

# MAHANAGAR METRO

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## Vijay's big CM move: 717 liquor shops near religious places, schools shut in Tamil Nadu

**Vijay ordered the closure of 717 Tasmac liquor shops located within 500 metres of religious places, educational institutions and bus stands across Tamil Nadu within two weeks.**

Chennai.(Agency)

In his first major administrative decision after taking oath as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Joseph Vijay on Tuesday ordered the closure of 717 state-run liquor retail outlets operating near places of worship, educational institutions, and bus stands across the state. The order directs authorities to shut down all such Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (Tasmac) outlets functioning within a 500-metre radius of temples, mosques, churches, schools, colleges and bus stands within the next two weeks.

According to the Tamil Nadu government, the state currently has a total of 4,765 Tasmac liquor

retail shops. Of the 717 identified for closure, 276 are located near places of worship, 186 near educational institutions and 255 near bus stands. The move marks Vijay's first major policy intervention within hours of assuming office and is being projected by the new government as a key social reform measure aimed at addressing concerns over the accessibility of liquor in sensitive public areas.

Tasmac, however, remains one of the state's

implications for the Tamil Nadu government and its ability to meet the welfare promises.

The decision was welcomed by political parties and leaders, who described it as a step towards addressing a long-standing demand and strengthening liquor regulation.

Actor and Makkal Neethi Maiam chief Kamal Haasan congratulated Vijay for the move, while urging the government to shut down more outlets and take greater responsibility in regulating the flow of alcohol.

"Even as the expectation of Tamil families was that liquor retail shops near places of worship, educational institutions, and bus stands should be removed, Hon'ble Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Brother Vijay has taken this action immediately upon assuming office," he said. The actor added, "Liquor sales should never be a function of the government; the government must take responsibility for regulating the flow of alcohol. The Tamil Nadu government must move towards this position. Today, it has begun by closing 717 liquor shops. This number must be increased. This action must be continued. Congratulations."



biggest revenue-generating public sector undertakings and the decision to shut its outlets is likely to trigger discussions over its financial

## DMK-AIADMK tie-up? EPS rival Shanmugam reveals story of night unthinkable nearly happened

**Vijay's rise and a fractured mandate pushed Tamil Nadu's bitter Dravidian rivals into unthinkable alliance talks.**



New Delhi.(Agency)

Tamil Nadu witnessed a dramatic political development on Tuesday, with a group of 30 AIADMK MLAs led by CV Shanmugam announcing support for Chief Minister Vijay. In doing so, Shanmugam also confirmed discussions around a post-poll political arrangement that once seemed unthinkable in Tamil Nadu politics, a possible understanding between AIADMK and DMK. After Vijay's TVK emerged as the single-largest party in Tamil Nadu but fell short of the majority mark, the state entered a phase of intense political negotiations. While an alliance between arch rivals DMK and AIADMK had long been considered politically impossible, speculation had mounted that the two Dravidian parties could explore a tactical arrangement to prevent Vijay from forming the government. Remember, AIADMK had contested the election as part of the NDA alliance alongside the BJP.

Shanmugam claimed that proposals for an AIADMK-DMK alliance had surfaced and alleged that party General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami was seeking the Chief Minister's post through such an arrangement. According to him, the move ran contrary to the party's ideological foundations.

"The AIADMK was founded to uproot the DMK, which we consider an evil force in Tamil Nadu. That has always been the foremost aim of the AIADMK, founded by MGR and protected by Amma. But now, some proposals have emerged that are against our principles," he said on Tuesday.

According to Shanmugam, aligning with the DMK violated the "basic principles" of the AIADMK. "To align with the DMK, our legislators and party cadre were against that proposal. We disagreed. So, in our legislative party meeting, we took a decision. It is against the interests of our party," he asserted. To put the development in perspective, an AIADMK-DMK alliance in Tamil Nadu would be politically comparable to the BJP joining hands with Congress at the national level.

Shanmugam further said the AIADMK legislative party had passed a resolution opposing the proposal and elected SP Velumani as the floor leader. Explaining the rationale behind extending support to Vijay, the AIADMK leader said the MLAs were "accepting the people's mandate" and argued that the verdict was in favour of Chief Minister Vijay. At the same time, he maintained that EPS remained the leader of the AIADMK, while also clarifying in the Assembly that the group was not entering into an alliance with the BJP.

## Himanta Sarma sworn in for 2nd term as Assam Chief Minister after record mandate

**Himanta Biswa Sarma took oath as Assam Chief Minister for a second consecutive term, becoming the first non-Congress leader in the state to achieve the feat.**

Guwahati.(Agency)

Himanta Biswa Sarma, the BJP's strongman in the Northeast, took oath on Tuesday as Assam Chief Minister for a second consecutive term after the party stormed back to power with a record mandate, paving the way for a third straight term for the BJP-led NDA government in the state.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office and secrecy to Sarma at a high-profile event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, among other party bigwigs. Alongside Sarma, four ministers -- senior BJP leaders Rameswar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP president Atul Bora and BPF MLA



Charan Boro -- also took oath on Tuesday. Sarma, who first became Chief Minister in 2021 after succeeding Sarbananda Sonowal, created political history by becoming the first non-

Congress leader in Assam to serve two consecutive terms as Chief Minister. His return to office also marked the BJP-led NDA's third consecutive term in Assam since the alliance first formed the government in 2016.

The BJP-led NDA registered a landslide victory in the recently concluded Assam Assembly elections, winning 102 seats in the 126-member Assembly. The BJP alone secured 82 seats, crossing the majority mark on its own for the first time in Assam. Its allies AGP and BPF won 10 seats each. The massive mandate further consolidated Sarma's position as the BJP's tallest leader in the Northeast and underlined the party's continued dominance in the region.

## MAHANAGAR METRO EXCLUSIVE

### Major Controversy: Allegations of a 'Blackmail Syndicate' Targeting Jain Monk Spark Outrage in Gujarat

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Makan

**Ahmedabad:** A major controversy has erupted in Gujarat after serious allegations surfaced regarding an alleged blackmail and extortion network that reportedly targeted Jain monk Muni Rajtilak Sagarji Maharaj. The matter has triggered intense debate within sections of the Jain community and social circles, with calls for a transparent investigation into the claims being made. According to reports and affidavits that have allegedly come into circulation, the case may involve accusations of financial extortion, manipulation, and attempts to damage reputations through what some sources describe as a "honey-trap style conspiracy." However, many of these claims remain unverified and are yet to be conclusively established in a court of law. Affidavits Raise Questions Documents reportedly linked to individuals identified as Kiran Doshi and his wife have become a



focal point in the controversy. Supporters of the monk claim these affidavits raise serious doubts about the motives behind the FIR and suggest the possibility of an organized pressure campaign. Critics and observers are now asking: Was the complaint used as a tool for financial pressure? Were religious figures deliberately targeted for monetary gain? Is there a larger organized network operating behind the scenes? At present, investigating authorities have not publicly confirmed these allegations. Several

Names Surface in the Dispute The controversy has also brought several individuals into public discussion, including names such as Hardik Hudiya, Jagat Parekh, Vikram Singhvi and Vikram Bafna. Allegations circulating in media and social discussions claim these individuals may have had links to the broader dispute, though no court has established criminal liability against them at this stage. Legal experts caution that all allegations must be investigated fairly and that every accused individual is

entitled to due process under the law. Tensions Rise Amid Claims of Pressure and Threats As the matter gains public attention, some media groups and supporters associated with the case allege they have faced pressure, intimidation attempts and efforts to influence the narrative surrounding the controversy. No independent confirmation of these claims has yet been made. The issue has now evolved into a larger debate about misuse of religious sentiments, reputation-based extortion, and the vulnerability of spiritual leaders to organized targeting. Growing Reaction Within the Jain Community The case has reportedly sparked strong emotional reactions among sections of the Jain community across the country. Community members and religious supporters are demanding: a fair and impartial investigation, accountability if any conspiracy is proven, and protection of religious institutions from exploitation. Many social

voices are also urging restraint, emphasizing that conclusions should not be drawn until official investigations and court proceedings are completed. Key Questions Being Raised Was there any organized extortion network operating behind the controversy? Have similar allegations involving religious figures occurred in the past? Did any individuals within the system knowingly assist such activities? Investigation Continues Authorities have not yet issued any final conclusions regarding the allegations. The matter remains sensitive and legally significant, with further developments expected as investigations progress. Disclaimer: The above report is based on allegations and claims currently circulating in connection with the controversy. None of the allegations mentioned have been conclusively proven in court, and all parties named are presumed innocent unless proven guilty through due legal process.

### L-G asks DDA to plan for making Dwarka an IT hub

New Delhi.(Agency)

Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu has directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to prepare a comprehensive and time-bound plan to transform Dwarka sub-city into a major international and domestic investment destination for IT, ITeS and digital infrastructure industries.

Officials said the L-G, who is also chairman of the DDA, discussed developmental initiatives for Dwarka, Rohini and Narela sub-cities during a recent meeting with senior DDA officials. He asked the authority to consult stakeholders and formulate a concrete action plan for the proposed projects at the earliest.

During the meeting, Sandhu advised officials to explore the potential of attracting non-polluting industries such as information technology, IT-enabled services, healthcare, global capability centres and digital infrastructure companies to set up operations in these areas.

Highlighting the growing connectivity and infrastructure in the sub-cities, the Lieutenant-Governor said proximity to the airport, improved road networks and expanding Metro connectivity make these regions suitable for development as decentralised economic hubs.

He also pointed to the operationalisation of the Urban Extension Road, transit-oriented development policy, upcoming education hubs and rapid residential expansion as factors supporting large-scale economic development in these areas.

According to officials, Sandhu noted that Dwarka, Rohini and Narela could emerge as hubs for data centres, semiconductor plants and warehousing in line with provisions of the Master Plan.

The L-G said such transformation would help attract investments, generate employment opportunities and increase revenue while ensuring sustainable urban development in the

## News box

## Man strangles 5-year-old son, hangs self with child's body tied to chest in Faridabad

GURGAON.(Agency)

A 32-year-old man allegedly strangled his five-year-old son before dying by suicide in Faridabad on Sunday. Family members found Sagar hanging from a ceiling fan with a rope, while his son's body was tied to his chest in Ballabgarh's Dayalpur village. Injury marks were visible around Rakshit's neck, indicating strangulation.

After being informed, a forensic team, along with Sadar police station officials, reached the spot to collect evidence. Police said Sagar worked as a driver and lived alone in his ancestral house in Dayalpur. Sagar's wife Sapna and son Rakshit had been staying separately with his parents at a rented accommodation in Machhgar village for the past six months due to frequent domestic disputes with his family members. Sagar's father, Ropchand, told police that his son often quarrelled with family members and had a violent temperament, following which they shifted to another village. He said an argument took place earlier in the day before Sagar left with the child. Sagar used to visit his family every weekend and used to take his son out for some time, police said. He visited Machhgar on Sunday morning and took Rakshit with him, saying he would buy food for the child and take him around in Dayalpur. However, he did not return with the boy till evening, prompting the family to search for them. When his parents reached Sagar's house in Dayalpur, they found the main gate locked from inside. With the help of neighbours, they entered the house by climbing over the wall. The room inside was also locked from within and had to be broken open. A police officer said information about the incident was received around 9.30pm on Sunday. "Preliminary investigation revealed that Sagar's relationship with his family was strained. The couple married in 2020," the officer said. The bodies were sent for post-mortem and later handed over to the family. Police spokesperson Yashpal said that a case was registered against Sagar for the murder of his son at Sadar police station.

## Biker dies in hit-and-run accident near KMP toll in Gurgaon

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A 40-year-old man died after his motorcycle was hit by an unidentified vehicle near the KMP toll plaza in the Bilaspur area late Saturday night.

The victim, Mahender, was a resident of Hayatpur. Police said he was returning from Agra after meeting a friend. According to the complaint filed by Mahender's brother, the accident took place around 12.30am when Mahender was entering the highway from the Jaipur-side cut near the toll. The complainant, who saw the collision, alleged that the vehicle, coming from Gurgaon, was being driven at high speed and in a negligent manner.

