.

The gap in oversight is stark. While KSOTTO receives monthly reports of transplant surgeries conducted across hospitals, there is no mechanism to verify whether a hospital has performed a live organ transplant without the mandatory paperwork. "Some hospitals could be bypassing the regulations and carrying out organ donations from unrelated donors," said Dr Noble Gracious, Executive Director of KSOTTO.

Under the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, buying or selling organs for money is illegal. The law requires applicants seeking unrelated live organ donations to obtain approval from district authorisation committees, and approach a state committee if rejected. Yet sources said the system is riddled with inconsistencies. Courts, administrators and lawmakers often take a lenient view when approving what is framed as a life-saving procedure.

## PGI develops rapid prosthetic eye protocol for paediatric eye cancer

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Doctors at the PGI, Chandigarh, have developed a new technique that allows customised artificial eyes to be fitted in children within 24 hours after surgical removal of the eye, offering faster rehabilitation for young retinoblastoma patients, according to a PGI communique.

The research, conducted by the institute's Department for Oral Health Sciences Centre and Advanced Eye Centre, focuses on children suffering from retinoblastoma, a rare but aggressive eye cancer in children, in which removal of the affected eye is often necessary to save life.

Conventionally, fitting an ocular prosthesis in infants and toddlers is a lengthy and difficult process, as young children are often unable to cooperate during examination and socket measurements. This frequently leads to multiple hospital visits and delays in rehabilitation, it said.

To address this, the PGI team developed a new Examination Under Anaesthesia (EUA)-based protocol that enables doctors to take an impression of the eye socket while the child is under anaesthesia, during the same treatment session. The process also allows early initiation of customised ocular prosthesis fabrication, significantly reducing treatment time. The study included five children aged between six months and three years and 11 months, who required prosthetic rehabilitation after enucleation surgery. Doctors customised the artificial eyes to match the colour, size and facial profile of the unaffected eye, achieving better cosmetic outcomes and maintaining facial symmetry, according to the communique.

## NEWS BOX

## Sanju Samson puts full stop to CSK captaincy noise: Don't go to new home with demands

New Delhi. (Agency)

Sanju Samson seems to have put a full stop to the Chennai Super Kings captaincy rumours with a simple message. Samson was traded in from the Rajasthan Royals ahead of the IPL 2026 season in a trade deal worth Rs. 18 Crore, with many feeling he would come into the team as the new skipper, replacing Ruturaj Gaikwad.

Pundits have commented on the possibility of Samson getting the CSK captaincy in the future, with R Ashwin saying that the wicketkeeper will be the skipper of the five-time IPL champions in a few years time.

"I'm no astrologer, but I do see Sanju captaining CSK at some stage. I don't know when, but I feel it could happen," said Ashwin. Now, Samson himself has talked about all the chatter around him and CSK captaincy. In the latest episode of the Super Kings podcast, Samson told Abhinav



Mukund that he didn't want to come to a new home with a lot of demands

"I already had a team. I was already settled in a place. So I wanted to come out of there and join another team. In that kind of transaction, you can't actually have demands. Honestly, when you are trying to get into a new home, you don't go there with demands — that's what I've learned, to be very honest."

"You go there and try to prove your worth. You try to behave the way you are, perform to the maximum, and then take things forward from there," said Samson.

## THE MALAYALI ETHOS

Samson pointed out in his Malayali roots and the work ethic of the people from Kerala, who work in different places around the globe for many years.

"And there's another thing as well. Like in Chennai, there are a lot of people working from different places. There are many Malayalis here.

## Daniel Dubois shakes off knockdowns, stops Fabio Wardley to become two-time heavyweight champion



MANCHESTER. (Agency)

Daniel Dubois showed up late, got knocked down early and still beat Fabio Wardley to become a two-time heavyweight champion on Saturday. Dubois stopped Wardley in the 11th round to win the WBO heavyweight title at the Co-op Live arena after reportedly being delayed by traffic on his arrival.

Wardley dropped Dubois (23-3, 22 KOs) just 10 seconds into the bout with an overhand right, and again in the third round, but the former IBF champion rebounded both times and dominated from there by landing heavy rights that produced swelling and bleeding on Wardley's face. "I know I've got heart, bundles of heart, I'm a warrior in there," said Dubois, whose resolve had been questioned in the past. "What a great fight, what a great battle. I'm No. 1 again."

Wardley absorbed blow after blow without going down before referee Howard Foster halted the bout early in the 11th.

It's the first professional loss for Wardley (20-1-1, 19 KOs). He was making his first title defense. He's a durable guy... a great warrior," Dubois said. "It was an honor to be in the ring with him." Dubois lost his IBF belt to Oleksandr Usyk via a fifth-round knockout at Wembley Stadium last July. It was his second loss to Usyk.