"The collision threw the victim onto the road, causing severe injuries. He was taken to a private hospital in Manesar, where he died during treatment," an officer said. Police said the driver fled the spot after the accident and the complainant could not note down the vehicle's registration number. After receiving information from the hospital, a police team reached the facility and later shifted the body to the civil hospital mortuary.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered under sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (death by negligence) of BNS at Bilaspur police station. Police said CCTV footage from nearby areas is being scanned to identify the vehicle involved. In another case, a 15-year-old Class 9 student from Mokalswala village alleged that a villager hit him with a car and fled despite his injuries. Rajeev told police that he was riding his scooter towards Pachgaon Chowk market on May 6 when the incident took place near the KMP bridge at Pukharpur around 1pm. According to the complaint, Rajeev had stopped near the roadside when a car coming from Pachgaon Chowk hit him. The boy alleged that the driver, identified as Rajkumar from the same village, was intoxicated at the time.

Police said the accident left both his legs fractured and damaged the scooter. He was first admitted to a private hospital in Manesar and later shifted to SGT Hospital in Chandu Budhera.

## Greenbelt nurtured by residents who didn't have park turns into bird haven

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

An 800 sq metre greenbelt in Sector 117, quietly nurtured over the past three to four years by Noida Authority and a group of residents, has begun attracting an unlikely cast of visitors — cranes, black ibises and the occasional peacock — turning the zone originally planned as a buffer between the main roads and the residential sectors into what a neighbourhood sanctuary.

The greenbelt, about 40 metres wide, was developed by the Noida Authority's horticulture department beginning in 2021-22. Residents of the sector took it further, planting shade-giving trees, including neem, peepal, Lagerstroemia, alongside flowering species such as jarul, gulmohar and kachnar, which are known to attract birds, as well as kaner, an evergreen shrub that blooms in red, pink and white. The combined effect of dense foliage, cleaner air and relative quiet has made the corridor hospitable to birds in ways that a conventional park might not. Among the birds spotted in the area is the black ibis, also known as the red-naped ibis or Indian black ibis, typically found foraging in dry fields and wetlands.

That it has taken to an urban greenbelt in a densely packed Noida sector is, for residents, a small marvel. Anand Mohan Singh, deputy director of the horticulture department at the Noida Authority, said the birds sighted in Sector 117 were previously spotted only near the Hindon, several kilometres away. "Having found lush greenery with big trees here, these birds have now started visiting the greenbelt, mostly during the afternoons," he said. Singh credited the 2021 plantation drive, carried out with community support, as the turning point. Sustained watering, weeding, soil aeration and fertilising by the Authority have since transformed the area. He acknowledged, however, that several green spaces across Noida still required attention. Approximately 21% of the city's land has been designated as greenbelts and parks. Planned separately from recreational parks, these greenbelts were conceived as buffer zones between main roads and residential sectors.

# Shooter held for targeting Fazilpuria's ex-manager killed in encounter

GURGAON.(Agency)

One of the two alleged shooters arrested for the May 2 firing outside the house of singer Fazilpuria's former manager was killed in a gunfight with police on Monday. The second accused and a constable who was part of the police team accompanying them were also injured. Police said Gursher Singh alias Shera (23) died in hospital while Jaspal alias Babbar (28) is battling a grievous injury to the leg. They were arrested over the shooting outside Saurabh Yadav's house in Sector 45, where constable Kulbir, who was posted there following complaints of extortion, suffered bullet-graze injuries to his hands and legs.

Police spokesperson Sandeep Turan said the two accused were taken to Bandhwari on Monday morning for the recovery of weapons allegedly used in the attack. During the operation, they allegedly led the team to three concealed Glock pistols, picked them up and opened indiscriminate fire. "The accused

fired around eight to 10 rounds at the police team. Police retaliated in self-defence," an officer said. Both men were hit and rushed to hospital. Gursher died during treatment. Constable Naveen, who, too, was hit in the leg, was discharged after treatment.

The encounter came days after city cops arrested the two men, alleging they had come from Punjab to kill Yadav and had opened fire outside his house in Kanhai on May 2 to create panic. Police said the attack was carried out at the behest of foreign-based gangsters Deepak Nandal and Satta Naushera, who had allegedly promised them money. The two shooters told police during questioning that Yadav's house had been identified for them by other men already arrested in the case. Four others — Ashok alias Pahalwan, Sumit, Manoj Kabir and Vicky — were earlier arrested for allegedly arranging motorcycles, conducting recon and helping execute the conspiracy. Police are also examining



the wider gang link. Naushera is believed to be a close associate of Lakhbir Singh Landa, who was declared a terrorist by the Union home ministry in Dec 2023. A senior officer said police would check whether the recovered Glock had any

cross-border link. "Many a times, Glock recovered from Naushera gang members were found to have been smuggled from Pakistan. We will examine that angle too," the officer said.

Police had earlier said Yadav and fugitive gangster Nandal knew each other and may have had a monetary dispute. They are also probing whether the attack was tied to earlier extortion threats. On a complaint by constable Kulbir, an FIR was registered at Sector 40 police station under BNS provisions dealing with attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy, common intention and assault or criminal force to deter a public servant from duty, along with relevant sections of the Arms Act. Police records show Gursher had earlier cases of attempt to murder and Arms Act violations in Punjab and Gurgaon. Jaspal, police said, has cases of assault, criminal intimidation and two FIRs under the NDPS Act in Punjab.

## 1k-plus schools in Haryana have just one teacher: Niti report

Gurgaon.(Agency)

More than 1,000 govt schools in Haryana are still being run by a single teacher, laying bare the strain on a system where one person is often forced to be the headmaster, clerk, meal supervisor and parent coordinator all at once. According to NITI Aayog's 2024-25 report based on UDISE+ data, 1,066 govt schools in the state have been functioning with just one teacher despite enrolling nearly 43,400 students. The report says single-teacher schools are "a serious concern" across the country, especially in rural and sparsely populated areas. In such schools, one teacher is expected to handle classroom teaching, administrative work, record-keeping, mid-day meal duties and coordination with parents. Multi-grade classrooms are common, making grade-specific teaching and meaningful classroom engagement far more difficult. Ashok Prajapati, president of District Primary Teachers Association, said more than 20 govt schools in the city have long been functioning with only one teacher. "To plug gaps, teachers are often

sent on short-term deputation to other schools for a few days or months. These stopgap arrangements disrupt studies both in the schools facing shortages and those



from which teachers are pulled out," he added. According to the report, Haryana has 23,494 govt schools in all. These include 9,569 primary schools for classes 1 to 5; 2,655 schools for classes 6 to 8; 2,217 middle schools for classes 6 to 8; 1,783 schools for classes 1 to 10; 925 schools for classes 6 to 10; 3,782 schools for classes 1 to 12 and 2,557 schools for classes 6 to 12.

The data also shows how sharply school availability narrows beyond the early years. Only 16.1% of the state's govt facilities offer uninterrupted schooling from classes 1 to 12. Even so, Haryana is well above the national average of 5.4%, suggesting the state performs better than much of the country on this count despite limited resources. On pupil-teacher ratio too, Haryana is within prescribed norms at several stages and outperforms the national average in key categories. The state's PTR is 21:1 at primary level, 10:1 at upper primary, 17:1 at secondary and 11:1 at higher secondary. The national averages are 20:1, 17:1, 15:1 and 23:1, respectively. But these averages mask a deeper staffing crisis. The report shows there are 7,626 teacher vacancies at the elementary level in Haryana, 4,070 in secondary schools and 3,847 in senior secondary schools. It also notes that shortages, particularly in rural areas, continue to hurt learning outcomes, student retention and progression between grades.

## Illegal groundwater use by builder, UP asks Noida DM to act against builders in 10 days

Noida.(Agency)

The groundwater department in Lucknow has asked Noida DM to take action against a builder for excessive groundwater extraction in Greater Noida and submit a report within 10 days. The direction came after environmentalist Vikrant Tongad pursued the matter with the water resources department and submitted an application on April 22, alleging that the Greater Noida Authority had initially ignored his complaint.

Tongad, in his application, mentioned that Migsun Builders have been carrying out large-scale dewatering operations in Tech Zone for the past year. Dewatering operations are specialised methods used to remove groundwater or surface water from construction sites, trenches and mining areas to create a dry, stable and

safe environment for work. He wrote that the groundwater extracted by the builder is being discharged into the sewer system. This is a violation of rules. He demanded action against the builder under the provisions contained in the Uttar Pradesh Groundwater (Management and Regulation) Act, 2019. He had written to the Authority multiple times, but they did not yield results. The last complaint was filed with the Authority on April 22.

Tongad told TOI that due to large-scale dewatering activities, there has been a significant decline in the groundwater level across the entire region. "The extracted groundwater is flowing into the sewer system. Now the sewer lines are overburdened. The pipes might burst at any point, and the fresh groundwater might get contaminated too. It might

cause permanent damage to the aquifer as well," he said. "These activities are in clear violation of several legal provisions, including the UP Groundwater Act, NGT orders, the Environment (Protection) Act and the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act."

"The residents and farmers of Gharbhara village are distressed about the illegal extraction of fresh groundwater and its wastage. "Recently, we have again received multiple complaints from the villagers. We have visited the site, captured pictures and filed the complaint to the state office for action," Tongad said. He has requested the state groundwater department to check the extraction and also impose appropriate environmental compensation for the damage already caused.

# MCG House raps 'insensitive' town planner over demolitions

NOIDA.(Agency)

MCG House on Monday passed a resolution condemning district town planner (enforcement) Amit Madhola after councillors accused the enforcement wing of acting insensitively during anti-encroachment drives and failing to coordinate with elected representatives.

The issue came up during the sixth general House meeting of MCG, held at Haryana Institute of Public Administration in Sector 18. Ward 2 councillor Jyotsna Yadav alleged a water cooler installed for public use in DLF-2 was demolished during an anti-encroachment drive without any time being given for its relocation. "Providing drinking water to people cannot be treated as an illegal act. A water cooler meant for the public is always installed along roadsides so that passersby can drink water, especially during summers. It was located near a tree and an electric pole, and there was no obstruction to traffic movement," said Yadav. After the discussion, the House passed a condemnation resolution against DTP (enforcement). Yadav said the proposal received unanimous support. "All 36 councillors supported the proposal that at least five public water coolers should be installed in every ward by MCG and their maintenance

responsibility should also be fixed. The House passed the condemnation proposal because the action taken by the enforcement team was insensitive," she added. Department of town and country planning (DTCP) carried out demolition drives in several licensed colonies, including DLF-2, in April following Punjab and Haryana high court's directions against illegal constructions. The meeting also discussed civic infrastructure, sanitation, sewerage, drinking water supply, road construction and encroachment removal across the city. Councillors raised concerns on sewer upgrades, waterlogging, streetlights, road repairs, parks, ponds and community infrastructure in their wards. Mayor Raj Rani Malhotra said, "Action will be taken on all issues raised during the meeting to improve civic infrastructure and public services in the city."

The House approved proposals to sell revenue road land embedded within private residential and commercial projects in sectors 111, 113, 104 and 114. Officials said these old access roads had become defunct,

landlocked or unusable for public purposes. It also approved a proposal to provide incentives to authorised plumbers for facilitating legal water connections and helping the civic body identify illegal connections. Under the proposal, plumbers empanelled with MCG will receive an incentive equal to 50% of the



connection or disconnection fee collected from consumers during the online application process, subject to a maximum of Rs 1,000 per case. Officials told the House that MCG collects water connection charges and security deposits from applicants under HSVP

policy. Since connection fees for some categories, especially commercial connections in HSVP sectors, are higher, a cap of Rs 1,000 has been proposed on the incentive payable to plumbers.

The civic body has also proposed an additional incentive of Rs 1,000 for authorised plumbers who report illegal or unauthorised water connections, provided the violations are verified by MCG officials. The House also gave consent to land allotment for RRTS project, Vita milk booths and auction of commercial sites at Vyapar Sadan.

The House also approved a proposal for development of an indoor stadium on nearly 3,000 square yards of HSVP land between Sheeshpal Vihar and South City. It also cleared construction of a community centre in Dhumsapur village by MCG. During the meeting, municipal commissioner Pradeep Dahiya said complaints would be sent to the additional chief secretaries of departments whose officials failed to attend the House proceedings.

# Tarikh pe tarikh: High Court raps UP govt and cops over case backlog, justice delay

Invoking the iconic "Tarikh pe Tarikh" dialogue from the 1993 film Damini, the Allahabad High Court said delays in criminal cases reflect public frustration with the justice system, but added that judicial officers alone cannot be blamed, pointing instead to failures by the state government and police.

Prayagraj. (Agency)

Quoting the famous dialogue from the 1993 Hindi film Damini, "Tarikh pe Tarikh... milti hai to sirf tarikh" (date after date, what we get is only date), the Allahabad High Court has observed that while it reflects the common man's perception of delayed justice, the massive pendency of criminal cases in district courts is not merely the fault of judicial officers, but primarily that of the state government and the police.

Rejecting the bail plea of murder accused Mevalal Prajapati, a resident of Fatehpur, Justice Arun Kumar Singh Deshwal observed that judicial officers cannot decide cases without adequate staff and police cooperation in ensuring the presence of accused persons and witnesses, along

with timely forensic science laboratory (FSL) reports.

"Many young judicial officers, who joined the judiciary, though very honest and hardworking and having a motto to dispense justice, found themselves unable to perform because of insufficient staff, non-cooperation by the police in the execution of court processes, summons, warrants etc. and faulty investigation and improper FSL reports," the court observed.

The court said such judicial officers often become frustrated and look towards the High Court for remedial measures, but even the High Court cannot do much in the absence of systemic support.

"It is the state government that must provide basic infrastructure, staff, the FSL report

and police cooperation," the bench said while issuing a slew of directions to address structural, administrative and procedural deficiencies affecting district courts.

The observations came during the hearing of a bail application in a murder case in which a blood-stained screwdriver was recovered, but the investigating officer allegedly failed to seek DNA matching from the FSL to determine whether the blood belonged to the deceased.

Taking note of the alleged lapse, the court had earlier summoned the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police, the Home Secretary and the Director of the FSL.

During the hearing, the FSL Director informed the court that of the 12



functioning laboratories in the state, only eight had DNA profiling facilities. The laboratories were also facing shortages of staff and modern forensic and ballistic testing equipment, the court was told.

Based on these submissions and a comprehensive study of several district courts, the High Court observed that the

heavy pendency of criminal cases was largely due to insufficient ministerial staff, stenographers and deposition writers, non-execution of court processes by police and delays in obtaining forensic reports.

The court further observed that systemic delays embolden criminals and weaken public confidence in the justice delivery system. The bench noted that many criminals continue to commit offences without fear and some have even become MLAs, MPs and ministers. Referring to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms, the court observed that around 49 per cent of ministers in the Uttar Pradesh government face criminal cases, while 44 per cent are facing serious criminal charges.

## Short news

### Andhra govt selects five nurses for Florence Nightingale Awards

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

The State government has announced the selection of five nursing professionals for the Florence Nightingale Awards for 2026, recognising their service in the field of nursing.

The awards will be presented in Guntur by Health Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav, on Tuesday, coinciding with International Nurses Day celebrations. Officials noted that the awardees were chosen for their contributions across research, teaching, administration, care, and community health. The minister will hand over prizes to recipients as part of felicitation. The awardees include B Vanajakumari, Principal of Narayana Nursing College, Nellore, who has been named Best Nurse Researcher. CR Samsher Begum, Principal of MIMS College of Nursing, Vizianagaram, selected as Best Nurse Administrator.

K Suganti, Lecturer at Government College of Nursing, Machilipatnam, will receive the Best Nurse Educator award. S Chinnammi, Head Nurse at CHC Budithi in Srikakulam district, has been recognised for Best Nursing Services. K Savitri, ANM at PHC Chukkalaru in Anantapur, has been chosen in Best ANM Category.

The Florence Nightingale Awards, instituted to honour the legacy of the pioneer of modern nursing, remain the highest recognition for nurses in India.

### Kerala private bus operators raise alarm over incoming UDF govt's free travel plan for women in KSRTC

KOZHIKODE. (Agency)

The incoming UDF government's proposal to provide free travel for women in Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) buses has drawn sharp criticism from private bus operators across Kerala, who warn that the move could severely disrupt the state's public transport ecosystem.

Urging the incoming UDF government to reconsider the decision, the All Kerala Bus Operators Organisation said that it could cripple the already struggling private bus industry. Operators warn that women, who constitute the backbone of their ridership, will abandon private buses entirely, leaving behind only students travelling on concession tickets.

Speaking to the media, the organisation's state general secretary T Gopinathan described the policy as "unilateral" and cautioned that it could destabilise the broader public transport system.

"According to KSRTC's own figures, around 1.9 million women use bus services daily. If free travel is implemented in KSRTC buses, private buses will be left with only student passengers," Gopinathan said. He further pointed out that unlike states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, where private bus presence is relatively limited, Kerala relies heavily on private operators to sustain its transport network.

"In Tamil Nadu, the private sector constitute only 20%, while a majority of the buses belong to the state transport. Also, the number of buses with free rides are limited," said Gopinathan P Suresh, Kozhikode district member of Kerala Bus Owners Association, highlighted the demographic reality of bus commuters. "A significant majority of daily passengers are women. Many men rely on private modes of transport.

## UP teacher claims she wasn't hired for wearing hijab, school denies charge

Varanasi. (Agency)

A video from Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, featuring a Muslim woman teacher has gone viral on social media, in which she alleges she was denied employment for wearing a hijab. The school management has strongly denied the allegation, claiming the video was an attempt to gain social media attention. In the viral clip, Samreen Bano alleges that Muslim teachers face discrimination. She claims that her religious identity and wearing a hijab are making it difficult for her to secure jobs and private tutoring assignments, and that schools are instilling fear and misconceptions about Muslim teachers in children's minds.

"I don't know why, but hatred seems to be all pervasive. Where does such hatred come from?" she says in the video.

Bano told that she had undergone a one-day trial at a private school in Varanasi, but during a parent-teacher meeting the next day, she was asked not to wear a hijab or

cover her head. She claims that when she objected, she was paid Rs 200 for the day's work and asked not to return.

SCHOOL PUSHES BACK

Speaking to, Usharaj Maurya, the school's



director and a BJP district office-bearer, defended the institution and disputed Bano's account. She said Bano had wanted to use her mobile phone inside the classroom, which is against school rules.

Maurya also pointed out that around 90 per cent of the students are Muslim and that

four Muslim teachers are already employed at the school, none of whom have faced any issues.

The management further alleged that Bano behaved like a social media influencer seeking to grow her following, and that she had objected to teachers wearing bindis and mangalsutras as well as to the Saraswati Vandana prayer being conducted at the school.

"It was only later that we discovered she had uploaded these recordings to social media," Maurya said.

VIDEO NOW DELETED

Bano confirmed that she received a call from local police officials who are collecting information on the matter. She subsequently deleted the video, saying she does not wish to escalate the issue further.

The school has submitted a written response to the police about the whole incident. Maurya added that the school does not want to escalate the matter, seeking only counselling for the teacher.

## Andhra govt bans new borewells, groundwater extraction in 258 villages of Prakasam

ONGOLE. (Agency)

The State government has issued orders imposing a ban on digging new bore wells and extracting groundwater in a total of 258 villages across the State as per the AP Water, Land and Trees Act (WALTA) 2002, including 91 villages of the combined Prakasam district. Apart from Prakasam district, the government has imposed the ban in 76 villages of Srikakulam district, 39 in Sri Sathya Sai district, 20 in Palnadu district, 14 in Anantapur, 10 in Kadapa and 8 villages in Chittoor district.

The government has taken this action due to the drastic decrease in groundwater levels and increased water consumption in the above areas. Among the 91 gram panchayats in 12 mandals of the combined



Prakasam district, most of them are situated in the Western Prakasam region. In the 91 villages, Pullalacheru mandal has 17 villages, Peddaraveedu 13, Markapuram 10, Giddalur 9, Yerragondapalem 8, Tripurantakam 7, Mundlamuru 6, Pedda Dornala and Donakonda 5 villages each, Cumbum and

Kurichedu 4 each and Racharla mandal has 3 villages. The Government has stated in the recent orders that, even for drinking water purposes, no digging is allowed without prior permission from the concerned authorities.

"Based on the groundwater level statistics and water availability, the government will impose ban on digging new bore wells, and it will be enforced up to the year-end," Joseph Kumar, Prakasam district DWMA Project Director, told. Over the last few years, water scarcity and declining groundwater levels have become a regular occurrence in these areas. In 2020, in response to the then-severe groundwater-level depletion, the Government issued ban orders.

## Ban on street namaz, crackdown on stone throwers: New Bengal govt's first moves

BJP MLA Arjun Singh said the administration had already issued strict directives on several matters, including public order, illegal activities and religious gatherings on roads.

Kolkata. (Agency)

The Suvendu Adhikari-led BJP government in West Bengal has moved swiftly on one of its key political promises, with state BJP MLA Arjun Singh saying roadside namaz will be restricted and prayers will not be permitted on streets. The decision, which Singh spoke of during an interview with, is expected to trigger political controversy in the state.

Speaking on the government's early decisions after taking office, Arjun Singh said the administration had already issued strict directives on several matters, including public order, illegal activities and religious gatherings on roads.

"The CM has given many orders during the Cabinet meeting. Namaz will not be allowed in the streets. Let them pray at mosques, but on the streets, it won't be

tolerated," Arjun Singh said. Referring to public prayers in Kolkata's Red Road area, Singh said such gatherings would no longer be allowed.

"Such a thing won't be seen. These are court orders," he said, indicating the government would cite judicial directives while implementing the restrictions.

The Eid Namaz on the Red Road, owned by the Ministry of Defence, became a subject of controversy last year when the Army initially denied permission for the prayers to go ahead, citing military use.

However, a couple of days later, the Army decided to alter its training schedule a bit to accommodate Eid al-Adha prayers on the road that stretches from the Netaji Statue to the entrance of Fort William, the

Eastern Command Headquarters. **CRACKDOWN ON CATTLE SMUGGLING**



Earlier, the BJP government said it was taking a tough stance on cattle smuggling and stone-pelting incidents, two issues the BJP had repeatedly raised during the election campaign. Asked whether cattle

smuggling would continue under the new regime, he said, "Action will be taken against those smugglers found doing cattle smuggling. Stone pelting won't be allowed".

The statement comes days after the West Bengal administration issued a series of directives to crack down on cattle smuggling, a long-standing BJP poll issue. On Monday, police officials were instructed to shut down all unauthorised cattle markets with immediate effect.

Border districts and other sensitive areas were also put under enhanced surveillance to dismantle smuggling networks. The BJP had frequently accused several Trinamool Congress leaders of being linked to cattle smuggling syndicates.

## Punjab bets big on healthcare

IN the world of armchair policy critique, there is a recurring trope: if a government launches a scheme that actually works, it must be a mirage; if it's ambitious, it must be "only on paper." The Punjab government's Mukh Mantri Sehat Bima Yojana which provides Rs 10 lakh health insurance coverage to all families in Punjab, has also been facing such criticism in the media. However, as any doctor will tell you, a diagnosis based on a cursory glance at the patient — without checking the vital signs — is usually inaccurate. The same applies to any scheme or policy and the vitals of Punjab's universal health insurance suggest it is sound and healthy. Punjab has achieved a historic first: it is the first state in the country to provide a universal health insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh per family. No other state has done it so far. This is not just a marginal increase over existing frameworks of the Ayushman Bharat scheme of the Government of India but the doubling of the social safety net, and coverage of almost 2.4 crore additional residents of Punjab, ensuring that a "critical illness" does not become a "financial death sentence" for the average household.