Dubois could be on a collision course with rising star Moses Itauma, who was ringside. WBO president Gustavo Olivieri has said after Itauma's demolition of Jermaine Franklin he'll recommend the British southpaw become the WBO mandatory challenger. Frank Warren, the promoter for both Dubois and Wardley, said in the ring, however, that there's a rematch clause in the contract. Usyk holds the WBA, WBC and IBF belts. The 39-year-old Ukrainian's next bout is against former kickboxing champion Rico Verhoeven on May 23 at the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt.

Chelli stuns Morrell on undercard London light heavyweight Zak Chelli scored a big upset by stopping Cuban southpaw David Morrell in the 10th round.

## Carried Dhoni's Boost bottle cutout: When long-haired Mahi left young Samson in awe

**Sanju Samson said sharing the CSK dressing room with MS Dhoni feels like living a childhood dream. Samson recalled as a kid he was starstruck by a long-haired Dhoni and shared how he carried the cutout of the CSK legend in his personal diary.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Sanju Samson said he is living every kid's dream, sharing the CSK dressing room with MS Dhoni and recalled being left in awe of the Indian legend during his childhood. Samson has been an ardent fan of Dhoni for a long time and has openly talked about coming to CSK and spending time with the former Indian captain. During the latest episode of the Super Kings podcast, Samson revealed the story about how his fandom of



Dhoni started. The wicketkeeper said he was a young kid when he first saw Dhoni play while sporting his iconic long hair look. "I was in 4th or 5th standard, very small then. I

remember seeing this guy with long hair walking out to bat for India. He would get out in a couple of games and then suddenly score a hundred against Pakistan. He scored 183,

then he kept scoring big runs after that. From that moment, I became a huge fan of his," said Samson. Samson revealed that he became such a big fan of Dhoni, that he started carrying the cutout of the legendary wicketkeeper from popular kids drink, Boost, on his personal diary.

"He was everywhere after that — posters, media, advertisements. He used to feature in Boost ads. At home, we used to drink Boost and there was a sticker on the bottle. I remember cutting Mahi bhai's face out from that sticker and sticking it on my diary," said Samson. "FEEL FORTUNATE TO BE HERE"

The CSK star revealed that he frequently chats with Dhoni and the IPL legend advises him constantly. "From that moment to where I am now, what more can I say? I sit with him, talk with him, play games with him, go to his room and ask him anything I want. He advises me as well. It's been a dream, actually more than a dream. I feel any kid would dream about this and I feel very fortunate to be here," said Samson.

Samson has scored 402 runs in 10 matches while Dhoni is yet to feature in a game for LSG.

## RCB vs MI Preview: Bengaluru seek answers in Raipur as Virat Kohli looks to find form

New Delhi. (Agency)

The IPL playoff race enters a crucial phase on Sunday with a double-header that could significantly shape the points table, with several teams still fighting to secure their place in the top four. Royal Challengers Bengaluru will be looking to get their campaign back on track when they face the Mumbai Indians at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium in Raipur. RCB remain firmly in the playoff hunt, but recent results have slowed their momentum at an important stage of the season. Virat Kohli's lack of runs has added to their concerns, especially with Phil Salt's injury disrupting the balance at the top of the order. Mumbai, meanwhile, appears to be finding rhythm at the right time and will see this as a chance to strengthen their own playoff push.

Earlier in the day, Chennai Super Kings will host Lucknow Super Giants at a packed Chepauk in another high-stakes contest. Lucknow head into the clash with renewed confidence after ending their losing streak with a big win over RCB, while Chennai will know another setback could seriously dent their qualification hopes. With playoff spots still up for grabs, Sunday promises

two matches with plenty on the line. CAN MI GET THEIR STARS FIRING TOGETHER?

Much has been said about the Mumbai Indians this season, but on paper, they still boast one of the strongest playing XIs in the competition. The challenge has been turning



that potential into consistent performances. Rohit Sharma's return from injury was a major boost, but the veteran opener looking in excellent touch, and Mumbai will hope he continues to lead the charge with the

bat. Suryakumar Yadav's inconsistent returns remain a concern, even though he has shown in recent games that quick starts are not the issue. The key may be giving himself a little more time rather than forcing the pace too early. Captain Hardik Pandya, meanwhile, is yet to have the kind of influence he enjoyed during his Gujarat Titans stint. Mumbai will need him to step up as both leader and all-round performer to keep their playoff hopes firmly alive. But before all that he would need to prove that he is fit and ready to play.

IS ATTACK THE BEST DEFENCE FOR RCB?

Following their defeat in the previous game, Rajat Patidar said Royal Challengers Bengaluru did not want to adopt a defensive mindset. While that intent reflects a positive approach, T20 cricket is not always about constant aggression. There are phases in a game where soaking up pressure and waiting for the right moment to counterattack can be just as effective.

That is where RCB may need to reassess their approach, especially with Virat Kohli struggling for rhythm. Kohli has never been a batter who needs to force the pace from ball one.

## Champions, undelivered: Why Indian sport needs a Zomato moment

BARCELONA. (Agency)

The Instagram story was twelve words long. "Back home now. As usual, no one knows what happened over the past two weeks, and it seems like no one really cares." Satwiksairaj Rankireddy posted it after the Indian badminton team returned from Horsens, Denmark, with a Thomas Cup bronze medal and no reception to speak of. No official, no fan, no camera. The post went viral. The debate has raged on. India will move on from this. But Chirag Shetty, Satwik's doubles partner, the other half of the most successful men's doubles pair in Indian badminton history, did not move on. He sat down and spoke. Not with the raw grief of a man who had just landed from a long, deflating flight. But with the measured, almost weary clarity of someone who has been carrying this thought for a long time and has finally decided to put it down on the table. "I honestly feel more people recognise me in



Malaysia or Indonesia than they do in India," he tells IndiaToday.in. For a country of 1.4 billion people, one that has produced precious few world-beaters across sports, that is not just an irony. It is an indictment. What he said was not a complaint. It was a diagnosis. THE 1983 THAT INDIA FORGOT There is a number that stops you when Chirag says it: 75.

"As Prannoy also said, people don't realise Thomas Cup is basically badminton's equivalent of a World Cup. It's one of the oldest tournaments in the sport after the All England Championships. It has a 75-year history," he adds. India, in 2022, won that tournament for the first time. They beat Malaysia, then Denmark, then Indonesia, the 14-time champions and defending title-holders, to lift a trophy that had existed since 1948 and had never once had an Indian name on it. Then they returned home, were felicitated by the Prime Minister, and watched the moment quietly dissolve into the background noise of the IPL season.

## GT consistency better than Vaibhav Sooryavanshi destruction: Hayden's blunt take

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Matthew Hayden was one of the most destructive batters in world cricket during his playing career, but the current Gujarat Titans batting coach would prefer his top three's consistency over the Vaibhav Sooryavanshi carnage. Hayden made the comments during the press conference after GT's thumping win over RR in Jaipur on Saturday, May 9. During the game, Sooryavanshi scored 36 runs off 16 balls to give RR the initial take-off, but was dismissed in the third over. At the same time, Sai Sudharsan and Shubman Gill scored fifties and put on a 118-run stand in 65 balls. Gill batted till the 17th over, scoring 84 off 44 balls. Hayden said that while it was exciting to see a talent like Sooryavanshi and his blistering cameos, in a 200-plus chase, batting deep is very important. The GT batting coach praised the

trinity of Gill, Sudharsan and Buttler for constantly going at a 150 strike-rate in the tournament and playing Test and ODI-type



cricket rather than being swayed by the pull of explosive batting. "Well, tonight was a good example, right, of an exciting young talent in Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. He batted, got 30 runs at a strike rate of 300. But when you're chasing 220 odd, you need to bat longer and deeper. So the advantage that we

have is that we get players, like the top three that you mentioned, who are striking at 150.

"Let me tell you as a batter, that is really hard, and they're doing it for a long period of time, they're constantly getting into the back half of the game, not just batting inside the powerplay. They're going right through with their fitness and their ability to be able to really play Test match-type cricket, and ODI cricket in particular. "So, I love the fact that we're going about constructing in innings. Tonight, where we're setting a target, which is a different challenge for us, we've had a number of totals in that sort of 160 range. Which I would back our batting to get through any day of the week, so it was nice tonight to have that bit of a challenge against an X factor team like Rajasthan Royals, and to come out on top was really important for us," said Hayden.

## Deepika Kumari stars as Indian recurve archery team clinches World Cup gold

**India's women's recurve team beat China in a shoot-off to win World Cup gold in Shanghai. The comeback, driven by Deepika Kumari's leadership amid coaching uncertainty, ended India's wait for this title.**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

India's women's recurve team produced a stunning comeback under pressure to defeat hosts China in a dramatic shoot-off and win the gold medal at Stage 2 of the Archery World Cup in Shanghai on Sunday. The trio of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and

teenage sensation Kumkum Mohod overcame the home side 5-4 after prevailing 28-26 in the tie-breaker following a fiercely contested final that ended 4-4 after regulation. The triumph carried extra significance for the Indian side, which had earlier knocked out powerhouse South Korea — winners of 10 Olympic gold medals in the discipline — in the semifinals. It marked India's first women's recurve team title at a World Cup event since 2021.

Deepika, a veteran of India's successful World Cup campaigns in Guatemala City and Paris in 2021, added another milestone to her decorated career, claiming her seventh World Cup team gold medal overall. The medal also ended a three-year wait for the Indian women's recurve team at the World Cup level, with their previous podium finish coming in Paris in 2023. India's medal tally in Shanghai had already begun on a positive note after compound archer Sahil Jadhav secured bronze a day earlier. The country

also remained in the hunt for another medal, with Simranjeet Kaur reaching the recurve semifinals and moving within touching



distance of her first individual World Cup podium finish.