Scepticism towards governance is a virtue and must be cultivated in a democracy. However, research cannot be replaced by opinionated columns that lack any serious analysis. The numbers bear out the evidence. Within just three months of the scheme's launch (from early January to April 30, 2026), nearly 43.78 lakh health insurance cards have been generated. To put that in perspective, roughly 15% of Punjab's population enrolled in less than 100 days after the scheme launch. To contrast this with other states, over the last eight years, Uttar Pradesh has averaged at 17 lakh Ayushman Bharat health insurance cards per quarter and Gujarat averaged around 9 lakh per quarter. Punjab is already averaging 2.6 times that of Uttar Pradesh and almost 4.9 times of Gujarat. The scheme is popular across age groups. Almost 2.83 lakh health insurance cards have been issued for children aged up to 10 years and more than 3.3 lakh belong to people aged above 70 years. As many as 30.2 lakh of these health cards have been made for people living in rural Punjab.

As it is, prior possession of the health card is not a mandatory requirement for a patient to avail himself of treatment under the scheme. The card can also be issued on the first visit to the empanelled hospital for treatment. All that is required is an Aadhaar card and voter card. Nothing else is needed.

Of hearts and households

Within the last 100 days of the scheme, 2,78,199 people have already undergone treatment across 574 private hospitals and 215 government hospitals. Therefore, this is not a "paper scheme"; it is a massive logistical operation functioning in real-time. The true rigour of a health scheme lies in its demographic reach. The scheme's numbers tell human stories that no serious analysis can afford to ignore: 16,342 people having received medical care for animal bites, including snake bites, will tell an entirely different picture about the scheme and so will 4,882 people having undergone cardiac procedures to treat blockages in their arteries. As many as 2,344 cases of severe anaemia have been treated under the scheme, most of whom are women. Over 4,380 cases of acute febrile illnesses caused by viral infections and more serious diseases like malaria, typhoid and dengue have received medical treatment and can return to productive lives. The scheme has also supported 4,439 Caesarean deliveries supporting these women and their families in their joyous times. Around 5,000 elderly people who have undergone knee replacements under the scheme can walk again and 1,982 people are seeing our beautiful world, again, because of cataract surgery. Most of all, more than 25,000 people have had haemodialysis, clearly reflecting an unmet demand for elderly people with end-stage renal diseases for their survival.

## Lessons from labour struggles

The labour-capital conflict remains the fundamental contradiction of capitalism

was the birth anniversary of Karl Marx, the greatest theoretician of the working class. May 4 marked the centenary of the UK's great General Strike of 1926. For nine days, millions of workers struck in support of coal miners who were locked out by their employers in a dispute over jobs and pay. The coal mining industry was so central to the UK economy that it was viewed as the 'backbone of the nation'. Of the total population of about 43 million in 1926, over one million adult males worked in the coal mines. The working conditions were hazardous. About a thousand miners were killed each year in the pits. The pay was low, and the working hours were long.

After World War I, Britain lost its position as the top coal exporter. The private owners of coal mines tried to recover export losses by proposing a 13% pay cut, ending national negotiations and extending working hours. The Trades Union Congress pledged support to the miners. A general strike to begin at midnight on May 3 was approved. The next day, 1.5 million workers from transport, iron and steel, building, electrical, gas and printing industries went on strike. They were joined a week later by shipyard workers and engineers. The key slogan in response to employers' plans for pay cuts and longer working hours was 'Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day.' In towns and cities across the country, councils of action or strike committees were set up in support of the coal miners. Although the advanced industrialised capitalist economies had witnessed isolated sector-specific strikes for over 100 years, the 1926 General Strike stood out as a new form of simultaneous action by workers in multiple industries. The strike attracted global attention.

After the seizure of power by workers and peasants in the Soviet Union in 1917, Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the revolution, next in importance to Lenin, argued that for the socialist revolution in the Soviet Union to succeed, it must be followed by successful revolutions in Europe. He feared that if the Soviet revolution remained confined to one country, it would degenerate. He, therefore, hailed the outbreak of the General Strike in the

UK, the most powerful imperial power then in the world, as a possible prelude to a socialist revolution.

He was disappointed as the trade union leadership, terrified by the working-class activism challenging constitutional norms, betrayed the militant working class and reached an agreement with the employers and the government without having won concessions on pay and working conditions. The betrayal by the bureaucratic trade union leadership can be interpreted in the short-term as a failure of the General Strike. However, it is an error to characterise such mass activity as a failure because of the success such radical activity achieved in bringing multi-dimensional politico-economic changes and its impact, beyond the short term, on mass consciousness globally. In India, the young revolutionary Bhagat Singh (1907-1931), the brightest internationalist in the Indian movement for

pay, was the driving factor behind low aggregate demand, which was responsible for generating the economic depression. It was a resounding vindication of the working class's demands during the General Strike. The welfare state that emerged after World War II grew out of this economic turmoil.

During the turbulent decades of the 1920s and 1930s, France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Hungary witnessed varying levels of mass activity in their industrial sectors and in some countries even in their agricultural sectors.

In India, the closest equivalent to the General Strike was the May 1974 railway strike by two million railway workers. In a brilliant piece of research, Prerna Agarwal, a historian, has examined, in a forthcoming paper, the Indian railway strike and its repercussions on the Indian political economy. The Nehruvian model of state capitalism in post-1947 India had many features of the Keynesian welfare state, especially relating to pro-labour legislation.

When Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister, she outwitted her right-wing rivals in the Congress party by further deepening the pro-labour and pro-social welfare policies in her first 'progressive phase'. Having defeated her rivals and established herself in power, she took an authoritarian turn to appease India's top capitalist class, which was unhappy with the earlier pro-trade union policies. This was demonstrated most starkly in the scale and forms of repression on the striking railway workers. Agarwal reports that 50,000 arrests, 10,000 dismissals and 30,000 evictions from their homes in the railway colonies. Crushing the railway strike, Agarwal rightly concludes, was a prelude to the imposition of the 1975 Emergency. The May 1974 railway strike in India and

the May 1926 General Strike in the UK, despite different locations and time periods, had one commonality: the issues of low pay and harsh working conditions were central to them. The recent emergence of the wave of industrial strikes in north and western India on the same issues of low pay and working conditions indicates that labour may be defeated, in some instances, as it was in 1926 and 1974, by the power of capital. But the labour-capital conflict remains the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, compounded further by the capital-environment contradiction manifested through the ecological crisis threatening our planet.



independence, was inspired by the General Strike and moved decisively towards a socialist vision to free India from British colonial rule. He played a key role in renaming the Hindustan Republican Army as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. He viewed the General Strike as undermining the economic and political power of the British Empire. When the Great Depression (1929-1939) struck Britain and other advanced capitalist economies, renowned economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) caused a stir in economic theory and policy by arguing that the low purchasing power of the working class, caused by low

## Reviving cotton : Real challenge lies in execution on the ground

Similar to Punjab, the drug issue now dominates the political discourse in Tamil Nadu

INDIA'S Rs 5,659-crore Mission for Cotton Productivity arrives at a time when the country's cotton economy is confronting both an agricultural and industrial crisis. Falling yields, rising pest attacks and shrinking acreage have steadily weakened a crop that once powered rural incomes and India's textile strength. The Centre's ambitious intervention, therefore, is not merely about boosting production; it is about rebuilding confidence among farmers who have increasingly abandoned cotton cultivation. For Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, the stakes are especially high. In Punjab's Malwa belt, cotton was once considered a dependable cash crop. However, repeated whitefly infestations, pink bollworm attacks, erratic weather and rising input costs pushed farmers back towards paddy cultivation despite the severe ecological cost of groundwater depletion. The decline of cotton acreage reflects a deeper agrarian distress in North India, where farmers are often trapped between environmental unsustainability and economic insecurity. The mission's focus on climate-resilient

seed varieties, high-density planting systems, modern



ginning infrastructure and extra-long staple cotton is a

step in the right direction. India cannot aspire to become a global textile powerhouse while remaining dependent on imported premium cotton. The broader 'Farm to Fibre to Fashion to Foreign' strategy rightly recognises that agriculture and manufacturing are deeply interconnected. The success of this mission will depend on execution at the field level. Farmers need timely access to quality seeds, affordable credit, scientific pest-management systems and crop insurance that provides real protection rather than bureaucratic frustration. Procurement systems must also inspire confidence if cultivators are expected to return to cotton. For Punjab and Haryana, reviving cotton in water-stressed regions could help reduce dependence on paddy and ease pressure on groundwater reserves. But if implementation remains trapped in paperwork and delayed coordination, the country risks repeating the same cycle of disillusionment that drove farmers away from cotton in the first place.

# The covenant and the contract

Part I, The Soldier at the Door : Why India's military deserves a framework of its own

Many recall the Indian soldier's contribution in the First and Second World Wars, fought across three continents. Few remember that the Second World War was also fought on Indian soil. The Battle of Kohima, once described as the "Forgotten War", is today recognised by military historians across the world as among the finest military campaigns of that war. In 1944, on a ridge that became synonymous with the Battle of Kohima, soldiers fought at such proximity that the tennis court between opposing trenches became part of the battlefield. Years later, that inscription came to mark not victory alone, but something deeper: the nature of military service itself. It did not create something new. It recognised something ancient. The civilisational legacy of the Indian soldier.

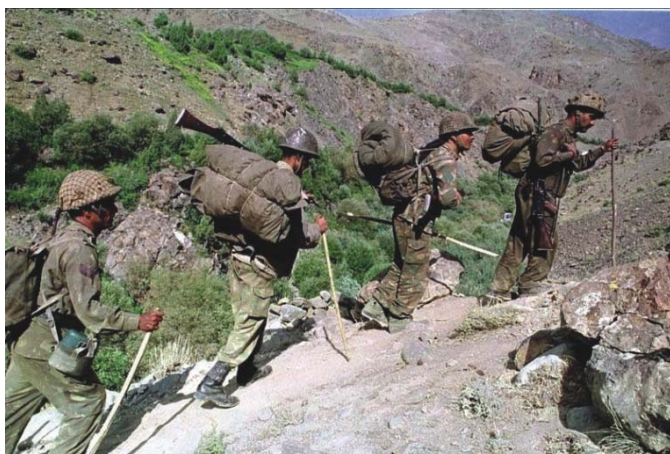
Historically, he has always been a volunteer for the ultimate sacrifice. That distinction matters. It matters more today than it ever has. Unlike others, the soldier cannot quit on a whim, cannot unionise, cannot litigate against a transfer and cannot refuse an order that may lead to his death. This is not a lifestyle choice. It is a legal surrender of rights every other citizen retains.

It is the only profession in the Republic where the Constitution is not something you merely live under, but something you may be ordered to die for.

To subject that covenant to the same framework as defined liability service is not merely administratively untidy. It is a category error. But the soldier's liability does not end with the body. It extends to the self. He sets aside everything that marks him in civilian life. Language, caste, religion, region, political preference and personal ambition all remain part of him as a human being, but none may override the larger compact he has entered. The transformation is not ceremonial. It is operational. Trust in combat cannot wait for sociological

negotiation. Cohesion under fire cannot pause for identity management. The regiment functions because the uniform has replaced the self with something larger. Identity is subordinated because survival, command and trust require it.

That is why the soldier eventually becomes, in the fullest sense, everyone's soldier. When he arrives at the citizen's



door in flood, in fire, in the aftermath of violence, the citizen does not ask his caste. The soldier does not offer it. Everything that fractures Indian public life dissolves at that threshold. He surrendered those fragments long before he arrived there. At the SSB (Services Selection Board). At the passing-out parade. At the first moment he wore the uniform and understood what it demanded of him. That surrender is not incidental to service. It is the deepest form of it. The soldier who stands at that door has not merely shown up. He has arrived as the nation.

Undivided. Unreserved. Unconditional. At that door, the Republic is not debated. It is delivered.

The military in India is one of the very few institutions where unity in diversity is not aspirational rhetoric but operational necessity. That achievement is among the Republic's greatest institutional successes.

Generation Z understands this instinctively, and perhaps more clearly than the debate itself yet does.

This generation does not romanticise institutions. It joins, when it does, after conscious calculation about how to spend the one life it has. It has grown up in an identity-saturated world where every platform asks it to perform, market and continuously explain itself.

The self has become performance. And the performance is exhausting. Then they encounter the uniform.

The uniform says: here, none of that matters.

For many of them, that is not sacrifice. It is relief.