DEEPIKA SHINES FOR INDIA

Competing without a permanent national coach due to the ongoing uncertainty around appointments, the Indian women relied heavily on Deepika's leadership and experience throughout the contest. While designated coach Prafull Dange stayed

mostly on the sidelines, Deepika constantly encouraged and guided the team during crucial moments against a partisan crowd and an energetic Chinese support staff.

China fielded a young lineup featuring Zhu Jingyi, Huang Yuwei and teenage archer Yu Qi, all relatively new to the World Cup circuit. India started strongly and narrowly captured the opening set 54-53, with Deepika leading the way through consecutive 10s. Ankita and Kumkum, however, showed signs of inconsistency early on. The momentum shifted in the second set. Although India briefly held an advantage midway through the round, China responded with a superb finish to register 55 points. India faltered at the end, and Deepika's final arrow landed in the 7-ring, allowing the hosts to level the scores at 2-2. China then edged ahead in the third set after a successful review upgraded one of their arrows from an 8 to a 9, giving them a slender 57-56 set win and a 4-2 overall lead.



# Nora Fatehi

To Perform At FIFA World Cup 2026 Opening Ceremony In Toronto, Joins Star-Studded Lineup

Nora Fatehi is set to perform and sing at the FIFA World Cup 2026 Opening Ceremony, which will take place on 12th June 2026 at BMO Field in Toronto, Canada marking another major milestone in her international journey. The appearance further cements her growing presence on one of the world's biggest and most-watched entertainment and sporting platforms.

### Nora Fatehi Among Star-Studded Lineup for FIFA World Cup 2026 Opening Ceremony

The star-studded lineup was officially announced today, on May 9. Nora will join an exciting global lineup featuring Alanis Morissette, Alessia Cara, Elyanna, Jessie Reyez, Michael Bublé, Sanjoy, Vegedream, and William Prince. Meanwhile, the USA opening ceremony lineup includes global music icons Anitta, Future, Katy Perry, Lisa, Rema, and Tyla, making FIFA World Cup 2026 a spectacular blend of international music, culture, and entertainment.

Her inclusion in the lineup highlights her rising stature as an internationally recognised performer with a strong cross-cultural appeal.

Having previously delivered a memorable showcase during FIFA World Cup celebrations in 2022, Nora's return to the global stage reflects the increasing demand for her as a performer who seamlessly blends music, dance, and stage spectacle.

Over the years, Nora Fatehi has built a strong association with international stages and global sporting events, including appearances linked to the T20 World Cup. Her upcoming act at the FIFA World Cup 2026 Opening Ceremony is expected to be another defining moment in her global career.

As she takes the stage in Toronto alongside internationally celebrated artists, all eyes will be on Nora Fatehi as she brings her signature energy, music, and performance power to one of the grandest spectacles in the world.

Meanwhile, Nora Fatehi is also gearing up for the release of her I-Pop track 'Body Roll' featuring Honey Singh, dropping today. With its global appeal, the track has already created massive anticipation among audiences worldwide.



## Neetu Kapoor Reveals Raha Kapoor Is 'Scared' Of Her Mom Alia Bhatt, Calls Ranbir Kapoor Her 'Friend'



Veteran actress Neetu Kapoor is currently enjoying rave reviews for her performance in Daadi Ki Shaadi. The film, also starring Kapil Sharma, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, and Sadia Khateeb, hit theatres on May 8, and it has been receiving positive reviews from the audience. Recently, while promoting the film, Neetu Kapoor candidly opened up about her granddaughter Raha Kapoor. The veteran actress also showered praise on Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor for the way they are raising their daughter. During her appearance on Soha Ali Khan's podcast, Neetu Kapoor spoke about Raha's bond with Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor. She said, "Raha listens to Alia and she is a great mother, but Ranbir is like a friend to her. He does all the fun and masti with her, but she is very scared of her mother because Alia is a disciplinarian." Praising Alia's parenting style, Neetu Kapoor shared that the actress is extremely good with her daughter and is focused on teaching her the right values, including limiting television and avoiding unnecessary distractions.

The veteran actress also humorously revealed that she often has playful disagreements with Alia over pampering Raha too much. She added, "I am always fighting with her, saying, 'Alia, at least let me give her one chocolate.' But she says, 'No, can't you understand sugar is not good for her?' I tell her, 'It's okay, I am the grandmother, let me spoil her.'"

When asked whether children are generally closer to their maternal grandmothers than their paternal grandmothers, Neetu shared her perspective on the subject. She explained that mothers often speak more about their own mothers, which naturally helps build a stronger bond. However, Neetu added that she feels fortunate because the family lives together, allowing her to share a close relationship with Raha Kapoor, who affectionately calls her "Dida." Ranbir and Alia, who dated each other for quite some time, tied the knot in April 2022. Later in the same year, in November, they welcomed their little bundle of joy, Raha.

## Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai: Varun Dhawan And Pooja Hegde Chemistry Shine In Tera Ho Jaun Song



The makers of Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai have finally released the romantic track Tera Ho Jaun, and fans are already loving the sizzling chemistry between Varun Dhawan and Pooja Hegde. Packed with dreamy visuals, lyrics and music, the song offers a glimpse into the film's romantic side and has quickly become viral. Recently, Varun Dhawan shared a behind-the-scenes video of the romantic track. Taking to his Instagram handle, Varun Dhawan shared the BTS video and wrote, "@stenben so excited for first song, You and @jonitamusik have taken the song to another level.. song out tomorrow." Saif Ali Khan also was seen promoting the song wow. The actor shared the video in which Saif was seen praising the song.

Initially scheduled to hit theatres on June 5, the film's release date went through multiple changes. It was first pushed to June 12 after Yash announced Toxic for a June 4 release to avoid a clash with Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar 2. Later, the makers surprised fans by preponing the release to May 22, weeks ahead of its original date. However, on April 29, Varun Dhawan dropped a new poster confirming that Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai will now release on June 5 after all. The reshuffle came after Yash shared a detailed note on social media announcing that Toxic would no longer arrive on June 4, prompting the team behind the Varun Dhawan starrer to revert to its initial release plan.

Made under the direction of David Dhawan, "Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai" will feature Varun in the lead role, along with Mrunal Thakur and Pooja Hegde as the female leads. Additionally, Rakesh Bedi, Mouni Roy, Chunky Panday, Jimmy Shergill, and Manish Paul will also be a part of the movie's ancillary cast.

On the work front, Pooja was last seen in Retro, alongside Suriya Sivakumar. She has an exciting lineup ahead. The actress will feature in Jana Nayagan starring Thalapaty Vijay. She is also set to appear opposite Dulquer Salmaan in DQ 41, the tentative title marking his 41st film. In Bollywood, she is gearing up for Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai, directed by David Dhawan and co-starring Varun Dhawan and Mrunal Thakur, slated for a June 5 release.

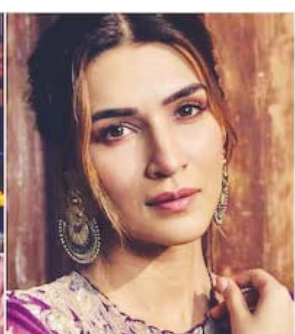
# Kriti Sanon

Says She Would Love To Star In Rekha's Biopic: 'She's The Ultimate Baddie'

Kriti Sanon has expressed her admiration for veteran actress Rekha, saying she would love to portray her in a biopic if given the chance. In a recent interview, Kriti called Rekha the 'ultimate baddie', and said that she admires her personality, intelligence, and life journey. While she admitted that she looks nothing like the veteran actress, she said that she would love to portray her.

### Kriti Sanon On Wanting To Play Rekha In Her Biopic

In an interview with GQ India, Kriti Sanon was asked whose biopic she would love to star in. She replied, "Rekha. She's the ultimate baddie. I know I look nothing like her, but I love



her. Her heart, her guts, her aura. She's warm, intelligent, and has lived life on her own terms."

Meanwhile, in the same interview, Kriti also opened up about the ups and downs she faced in her acting journey. She recalled going through phases of frustration and wanting to do better roles before starring in

'Mimi'. "There were roles I came very close to that eventually went to star kids, something that was beyond my control. When you don't come from a film background, there's a great amount of uncertainty you have to deal with. It has been a process of gradual growth, with me taking risks and making more intentional choices. I have earned every opportunity; nothing has been handed to me," she said.

She also revealed making mistakes, and doing films because they seemed significant, despite knowing they didn't offer much for her as an actor. "There was a phase where nothing was working, and it felt confusing. However, I am grateful for that period, because it gave me clarity on what I do not want to pursue. Failures teach you far more than success does," she said. On the work front, she is currently gearing up for the release of her upcoming film Cocktail 2, alongside Shahid Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna. The film is set to release on June 19.



## NEWS BOX

## Militia kill at least 69 in northeast of DR Congo

BUNIA. (Agency)

A militia attack killed at least 69 people in Ituri province in the troubled northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, local and security sources told AFP Saturday. It was just the latest in a series of attacks in Ituri, a gold-rich province that borders Uganda which has suffered years of deadly conflict. Armed men affiliated with the Codeco militia (Cooperative for the Development of Congo) carried out the attack at the end of April, said the sources. The lack of security in the zone because of the continued presence of Codeco fighters delayed the recovery of the bodies for several days, they added. Security sources put the toll at 69 dead but a local civil protection official, Dieudonne Losa, told AFP that more than 70 people had been killed.