The military offers what no startup, no salary package and no influencer economy can provide: a purpose that absorbs the self completely and returns something larger in its place.

The soldier at the citizen's door is not diminished by having no caste in that moment. He is elevated by it. He is perhaps the only person in that doorway who has genuinely transcended the fractures others are still negotiating. This generation is not running from self-erasure. It is searching for a place where the self can finally rest. The uniform is that place. The young volunteer who steps forward today is not an accident of recruitment statistics or nostalgia for another era. Generation Z is shaped not only by its own choices, but by the values it inherits from family, peers and the moral

climate around it. Somewhere within that continuum, the legacy of the soldier still survives in the bloodstream of the Republic.

That is why the calling endures.

Each generation, in its own language and under its own pressures, chooses the covenant again.

From 1948, 1971, Kargil to Operation Sindoor, generation after generation has answered that covenant without renegotiation. In mountains, deserts, jungles, counter-insurgency grids and humanitarian crises, the Indian soldier has repeatedly demonstrated something increasingly rare in the modern world: disciplined force under constitutional restraint. At a time when conflict elsewhere often struggles even to define its own exit, India's military tradition has remained tied not merely to victory, but to proportion, control and return.

The covenant, however, must run both ways.

The Republic often measures military service only in moments of visible sacrifice. But the deeper cost is quieter, slower and cumulative.

The officer who retires early has given the nation the very decades other professions use to consolidate careers, wealth, networks and security.

He does not merely risk his life.

He surrenders his earning arc.

That sacrifice is not incidental to military service. It is embedded into its design. The nation requires youth in combat leadership. It requires a force capable of movement, endurance and decision under pressure. The compressed military career is therefore not an administrative flaw. It is part of the operational logic of the institution itself. And when a young person understands that clearly, steps forward with open eyes and accepts that covenant anyway, the Republic owes that person an answer written not merely in ceremony, but in structure. In policy. In design.



## Healthy Diet

# 4 Broccoli Salad

### Recipes That You'll Want To Make Tonight

Broccoli is a deeply-divisive vegetable. You can barbecue it, roast it with cheese, layer it into a macaroni bake. You can use leftover pasta for this, or make fresh

Broccoli is a deeply-divisive vegetable. George Bush Sr hated even the sight of it, banning it from being served even from Air Force One. "And I haven't liked it since I was a little kid and my mother made me eat it. And I'm president of the United States, and I'm not going to eat any more broccoli!" he is reputed to have grumbled. On the other hand is Barack Obama, who absolutely loves the stuff. Broccoli may cleave the Presidents of the USA, but it is rather a delicious vegetable, and endlessly versatile - it easily takes to South East Asian flavours as well as European and Indian ones. You can barbecue it, roast it with cheese, layer it into a macaroni bake or even toss it into Thai curries. But although most people view broccoli as a sort of warming vegetable to be eaten in winters or monsoons, it is also excellent in salads, which makes it the perfect vegetable for our simmering, sultry summers. Broccoli and cheese are a match made in salad heaven, but it also works superbly in a garlic, chilli and soy sauce salad, or tumbled with pasta or even cooked with sausage or salami for a more hearty salad. Below, I've given you some of my absolute favourite broccoli salads, quick and easy to

put together, with the minimum of fuss. Perfect for a summer's day when you don't want to spend hours broiling over the stove.

#### Broccoli Pasta Salad

You can use leftover pasta for this, or make fresh. Any small pasta like farfalle (bow tie shaped) or penne should do. I love adding fruit to my salads; in this case, the sweetness

Pistachios to serve  
Salt to taste

#### Method:

Bring a pot of heavily salted water to the boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente (around seven to ten minutes). Cut the broccoli into small florets, and toss it into the pot, after removing the pasta. Then dry the hot broccoli with a napkin, in order to prevent it from getting mushy. Add it with the pasta to the pepper, the pear and the cucumber.

Whisk the olive oil, vinegar, orange juice, salt, and chilli together vigorously, then pour into salad. Sprinkle with pistachios before serving for a bit of crunch.

#### South East Asian Broccoli Salad

#### Method:

Bring a pot of heavily salted water to the boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente (around seven to ten minutes). Cut the broccoli into small florets, and toss it into the pot, after removing the pasta. Then dry the hot broccoli with a napkin, in order to prevent it from getting mushy. Add it with the pasta to the pepper, the pear and the cucumber.

Whisk the olive oil, vinegar, orange juice, salt, and chilli together vigorously, then pour into salad. Sprinkle with pistachios before serving for a bit of crunch.

#### Hot Broccoli, Choriz and Prawn Salad

Broccoli - 250g  
Goa sausage - (choriz) 100g

Prawns - 200 g  
Olive oil to fry  
Garlic cloves - 8, chopped  
Green peas - 1/2 cup  
Salt to taste  
Coriander leaves to serve  
Honey - 2 tsp  
Green chilli - 1, chopped  
Extra virgin olive oil - 1/4 cup

#### Method:

Cube the sausage and fry in some olive oil in a saucepan, for about six minutes. Then add in the garlic, frying until pale gold in colour. Toss in the broccoli, stirring occasionally. Add the green peas and prawns once the broccoli is nearly tender, around five or six minutes.

Toss the honey, extra virgin olive oil and chilli in a bowl, and pour over the contents of the saucepan. Season and serve with coriander sprinkled on top.

**Broccoli, Ricotta And Rice Salad**  
This broccoli salad is a great way to dispose off old, leftover rice-you can use any type of rice you like.

Broccoli - 250g  
Kashmiri chilli - 1, finely chopped  
Ricotta - 100g  
Leftover cooked rice - 100g, at room temperature  
Baby spinach leaves - 200g  
Lemon juice - 1 tsp

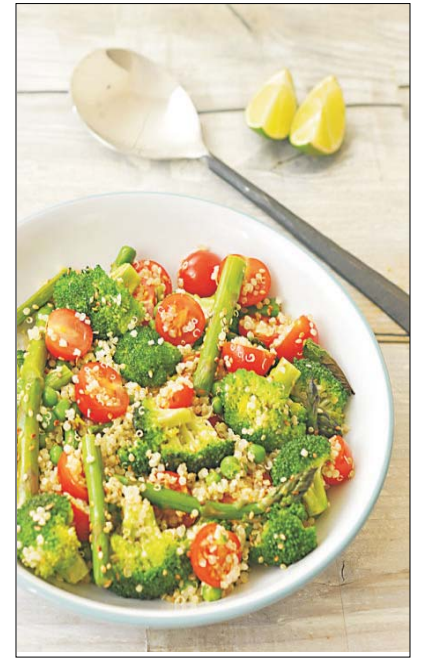
#### Salt to taste Method:

Bring a pan of water to boil, and add salt. Meanwhile, cut the broccoli into little florets, and as soon as the water starts bubbling over, throw in the broccoli. The broccoli should take about five to six minutes to finish cooking. Take it all out and drain.

Crumble the ricotta cheese into little pieces, and mix into the broccoli; the heat will help the ricotta to melt. Then toss in everything else, mix well, and serve.

#### Get The Most From Your Broccoli

When looking to buy broccoli, look



for bright green-coloured ones, with their heads compacted together, rather than loose florets. Avoid broccoli that has yellow flowers.

It's best not to overcook your broccoli, if you want to preserve its nutrition. A maximum of seven to ten minutes is ideal. This way, it won't get soggy, and you'll have the added advantage of leaving the broccoli crisp and bright green. You can even eat broccoli raw.

If you want to keep your broccoli for a long time, try freezing it, rather than refrigerating it. Otherwise, keep it in the vegetable crisper in a bag with holes in it, so that it can breathe, and ideally, use it within three days.

Cut ySou broccoli like you would cauliflower-the easiest way is by cutting off the canopy of florets, then cutting the more fibrous stalk. The very end of it is far too fibrous to eat though. Better to cut it off and discard it.



of the pear acts as a subtle foil to the earthy funkiness of broccoli.

Pasta - 150g  
Broccoli - 100g  
Pear - 1, chopped into little pieces  
Cucumber - 1 small, diced  
Red pepper - 1, chopped finely  
Chilli flakes - 1 tsp  
Olive oil - 2 tbsp  
Balsamic vinegar - 2 tsp  
Orange juice - 1 tbsp

## Food combinations that taste terrific

Move over fish and chips. Here are some new food combinations that guarantee a healthy kick to your diet. While certain food duos simply taste terrific together, there are other combinations that can work real wonders on our wellbeing too. But how do you know what you need to add to what?

Well, for a supercharged health kick, we've done the food maths for you...

#### ADD LOW-FAT YOGHURT... TO SALMON

Next time you're making up a salmon sandwich, mix in low-fat yoghurt. The vitamin D from oily fish helps the body better absorb the calcium from the yoghurt - and that's good news for your bones.

#### ADD AN EGG... TO SALAD

A Purdue University study in the US found the people who ate a salad with egg absorbed more carotenoids from the veg (antioxidants linked to good heart and eye health) than those who didn't. "The fat in eggs helps to increase the absorption of carotenoids," says nutritionist Kim Pearson. "So top off your next salad with a chopped up free-range organic egg."

#### ADD BROCCOLI... TO TOMATO PASTA SAUCE

Both tomatoes and broccoli contain cancer-fighting nutrients. A University of Illinois study in the US found that they were better at shrinking prostate tumours when eaten together rather than alone. The researchers believe that's because different bioactive compounds in each food work on different anti-cancer pathways.

#### ADD WINE... TO FISH

Italian researchers discovered that women who consumed a glass of wine a day had higher levels of healthy omega-3 fats in their blood. The scientists believe the polyphenol antioxidants in the wine may help the body



soak up healthy fats from the fish. We don't need to tell you to go easy on the vino (drinking too much is thought to raise breast cancer risk) so you could also try infusing your fish in a wine-based marinade before cooking.

#### ADD A SIDE OF COLESLAW... TO YOUR EVENING MEAL

A study from the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York, found people who ate raw cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower three times a month had 40% less chance of developing bladder cancer. "Cooking veg can destroy some nutrients. Raw veg generally contains higher levels - aim to eat some every day," says Kim. "Try making home-made coleslaw with a quality mayonnaise and serve on the side. Or dip raw broccoli and cauliflower into guacamole."

#### ADD BLACK PEPPER... TO TURMERIC

The popular yellow curry spice turmeric contains curcumin, an anti-inflammatory that may help ease the pain of arthritis. Turmeric has also been linked to protecting against cancer, high cholesterol, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease. "The trouble is that curcumin is known to be poorly absorbed by the gut," says Kim. "But studies have shown that the piperine in black pepper helps to enhance the absorption of curcumin."

#### ADD SPINACH... TO A CHICKPEA CURRY

Spinach is a great source of magnesium - good for bone, muscle and heart health. It also helps the body convert food to energy. "Vitamin B6 is needed to enhance magnesium absorption," says Hannah Richards from Cardiff Sports Nutrition.

"Studies have shown that nearly twice the amount of magnesium is absorbed when vitamin B6 is taken along with it. Chickpeas are a great source of vitamin B6, so combining them with spinach in a curry is a great idea."

#### ADD CAULIFLOWER... TO CHICKEN

Scientists from the Institute of Food Research found that serving up two food components together - sulforaphane (a plant chemical) and selenium (an essential mineral) could make them up to 13 times more powerful at attacking cancer together than they are alone. Cauliflower is a good source of sulforaphane and chicken contains selenium, include them both in your Sunday roast.

#### ADD CHILLI PEPPERS... TO KALE

Vitamin C helps the body better absorb iron. So to get the maximum amount of plant-based iron from leafy greens (such as kale and spinach), try wilting the greens in a pan with some garlic and chopped-up chillies (which are packed with vitamin C).

#### ADD OLIVE OIL... TO TOMATOES

Tomatoes are packed with vitamins. They're also a rich source of carotenoid nutrients like lycopene, thought to help reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease. Studies have shown that when tomatoes are eaten with healthy fats (like olive oil) the body absorbs masses more of these carotenoid phytochemicals. So saute your tomatoes in olive oil when cooking, or drizzle on when serving a salad.

## Achari Paneer Tikka Recipe

Your favourite snack Paneer Tikka flavoured with tangy spices. Achar is basically pickle which is often accompanies Indian food. This recipe of Achari Paneer Tikka is an ideal appetizer for a dinner party or a get-together with friends and family. A special tricolor tikka recipe for Republic day, curated exclusively by Chef Bikram of Desi Vibes.

#### Ingredients Of Achari Paneer Tikka

2 tsp Pickle gravy  
250 Gram Paneer (cottage cheese)  
1 tsp Coriander seeds  
1/4 tsp Fenugreek seeds (methi dana)  
1/2 tsp Onion seeds (Kalonji)  
1/4 tsp Hung curd  
1 tsp Ginger-garlic paste  
To taste Salt  
1/4 tsp Red chilli powder  
1/4 tsp Garam masala powder  
1/4 tsp Mustard powder  
A pinch of Turmeric powder  
2 Tbsp Oil

#### A few sprigs Fresh mint (pudina)

#### How to Make Achari Paneer Tikka

1. Dry roast coriander seeds, fenugreek seeds, onion seeds till fragrant. Set aside to cool. 2. Place hung curd in a bowl, add ginger-garlic paste, salt, red chilli powder, garam masala powder, mustard powder, pickle gravy, turmeric powder and mix well. 3. Crush the roasted spices in a mortar with the



pestle. Add a little of the crushed spices to the yogurt and mix well. 4. Cut cottage cheese into 1 inch cubes and add to the curd mixture and mix well so that all the cottage pieces are well coated. Let them marinate for around 15 minutes. 5. Heat oil in a non stick pan. String the cottage cheese cubes onto satay sticks and place them in the pan. 6. Cook, rotating the sticks, so that the cottage cheese cubes get evenly cooked all around. 7. Arrange them on a serving plate, garnish with mint sprig and serve hot.

**Key Ingredients:** Pickle gravy, Paneer (cottage cheese), Coriander seeds, Fenugreek seeds (methi dana), Onion seeds (Kalonji), Hung curd, Ginger-garlic paste, Salt, Red chilli powder, Garam masala powder, Mustard powder, Turmeric powder, Oil, Fresh mint (pudina)



## Recipe: Tandoori pomfret

Tandoori Pomfret is a delicious fish delight. Here the exotic flavors of spices all wrapped in the fish and then grill in the oven. Resulting really juicy and scrumptious grilled fish.



### Ingredients:

8 Pomfret fish  
1/4 tsp Turmeric powder  
2 tbsp Red chilli powder  
1 tsp Garam masala powder  
1/2 tsp Carom seeds/ ajwain  
1 tbsp Roasted gram flour/ Besan  
1/2 cup Hung Curd  
Salt to taste  
4 tbsp Mustard oil  
Juice of 1 lemon  
2 tbsp Coriander paste  
1 tsp Ginger-garlic paste

### Directions:

- Trim tails, fins and other unnecessary things. Then wash it thoroughly.
- Make incisions on a clean fish. Keep it aside.
- In a bowl, add all the ingredients mentioned in the ingredient list. Adjust the amount of besan and yogurt to get a nice thick paste.
- Apply this marinade to the fish on both sides very well.
- Keep it for at least 30 minutes in the fridge.
- Preheat the oven to 180 Degree Celsius (356 Degree Fahrenheit).
- Grease the pan or rack. Place the fish on grill rack and cook it for 15-20 minutes until golden brown.
- Serve with Onion rings and lemon.

## Recipe: Stuffed tomatoes

A low-cal vegan option that pleases the palate as well  
Preparation time: 15mins  
Cooking time: 15 mins  
Serves: 4

### Ingredients:

4 medium sized tomatoes  
200g boiled potatoes  
100g paneer (cottage cheese)  
1 tbsp desi ghee (clarified butter)  
1 tsp finely chopped green chilies  
1 tsp finely chopped coriander leaves  
1/2 tsp amchur powder (dry mango powder)  
1/2 tsp black pepper powder  
1 tsp sendha namak (rock salt)

### Recipe Method:

Cut off the top of the tomatoes and scoop out the seeds and pulp to get a cavity. Set aside.  
Grate the paneer and the boiled potatoes. Mix in all the other ingredients. Heat the ghee in a pan and add the mixture. Saute for 3-4 minutes stirring continuously. Cool the mixture and stuff in the tomatoes. Grill or bake in a preheated oven at 200 degree centigrade for 10mins. Alternatively you can shallow fry in 1 tbsp till the tomatoes are cooked but firm.



# Cook broccoli the right way

**Though broccoli has been bumbling with a not so good reputation still there are people out there who love eating broccoli. Just follow few simple steps and you can make this green a popular veggie of your diet.**

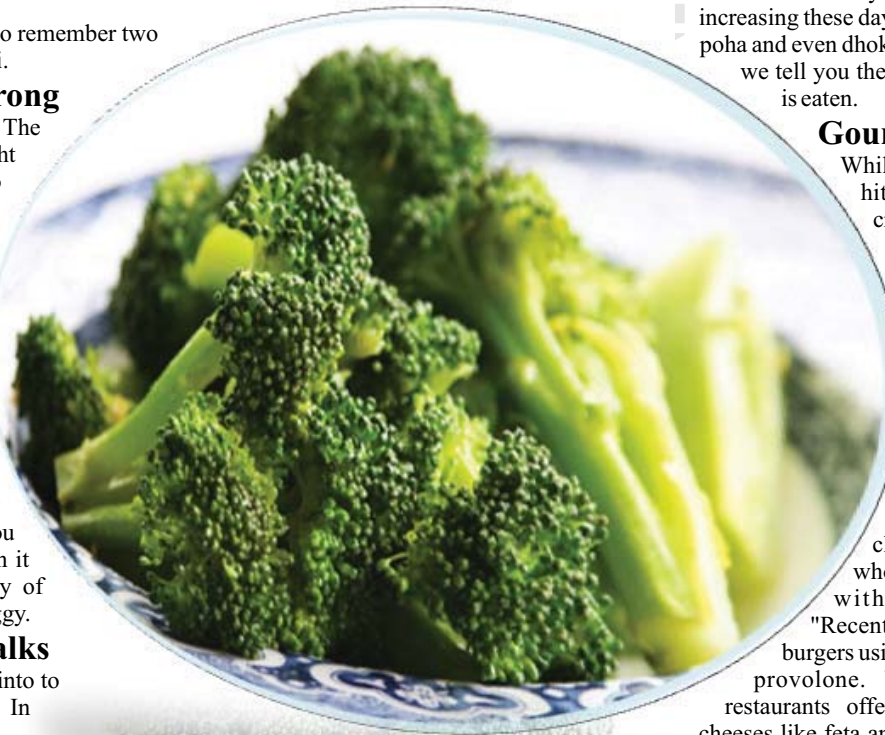
As a beginner you just need to remember two things while tackling broccoli.

### Undercooking is Wrong

Do not undercook broccoli. The modern art of cooking might believe at al dente of crunchy but do not do this to broccoli. A little softer the better it is. Broccoli has a marvelous texture because of its extravagant head of hair. While cooking beyond al dente, they soften and start to break up a little after which you are free to add any dressing. It sucks up the dressing giving it a juicy tang with sublime results. All you need to remember is to drain it well and allow it get plenty of steam so that it doesn't get soggy.

### Don't Cut off the Stalks

Peel the stalks and cut them into to boil them with the florets. In case you have not tried this



before you will love the stalk's sweet meat.

Here are a few things to do with broccoli. Have you any tips with broccoli? We'd love to hear them in the comments under this piece.

- Dress them with some fresh lemon juice, salt and olive oil. Make sure that it is cooked soft.
- You can serve it with pasta. Boil the broccoli in salt water till it gets soft. Drain and let them steam for a few minutes. Fry some garlic in olive oil and add pine nuts and broccoli. Squeeze some lime juice,

season and serve with pasta with some parmesan sprinkled on it.

- In half a cup of water at room temperature, sprinkle 1 tbsp of gelatin and let soak for 1/2 an hour. Pour 1 1/2 cups of boiling water over and mix well to dissolve. Leave to cool. When cool and beginning to set, mix in the broccoli, walnuts, salt, pepper and corn. Transfer into the mould and leave to chill and set in the refrigerator. When ready to serve, pass a knife around to loosen edges, place an inverted plate over the mould and turn upside down. Your Broccoli and Walnut Mould Salad is ready.

## A guide to cheese varieties and pairing

Other than being used as a topping, we tell you how cheese can be eaten the traditional way

While the variety of cheesy snacks are increasing these days - from cheese-topped poha and even dhoklas with melted cheese, we tell you the traditional way cheese is eaten.

### Gourmet all the way

While mozzarella became a hit when people went crazy about the stringy, chewy pizza topping, desserts like cheesecakes and tiramisu made us take notice of mascarpone and cream cheese. Delicious salads made of fruits, veggies and herbs, are also topped up with cheese. Mira Maniar, who loves to experiment with her dishes says, "Recently, I made gourmet burgers using smoked cheddar and provolone. Not just that, even restaurants offer pizzas topped with cheeses like feta and gouda, which until a few years ago, were completely unheard of."

### Plating and pairing

One of the most important things that needs focus when it comes to cheese is how it should be plated and what it should be paired with. Chef Ravi Dua says, "I was surprised to find how well-aware people are when it comes to cheese and their pairings. There are a variety of TV shows that educate people these days on what cheese can be eaten with what and how you can plate it. We get a lot of requests to serve

cheese platters with specific pairings at events and small parties. Not just that, markets are also well-stocked with foods that work as great cheese pairings, including artisan crackers and breads like nutty walnut loafs, sourdough breads, baguettes and even brioche that can be made on order."

### Cheese pairings to avoid -

Citrus fruits: Acidic and watery fruits can kill the flavour of your cheese and the water from them can also ruin the plate. -Strongly flavoured bread and crackers: Heavy flavours like garlic and onion are a complete no-no on your platter as they can interfere with the actual taste of your cheese. Some cheese already have underlying onion and garlic flavours, it is not advisable to go overboard with the tastes. -Spicy food: Again, a strong spicy taste

will kill the taste of cheese. Instead, the cheese will end up soothing your tastebuds from the spice - defeating the whole purpose of a platter. -Not all nuts go with cheese: While nuts and dried fruit go well with cheese, not all of them make great pairings. Cashews are avoidable. Good cheese pairings -Pecans, almonds, hazelnuts and walnuts go well with hard cheeses, while pistachios go with soft ones. -Grapes, figs and dates are all great to serve your cheeses with. -Olives and cheese are a great match. You can put onion relishes and greek yogurt dips on the side.



# 'Malay cuisine perfect for Indian market'

**The common usage of ingredients like coriander powder, turmeric, green chilli, red chilli powder and ginger between Indian and Malaysian cuisines makes it suit Indian tastes well, says Malaysian chef Muhammad Lisarni, who feels food from his country can be an instant success here.**

"Malaysia's population is divided amongst three major ethnic groups -- Malays, Chinese and Indians. The taste of Malaysian food is subtle and unique as it is the fusion of Chinese vegetables blended with Indian spice, which makes our food rich and fresh.

"But since we use the same spices like coriander powder, turmeric, green chilli, red chilli powder, palm sugar (jaggery) and ginger, it suits the Indian palate to perfection and should be an instant success in the Indian market," Lisarni told IANS in an interview here. The Kuala Lumpur-based chef is on his debut visit to the country to



conduct an exclusive masterclass as part of a Malaysian food festival being held at the Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel here. The festival, in association with Tourism Malaysia and the Malaysian High Commission, started on May 23 and will conclude on May 31. He hopes to entice Indian food aficionados with the

distinct "hotness" of his native cuisine. "In Malay cuisine, fresh aromatic herbs and roots are used, some familiar, such as lemongrass, ginger, coconut, pandan leaf, garlic, shallots, kaffir limes and fresh chillies. Both fresh and dried chillies are used to add hotness which will definitely satiate the Indian tastebuds," Lisarni said. As a specialist in Malay cuisine, Lisarni has played an integral role in the production of the Malay kitchen at Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel in Kuala Lumpur - a popular business hub and tourist destination of Malaysia, where over 10 percent of the nearly 30 million population is ethnic Indian.