The Codeco militia claims to defend the rights of the mainly farming Lendu community, notably against the mainly pastoral Hema community. Another armed group active in the province, the Convention for the Popular Revolution (CRP), says it fights for the Hema community. They are just two of several armed groups active in the area, which also include the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a group formed by former Ugandan rebels that has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group (IS). Local and security sources on Thursday said ADF fighters killed at least 36 people in two days of attacks in Ituri and North Kivu. Since 2021, the Ugandan army has, alongside the Congolese military, been deployed in the northern part of North Kivu and in Ituri to fight the ADF.

The Congolese army sometimes uses Codeco as an auxiliary force. Earlier on Saturday, the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo warned of a "deadly" wave of attacks in the country's restive east targeting civilians.

## Faint Meow In Mississippi Tornado Rubble Leads To Stunning Rescue

Mississippi. (Agency)

As storm chaser Ashton Lemley picked his way through a tornado-ravaged Mississippi trailer park, he heard the unmistakable meow of a kitten pierce the predawn darkness. The homes were flattened just hours earlier as storms spawned at least three tornadoes across the bottom half of Mississippi, injuring a dozen at the trailer park in the rural community of Bogue Chitto.

Lemley had no idea where the kitten was, but he was determined to find it. After a few minutes, the meowing stopped, and Lemley feared the worst.

Then, five minutes later, he heard it again.

"I said, 'Oh, he's still alive!'" Lemley told The Associated Press on Thursday. Lemley quickly dug under insulation from a flattened wall until his flashlight beam found the kitten — wet, scared and hiding between two wooden posts. Lemley captured the moment on video: "Oh my goodness, I found him!" he says to the camera. "Are you OK? Come here — it's OK. ... We'll get you cleaned up, baby. Don't you worry. Lemley held the kitten in his arms for a few minutes before handing it off to the commander of the United Cajun Navy, a volunteer disaster-response group, who dried it off and took it to safety. Lemley marveled that it didn't appear to be injured. "I've been in these situations so many times," said Lemley, who has been chasing storms since 2010. "I don't try to get overly emotional. But it is very heartbreaking to see any type of animal or human go through something like that."

## Israel Built And Defended A Secret Base In Iraq For Iran War: Report

World. (Agency)

Israel set up a clandestine military outpost in the Iraqi desert to support its air campaign against Iran and launched airstrikes against Iraqi troops who nearly discovered it, the Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday, citing people familiar with the matter including U.S. officials.

Israel built the installation, which housed special forces and served as a logistical hub for the Israeli air force, with the knowledge of the U.S. just before the start of the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran, the newspaper said. It also included search-and-rescue teams positioned to assist any downed Israeli pilots, the Journal said.

Reuters could not independently verify the report. There was no immediate response from the Israeli prime minister's office to a Reuters request for comment. The base was almost discovered in early March after Iraqi state media said a local shepherd



reported unusual military activity, including helicopter movements in the area. Iraqi troops were dispatched to investigate, but Israeli forces used airstrikes to keep them at a distance and prevent the site from being discovered, the paper said, citing one of the sources. The Journal cited a complaint filed with the United Nations later in March in which Iraq said the attack involved foreign forces and airstrikes and attributed it to the U.S. The WSJ cited a person familiar with the matter as saying the United States was not involved in the attack.

## Putin says Ukraine war winding down, blasts West for backing Kyiv

**Moscow and Kyiv traded accusations of violations, but no major strikes were reported, despite continued drone activity and civilian casualties on both sides.**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (Agency)

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday said the war in Ukraine was winding down, slamming Western support for Kyiv, as the first day of a US-brokered ceasefire was marked by mutual accusations of violations. Putin spoke after telling soldiers at the scaled-down parade in Moscow that they were fighting an "aggressive force" in Ukraine, backed by all of NATO and describing his war goals as "just". The Russian leader has made the memory of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II a central

narrative of his 25-year rule and repeatedly invoked it to justify his Ukraine offensive. Russian authorities typically mark the Victory Day parade with pomp and grandeur. But a spate of Ukrainian long-range attacks in recent weeks prompted the Kremlin to ramp up security measures and downsize this year's celebrations. When asked after the parade whether the Western military aid to Ukraine had gone too far, Putin said: "They started ratcheting up the confrontation with Russia, which continues to this day."

"I think it (the conflict) is heading to an end but it's still a serious matter."

"They spent months waiting for Russia to suffer a crushing defeat, for its statehood to collapse. It didn't work out."

"And then they got stuck in that groove and now they can't get out of it," Putin said, referring to the Western countries.

Putin added he was ready to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a third country only once all conditions for a potential peace agreement were settled. Ceasefire violations

After two failed attempts at truces this week by both Russia and Ukraine, US President Donald Trump on Friday announced that a three-day ceasefire between both sides



would come into effect from Saturday.

Moscow and Kyiv traded accusations of violations, but no major strikes were reported, despite continued drone activity and civilian casualties on both sides.