Lisarni's cooking style is based on traditional methods, showcasing simplicity, freshness and natural textures, and it is imbued with cultural influences. He felt that in today's time, people are opting for organic and healthy way of living - and it is something that Malay cuisine can stand out for in the culinary world.

"Today, our lifestyle has evolved into a more organic and healthy way of living. Malay cuisine in particular is a perfect fit in the Indian market as it provides a touch of freshness to the various meats and vegetables, but keeping the flavours similar to those accustomed to the Indian palate," he said.

Lisarni, whose passion for cooking is visible in his meticulously prepared and skilfully presented dishes, also pointed out that while "trends in the culinary industry are ever-changing, the flavours and textures are everlasting".

"The challenge we face is to present the same ingredients in different ways," he said.



# Catcalled, Beaten, Clothes Torn: Morning Tea Horror For 2 Women In Delhi

The women alleged that one of them was molested and her clothes were torn, while the accused uttered racist slurs and even attacked them with a bamboo stick while they were trying to escape.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Two women were sipping tea on a peaceful Sunday morning in Delhi's Nehru Place. Suddenly, a group of men started passing derogatory remarks, a response from one of the women to which instigated physical assault. Soon, their clothes were torn and they were allegedly molested as a crowd watched, but no one intervened.

The incident occurred at a tea stall outside a hotel on May 10 around 7 am. Two men took off their shirts and starting catcalling, the women recounted in their police complaint. "We confronted them about it. Afterwards, we moved further away and sat down quietly," one of the women told ANI.

The men returned and were soon joined by

more, all provoking the two women - one from Assam and the other from Bihar - while also attacking them. The women alleged that one of them was molested and her clothes were torn, while the accused uttered racist slurs and even attacked them with a bamboo stick while they were trying to escape. "Those men came really close to us, and when my friend pushed him, one of them slapped her," one of the women recounted.

According to police, one of the clips recorded by the women, around two minutes long, purportedly shows a group of men hurling abuses at the women while appearing to be under the influence of alcohol. The video also allegedly captures



a tense exchange in which one of the accused is heard attempting to stop the recording. "In the footage, one of the men can be heard saying, 'Bhai ye toh video bana rahi hai, kya karey?'" (She is making a video, what should I do?) Following

which, abusive language was used," the officer said.

As the incident unfolded, the women claimed that several people stood witness, some even "watching and laughing", but no one responded to calls for help. My blood pressure dropped because of the aggression and stress. We were also on our periods at that time and were already uncomfortable," one of the women told PTI.

The incident, one of the victims said, was long in the making. "They tried to harass me many times, but I never gave those people any attention. Since my friends were not present there on that particular day, they took advantage of the situation.

The local police do not patrol the area at night," she said. The accused continued to follow them and they did not feel protected even while the police accompanied them, the women said.

Even after the incident was over, the women felt the fear of being followed, the trauma of the alleged assault and the struggle to feel normal again. "I haven't been able to eat or sleep since the incident. My entire body is in pain. I'm worried about my mental health," one of them told PTI. "I am bold, and I want to continue being bold, but I also want to feel safe. I am able to speak up, but there are many girls who cannot. What will happen to them? That is why I want safety," the woman from Assam added.

## Delhi HC okays relocation of three slum clusters near PM's residence

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Monday directed the inhabitants of three slum clusters near the Prime Minister's residence in the Race Course area to vacate the camps within 15 days and move to the alternative location provided by government authorities. The court cited "security concerns" and said the authorities would be free to take action after they fail to comply with the order.

Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav said that the residents were first served eviction notices on October 29, 2025, and "sufficient time has elapsed since then". The court accepted the authorities' contention related to the "contemporary geopolitical events", and their "national security concerns", as specific reasons for eviction. The court was hearing petitions filed by residents of Bhai Ram Camp, DID Camp, and Masjid Camp, who challenged their eviction and relocation to Savda Ghevra in outer Delhi.

The judge noted that the government had taken the policy decision due to "national security concerns" and said that the court "ought not to be too eager to interfere" with such actions.

The bench held that the 'right to shelter and livelihood' were 'intricately connected' to the right to life, protected under Article 21 (right to life) of the Constitution. The rehabilitation, however, would itself not violate constitutional rights if authorities comply with rehabilitation policies and ensure adequate facilities.

Therefore, it directed the government to ensure compliance with the provisions of the DUSIB (Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board) policy and the DUSIB protocol, including securing education, travel, water and sanitation facilities, etc. for the residents. The petitioners had claimed that shifting families far from their current homes would disrupt their livelihood.

## Delhi Fire Services to get modernisation push under new masterplan

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi government has decided to prepare a long-term firefighting master plan aimed at strengthening fire safety infrastructure and improving emergency response mechanisms across the capital.

Delhi Home Minister Ashish Sood on Monday chaired a review meeting with senior officials and divisional officers of the Delhi Fire Services to assess fire preparedness and prevention measures in the capital.



During the meeting, officials reviewed existing fire prevention systems, emergency response preparedness, availability of modern firefighting equipment, procurement of new fire vehicles and plans for modernization of the Fire Department. Discussions were also held on developing a comprehensive Fire Fighting Master Plan to address future requirements in view of national capital's expanding population and rapid urbanisation.

The meeting focused on improving response time, modernising the department's communication systems and establishing an advanced command and control network. The government also stressed the need for advanced technical training for fire personnel to keep pace with evolving technologies.

Sood directed officials to strengthen and technologically upgrade Delhi's fire safety system to ensure swift action during emergencies. He said the government was committed to modernising the Fire Department's infrastructure and machinery while prioritising the safety of residents.

## 465 students barred from semester exams for low attendance

New Delhi.(Agency)

Nearly 465 students of Shaheed Rajguru College of Applied Sciences for Women have been declared ineligible to appear for the upcoming end-semester examinations after failing to meet the minimum attendance requirement mandated by the University of Delhi.

According to a notification, students who did not secure the required 66.67 per cent attendance will not be permitted to sit for semester examinations. Departments have also been directed to circulate the list of attendance defaulters in class groups to ensure students are informed about their examination status.

Confirming the move, principal

Payal Maggo said the college was obligated to implement university regulations strictly. She stated that students falling short of the



prescribed attendance percentage could not be allowed to take the examinations.

An analysis of the attendance data revealed that Semester 2 recorded the highest number of defaulters,

with 181 students accounting for nearly 39 per cent of the total cases.

Semester 6 had 113 students barred from exams, followed by 112 students in Semester 4 and 59 students in Semester 8. The notification highlighted the strict enforcement of the attendance policy, with even marginal shortages resulting in disqualification. The development sparked debate over attendance policies at the University of Delhi.

Students have often argued that internships, preparation for competitive examinations, and long commuting hours make it difficult to maintain rigid attendance requirements, raising questions about balancing academic discipline with flexibility in higher education.

## Mayor Pravesh WahI peeved at garbage pileup on roads

New Delhi.(Agency)

Mayor Pravesh WahI conducted an extensive inspection in the city's Badli area under the Civil Lines Zone to review the ground-level status of sanitation arrangements and civic amenities in the locality. During the inspection, he also expressed deep dissatisfaction after witnessing garbage scattered across several locations, debris lying unattended on roads, and the severely deteriorated sanitation conditions in the Badli area.

WahI visited various locations across the area and met residents, listened to their grievances and instructed the senior officials present on the spot to ensure immediate resolution of the issues raised by the public.

A video of the mayor personally picking up garbage was seen on social media that was aimed at sending a strong



message to officials and sanitation staff that cleanliness in Delhi is a core responsibility of the municipal corporation, not merely a formality. The mayor's approach and intervention were welcomed by local residents, who expressed satisfaction over the immediate action and appreciated the administration's responsiveness in addressing civic issues on the ground, said officials.

He also strongly reprimanded the officials concerned and sanitation staff and categorically stated that any form of negligence or indifference towards cleanliness and public services would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

During his interaction with shopkeepers and traders in the area, he appealed to them to mandatorily place dustbins outside their establishments. The mayor stated that the responsibility of making Delhi clean and well-organised does not rest solely with the Municipal Corporation.

## Livelihood at stake ahead of sealing drive



New Delhi.(Agency)

Shop owners near Ashok Nagar metro station are fearing loss of livelihood. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the Delhi Development Authority are scheduled to undertake a sealing drive on Tuesday against properties or shops in that area, citing that commercial activities cannot be carried out in a residential area.

An official letter, accessed by this newspaper, was sent by the DDA to the DCP (East) on May 6, requesting for police assistance during the sealing drive near the New Ashok Nagar Metro Station road and in Village Chilla Saroda Bangar.

The letter further stated that the sealing programme directed by the monitoring committee will be carried out by the MCD as per the identification of properties by the DDA and under the supervision of the assistant director (LM East Zone), DDA, and the concerned AE, MCD.

Despite the official orders, there was no intimation provided to the shop owner or residents regarding the drive. "The information spread among us through word of mouth and was sudden," said a shop owner in the area while adding, "We started shutting the shops with bricks from Sunday."

The last two days in that area have captured an image which is different from usual. What appears to be usually a crowded neighbourhood market selling groceries, vegetables, meat and daily essentials resembled a construction zone instead.

Frontages of shops were being walled up, goods being shifted onto pavements, and bewildered residents wandering from one blocked shopfront to another trying to find basic necessities. Sandeep, who has been running a grocery store in that area for several years now, said, "There are around 1,500-1,800 shops here, and we have been put in a difficult spot all of a sudden and are clueless about what to do." Another shop owner, Vijender, said, "We don't know what the civic authorities want; such actions hamper the livelihood of so many people."

## 'Continue driving': Delhi gets its first barrier-free toll plaza on UER-II

New Delhi.(Agency)

On Monday (May 11), all 24 boom barriers at Mundka-Bakkarwala toll plaza on Urban Extension Road (UER)-II went up. The fare displays, line cameras, signal light and FASTag readers were turned off. A rectangular structure mounted on each lane gantry with three high-tech cameras and high-performance FASTag readers went live instead.

The new board on the toll plaza read: "Continue driving". Replacing the old system with a new one, thus, also marked the beginning of Delhi-NCR's first and India's second Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) barrier-less tolling system.

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, inaugurated the advanced tolling system at Mundaka on Monday. This is a major milestone in the electronic toll collection (ETC) infrastructure of the country, which was started in 2014,



replacing the manual tolling system. Now, vehicles will not have to stop at the toll plaza for user fee or toll payment. The toll amount will be deducted with the help of high-performance Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) readers and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras mounted over the gantry. The RFID and ANPR cameras work and read the FASTag and Vehicle registration Number (VRN) even

when vehicles being driven at a speed of 80-100 kmph pass the gate, and the required amount gets deducted.

UER-II, officially called NH-344M, is a 75.7-km-long six-lane highway in Delhi, which starts from Mahipalpur and ends at Alipur.

Commuters crossing the toll gate on Monday morning were surprised and ended up stopping hesitantly even though boom barriers were up. Meanwhile, at lane number 14, Vikas Shukla, a toll supervisor, continuously waved hand asking drivers not to stop. "Aage badhiye, toll apne ap hi kat jaayega (Move ahead, the toll will be deducted automatically)," Shukla said to a person driving an SUV. He added that the new system is expected to end fights reported at the toll gate. "The work at a toll booth is very difficult. People say all kinds of things to you. Even when they are at fault. Everyday, there was something or the other," said Puneet Mishra, another employee at the fee plaza.

## West Bengal govt to implement Ayushman Bharat scheme: How to apply for Rs 5 lakh cashless treatment

MORBI.(Agency)

The newly elected BJP government led by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari has made a host of announcements at its first Cabinet in Nabanna, West Bengal. Much to expectations, the Bengal government has announced that the state will be aligned to centre's Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana' (PM-JAY). Under the Ayushman Bharat health-insurance scheme, citizens can avail cashless treatment of Rs 5 lakh. Ayushman Bharat, world's largest health-insurance scheme, offers annual hospitalisation benefits of up to Rs 5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary care. 1. Ayushman Bharat -Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana provides cashless and paperless access to services for the beneficiary at the point of service. AB-PMJAY is the world's largest Government funded health assurance scheme.