"Hopefully, it is the beginning of the end of a very long, deadly, and hard fought War," Trump posted on his Truth Social network, adding the ceasefire would be accompanied by a prisoner exchange.

The Kremlin said that as of now there were no plans to prolong the truce. The warring sides also agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners each during the truce. But Putin said Saturday that Russia had not yet received any proposals from Ukraine on the exchange. Scaled-down parade

The parade was vastly smaller compared to previous years, with no military hardware on display for the first time in nearly two decades and only a handful of foreign dignitaries in attendance — most of them leaders of Russia's close allies.

In an address to the parade, attended by Russian military units as well as soldiers from North Korea, Putin invoked the Soviet victory to rally support for his army in Ukraine. "The great feat of the generation of victors inspires the soldiers carrying out the goals of the special military operation today," Putin said. "They are confronting an aggressive force armed and supported by the entire NATO bloc. And despite this, our heroes move forward," he said. "I firmly believe that our cause is just," he added later.

## Car bomb attack on checkpoint kills at least 12 in northwest Pakistan

PESHAWAR. (Agency)

Militants detonated a car bomb at a checkpoint in northwestern Pakistan and opened fire on police, killing at least 12 and wounding five, officials said on Sunday. "Last night in the Fateh Khel area of Bannu, a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a police checkpoint, after which multiple militants entered the post," Bannu police official Muhammad Sajjad Khan told AFP. He said that 12 officers were confirmed dead with one more missing, the latest attack in the border province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during a wave of militancy that has strained ties between Islamabad and Kabul.

Gunmen stormed the police checkpoint after the car blast, opening fire, according to officials who said they



also used small drones in the attack. "During the assault, the militants used quadcopters along with heavy weaponry," a senior administrative

official in Bannu told AFP on condition of anonymity. "In addition, while retreating, the attackers took police personnel and weapons from the station with them," he added. Bannu has been gripped in recent years by militant activity that has grown across Pakistan's border regions. The Taliban government in Kabul denies Pakistan's accusations that Afghan territory is a safe harbour for militants, but the frosty relationship has

spiralled into deadly armed conflict, including Pakistani airstrikes on cities in Afghanistan in recent months.

## Israeli drone strikes near Beirut kill four, southern airstrikes kill at least 13

BEIRUT. (Agency)

Three Israeli drone strikes on vehicles just south of Beirut on Saturday killed four people while a series of airstrikes on southern Lebanon killed at least 13, including a man and his 12-year-old daughter, state media and the Health Ministry said. The three drone strikes south of Beirut marked another escalation since a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect on April 17. Both Israel and Hezbollah have continued their daily attacks despite the truce. On Wednesday night, Israel's air force carried out an airstrike on a southern suburb in which Israel said it killed a senior Hezbollah military official. It was the first strike near the capital since the ceasefire was reached. Two of the strikes on Saturday took place on the highway linking Beirut with the southern port city of Sidon in which several people were wounded, while the third happened on a road leading to Lebanon's Chouf region killing three, the state-run National News Agency said. An Associated Press journalist at the scene saw a dead body on the highway in the town of Saadiyat. The Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike on the southern village of Saksakiyeh killed at least

seven, including a child, and wounded 15. The ministry said this was an initial count. The agency reported strikes in southern Lebanon, including one on the village of Bouj Rahhal that killed three and another in Maifadoun that killed one. The Health Ministry, meanwhile, said three Israeli drone



strikes killed a Syrian man who was riding a motorcycle with his 12-year-old daughter in the city of Nabatiyeh. The ministry said that after the initial strike, the man and his daughter managed to move away from the site only to be attacked again by the drone instantly killing the man. The girl then moved about 100 meters (yards) away and was hit again by the drone after she had been already wounded. The girl later died in a hospital, NNA said.

"The Ministry of Public Health

denounces this barbaric targeting and the deliberate violence against civilians and children in Lebanon," the ministry said in its statement added that the strike marks an ongoing series "of grave violations of International Humanitarian Law." The Israeli military said Hezbollah fired explosive drones into Israel near the border with Lebanon adding that three soldiers were wounded, one of them seriously, in one of the attacks. It added that Hezbollah fired drones inside Lebanon as well in which one hit an Israeli vehicle without inflicting casualties.

Hezbollah claimed several attacks inside Lebanon as well as firing a drone at an Israeli military post in the northern town of Misgav Am. The latest war between Israel and Hezbollah began on March 2, when Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel, two days after the United States and Israel launched a war on Hezbollah's main backer, Iran. Israel has since carried out hundreds of airstrikes and launched a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, capturing dozens of towns and villages along the border.

## Iran warns US against attacks on its oil tankers, other ships but ceasefire appears to hold

JAKARTA. (Agency)

Iran's Revolutionary Guard navy on Saturday warned that any attack on Iranian oil tankers or commercial vessels would be met with a "heavy assault" on one of the US bases in the region and enemy ships, even as a tenuous ceasefire appeared to be holding.

Iranian state TV reported the warning a day after the United States struck two Iranian oil tankers, casting doubt on the month-old ceasefire that the US has insisted is still in effect. The US military said the tankers were trying to breach its blockade of Iran's ports. Meanwhile Bahrain, which hosts the US Navy's regional headquarters, said it arrested dozens of people it alleged had links to Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

Washington awaits Iran's response to its latest proposal for a deal to end the war, reopen the Strait of Hormuz to shipping and roll back Tehran's disputed nuclear program. And Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow's proposal to take enriched uranium from Iran to help negotiate a settlement remains on the table. Bahrain says arrests were linked to Guard funding attempt Bahrain said it had arrested 41 people it said are part of a group affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard. The interior ministry said investigations confirmed they were in contact with the Guard and collected funds "with the aim of sending them to Iran" to support its "terrorist operations."

The small Persian Gulf island is led by a Sunni Muslim monarchy but, like Iran, has a majority Shiite population. Rights groups have said the kingdom has used the war between Iran and the US, which bases its Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, as an excuse to crack down on dissent. Iran issued a warning to Bahrain: "Siding with the U.S.-backed resolution will bring severe consequences. The Strait of Hormuz is a vital lifeline; do not risk closing it on yourselves FOREVER," Ebrahim Azizi, head of the national security commission of Iran's parliament, said on social media. Iran has mostly blocked the critical waterway for global energy since the US and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28, causing a global spike in fuel prices and rattling world markets. The US has imposed its own blockade of Iran's ports. US Central Command said on Saturday its forces had turned back 58 commercial ships and "disabled" four since the blockade began April 13. Britain deploys warship to the Middle East Britain's defense ministry said it was deploying a warship to the Middle East to join a potential mission to protect commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz once hostilities end.

## Iran's Guards threaten US Mideast sites as Trump awaits Tehran response

TEHRAN. (Agency)

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards threatened Saturday to target US sites in the Middle East if its tankers come under fire, Iranian media reported, as Washington was left waiting for Tehran's response to its latest negotiating position. "Any attack on Iranian tankers and commercial vessels will result in a heavy attack on one of the American centres in the region and enemy ships," the Guards said, a day after US strikes on two Iranian tankers in the Gulf of Oman. US President Donald Trump had said on Friday he was expecting Iran's answer to Washington's latest proposal for a peace deal "supposedly tonight". But if Tehran sent Pakistani mediators a response, there was no public sign of it, and Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reportedly questioned the reliability of US leadership. "The recent escalation of tensions by American forces in the Persian Gulf and their numerous actions in violating the ceasefire have added to suspicions about the motivation and seriousness of the American side in the path

of diplomacy," he said in a call with his Turkish counterpart, according to Iran's ISNA news agency. On Friday, a US fighter jet fired on and disabled two Iranian-flagged tankers that Washington accused of challenging its blockade of Iran's ports. An Iranian military official told local media the navy had responded with strikes. That incident followed another flare-up the night before in the Strait of Hormuz, the vital international sea lane that Iran is seeking to control in order to extract tolls and wield economic leverage over the United States and its allies. The US says it is unacceptable for Tehran to control the key oil route. Washington has sent Iran, via Pakistani mediators, a proposal to extend the truce in the Gulf to allow for talks on a final settlement of the conflict, launched 10 weeks ago with US-Israeli strikes on Iran. A reporter for French broadcaster LCI, Margot Haddad, said Saturday that Trump had told her in a brief interview he still expected to find out Iran's answer "very soon". Iran's foreign ministry spokesman said Friday the proposal was

still "under review". Oil slick Top US diplomat Marco Rubio met Saturday with the leader of Qatar, a key intermediary for



Washington in dialogue with Iran, discussing "continued close coordination to deter threats and promote stability and security across the Middle East," the State Department said. Qatar's Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met the previous day with US Vice President JD Vance to discuss the

Pakistani-led efforts to broker a permanent peace. Iran has attacked sites in Qatar during the war, pointing to the wealthy emirate's role as host of a major US air base. Meanwhile, satellite images have shown an apparent oil slick spreading off the coast of Iran's Kharg Island, a key oil export terminal for the Islamic republic. It was not immediately clear what caused the apparent spill, which was off the island's west coast and appeared to cover more than 20 square miles (52 square kilometres), according to global monitor Orbital EOS. A UK-based non-governmental organisation, the Conflict and Environment Observatory, told AFP that by Saturday the slick was "much reduced", and may have been caused by leaking oil infrastructure. Kharg Island is at the heart of Iran's oil export industry, a lynchpin of its battered economy, and lies in the Gulf far north of the narrow Strait of Hormuz. Following the start of the war on February 28, Iran largely closed the strait, throwing global markets into turmoil and driving up oil prices.