ALSO READ: 6.5 lakh people registered under Ayushman Bharat in Delhi

2. The benefits under AB-PMJAY are portable across the country. There is no cap on family size, or age or gender. 3. Entitled families are able to use the quality health services they need without facing financial hardships. 4. AB-PMJAY provides services only for inpatient treatment, therefore, only hospitals providing inpatient services are empanelled under this scheme. 5. AB-PMJAY provides treatment corresponding to a total of 1669 procedures under 26 different specialties including chronic diseases like Cancer, Diabetes, Heart Disease and other non-communicable diseases and renal and corneal transplant. Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy packages, along with surgical oncology are covered as part of cancer treatment under the scheme.

## Impact of higher fuel prices yet to hit Indian consumers: Uday Kotak

New Delhi.(Agency)

At a time of rising geopolitical uncertainty and fears of an energy-price shock from the ongoing Middle East conflict, Uday Kotak on Tuesday urged India Inc and policymakers to prepare for "rough weather", warning that the impact of higher fuel prices is yet to fully hit Indian consumers.

Speaking at the CII Annual Business Summit 2026, Kotak said India must prepare itself for economic shocks before they arrive rather than react after the damage is done. "I would like India to assume we will be in rough weather and prepare to do very well in rough weather. Men and women and strength are not built in good weather," Kotak said during the session. He warned that India has not yet fully experienced the impact of the recent surge in global energy prices triggered by tensions in the Middle East, but said the transmission of higher oil prices into the domestic economy was inevitable.

"We have not seen the impact in the last two months of the Middle East war in terms of energy price transmission. It's coming, and it's coming big, and consumers have not felt the pressure at all," he said.

Explaining the likely impact on households, Kotak said consumers with limited incomes would face a double blow as fuel costs rise directly and also push up prices of other goods dependent on transportation and energy inputs. "The shock is coming. Oil companies had the ability to be the shock absorber, and it's a large amount of money," he said, adding that the situation could improve only if geopolitical tensions ease quickly. Kotak also highlighted the growing role of domestic investors in India's economy, contrasting it with foreign capital flows. According to him, while foreign investors have invested roughly ₹1.5 trillion, domestic investors including retail participants and insurance companies have invested nearly ₹80 trillion into the economy.

## Stock markets open lower as oil surge, US-Iran conflict hurt sentiment

New Delhi.(Agency)

Equity benchmark indices tumbled in early trade on Tuesday amid rising crude oil prices as uncertainty surrounding the West Asia conflict clouded markets' confidence. Unabated foreign fund outflows also dragged the markets lower. The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 525.44 points to 75,489.84 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 164.5 points to 23,651.35. From the 30-Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Adani Ports and Bajaj Finserv were among the major laggards.

Bharti Airtel and NTPC were the winners.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 0.93 per cent higher at USD 105.2 per barrel.

"The ongoing US-Iran conflict continues to weigh on global sentiment, keeping risk appetite subdued across financial markets and resulting in heightened headline-driven volatility across equities and commodities. Investors remain wary as uncertainty surrounding the duration and potential outcome of the conflict continues to cloud market confidence," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth-tech firm, said. US President Donald Trump on Monday said the ceasefire with Iran was at its "weakest" and on "massive life support", a day after he rejected Tehran's proposal to end the months-long war as "totally unacceptable".

"It is at its weakest. After reading that piece of garbage they sent us. It's on life support, massive life support," Trump told reporters at the Oval Office in response to a question on the ceasefire with Iran in the wake of the rejection of the peace proposal. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 8,437.56 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi and Shanghai's SSE Composite index were trading lower, while Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted higher.

# India declines US-sanctioned Russian LNG despite supply strain

**India has told Russia it will not buy liquefied natural gas cargoes covered by US sanctions. The decision has left a tanker waiting near Singapore and underlined the compliance risks around Russian LNG.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

India has declined Russia's offer to sell it liquefied natural gas subject to US sanctions despite a shortfall driven by Middle East tensions, said two sources with direct knowledge of the matter, leaving a tanker bound for India in limbo as talks continue on permitted cargoes.

The stance highlights the fine balance the world's third-biggest oil importer and

consumer is seeking to strike between securing energy supplies and avoiding LNG cargoes on which the US has placed sanctions, which are harder to disguise and carry greater compliance risk. It also underscores the limits of Moscow's ability to pivot its LNG exports to new markets. India's reluctance has left an LNG cargo from Russia's US-sanctioned Portovaya plant in the Baltic Sea unable to discharge, despite indicating India as its destination in mid-April, one of the sources said. The vessel was tracked despite documentation suggesting the cargo was non-Russian, the source added. Reuters had reported in mid-April, citing LSEG shipping data, that the 138,200-cubic-metre tanker Kumpeng was heading to the Dahej LNG import terminal in western India. The vessel is now near Singaporean waters with no destination broadcast, according to LSEG. India, the biggest buyer of Russian seaborne crude, conveyed its decision

not to buy LNG that was under sanction to Russia's Deputy Energy Minister Pavel Sorokin during his April 30 visit,



when he met Indian officials including Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, one of the sources said. It was their second meeting in as many months, and Sorokin could return in June for further talks, said the source. India's Oil and Gas Ministry and Russia's embassy in Delhi did not immediately respond to requests for comment. 'RUSSIA KEEN TO SELL,

INDIAN COMPANIES CAUTIOUS'

India's purchases of Russian crude have meanwhile continued unabated, aided by a temporary waiver of U.S. sanctions introduced to help countries cope with an energy crisis resulting from the US-Israeli war on Iran, which began on February 28. Arctic LNG 2 is Russia's other export plant subject to US sanctions. Washington stepped up sanctions on the LNG plants in early 2025 over Russia's war on Ukraine.

While crude oil cargoes can be hidden through ship-to-ship transfers at sea, LNG shipments are far harder to conceal from satellite tracking, one of the sources said. India is open to buying authorised Russian LNG, but most of those volumes are committed to Europe, the source said. The source said China remains a major buyer of both sanctioned and unsanctioned Russian LNG. Moscow is also seeking long-term deals to supply India with LNG and fertilisers.

## AI can improve portfolios, but good investing still needs context: Geojit's Jones George

**As India's retail investing boom accelerates, AI-driven tools are reshaping how investors access markets and build portfolios. But technology alone cannot replace discipline, judgment and long-term financial understanding, says Jones George, Executive Director at Geojit Financial Services.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's retail investing landscape is undergoing a major transformation, driven by rising participation in equities, digital investing platforms and growing use of AI-led tools. But even as long-term investing gains traction, speculative trading behaviour continues to dominate among a large segment of new investors. In an interview with IndiaToday.in, Jones George, Executive Director at Geojit Financial Services, spoke about the evolution of retail investing in India, the growing dominance of derivatives trading, investor behaviour during

volatile markets, the role of AI in portfolio construction and why hybrid "phygital" wealth models could define the future of investing. Q. Retail participation in India has surged sharply, but data shows a large share of activity is still concentrated in



derivatives, where most retail investors tend to lose money. Do you see clear evidence of a shift towards long-term wealth creation, or is the trading mindset still dominant beneath the surface? Retail participation has undoubtedly deepened, but it is happening in two parallel tracks. On one side, we are seeing a very healthy structural shift toward long-term wealth creation through SIPs, mutual funds, retirement products, and diversified investment portfolios. The consistent growth in systematic investing and the increasing acceptance of goal-based

investing are strong indicators of maturity. At the same time, the trading mindset, particularly in derivatives, remains dominant for a large segment of new entrants, especially younger investors attracted by speed, leverage, and short-term excitement. Many enter markets through trading before they understand investing. So, the shift is real, but incomplete. The challenge for the industry is to convert participation into disciplined investing. Platforms, advisors, and regulators must work together to move investors from speculation to financial planning. True financial inclusion is not just about market access; it is about helping people stay invested long enough to create wealth or achieve their financial goals. Q. Markets have seen sharp swings in recent months, from global shocks such as the West Asia conflict to domestic corrections. In your view, has this phase of volatility improved investor discipline, or has it pushed retail investors towards more reactive, short-term behaviour? Volatility tends to reveal investor behaviour more than it changes it. For disciplined investors, market corrections often reinforce the importance of asset allocation, diversification, and staying invested through cycles.

## Govt reduces oil, gas royalty burden across offshore and deepwater blocks

SYDNEY.(Agency)

The Centre has reduced the royalty burden on crude oil and casing head condensate production from offshore deepwater and ultra-deepwater blocks, according to revised royalty provisions notified in the latest schedule under the oil and gas regime. Under the revised structure, royalty for deepwater areas has been fixed at 5 per cent for the first seven years from the commencement of commercial production and 10 per cent from the eighth year onwards. For ultra-deepwater blocks, no royalty will be charged for the first seven years of commercial production. In addition, a

royalty rate of 5 per cent will apply from the eighth year onwards. Moreover, the revised royalty schedule covers areas awarded under various regimes, including nomination-based awards to national oil companies, blocks awarded before the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP), and areas awarded under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) and Discovered Small Field (DSF) Policy.

For onland and shallow water areas, royalty rates remain at 12.5 per cent in most categories, while certain offshore and ultra-deepwater production

categories will attract lower levies. The government has also retained a 7.5 per cent royalty rate for some categories specified under the revised framework, while production-sharing contracts awarded under earlier policies will continue to follow rates specified in respective agreements. The government's move comes at a time when economies across the world are facing pressure due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia and rising volatility in global energy markets. Additionally, the government has said that we have adequate stocks of petroleum products.

## Gold prices remain steady: Should you sell now or wait?

**With gold prices showing little movement in recent days, many investors are left wondering what to do next. Is this a pause before another rise, or a good moment to lock in profits and sell?**

New Delhi.(Agency)

For many Indians, gold is more than just a metal. It is tradition, emotion and a trusted savings option, especially during weddings. But lately, the yellow metal has not seen the kind of sharp price rally many expected. Even as global tensions remain high, buying activity appears subdued after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to avoid non-essential gold purchases for a year amid rising economic pressure. At around 11:30 am, MCX Gold was trading at Rs 1,53,850, up slightly by Rs 183. While prices remain elevated, the pace of movement has slowed, with traders closely watching global developments and domestic sentiment.

WHY PM MODI'S REMARKS MATTER Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal asking Indians to avoid buying

gold for weddings for one year may have sounded surprising at first. In a country where gold is closely tied to celebrations, family traditions and long-term savings, the suggestion has sparked conversations. However, the message comes against a larger economic backdrop. India is dealing with pressure from rising crude oil prices and uncertainty linked to tensions in West Asia. Concerns around the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's busiest oil shipping routes, have added to worries over energy supplies and import bills. Since India imports both crude oil and large quantities of gold, higher purchases can put additional strain on the country's foreign exchange reserves and weigh on the rupee.

STEADY YET STRONG

Even though physical demand may have slowed, market experts say gold prices are still finding support from global uncertainty. Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, believes MCX Gold is showing renewed strength after breaking out of a recent consolidation phase. "MCX Gold opened with a gap up and is trading near the Rs 1,54,000 zone, breaking out of the recent consolidation range and trading above the ascending trendline with

renewed bullish momentum. Immediate resistance stands at Rs 1,54,750-Rs 1,55,000; a sustained move above this level could extend the rally toward Rs 1,55,500-Rs 1,56,000," he said. He added that Rs 1,53,000 remains an important



support level. If prices fail to hold above it, gold could slip back into the Rs 1,51,500-Rs 1,53,500 range. Still, Ponmudi believes the near-term outlook remains "cautiously bullish", helped by safe-haven demand amid rising geopolitical tensions.

WHAT IS DRIVING VOLATILITY IN GOLD?

According to Gaurav Garg, research analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, recent price swings in gold and silver are being influenced by multiple factors at the same time. "The recent volatility in gold and

silver markets can be attributed to a mix of geopolitical risks and technical trading patterns, with investors balancing these factors against expectations of forthcoming economic data," Garg said.

In simple terms, investors are currently caught between fear and caution. On one hand, global uncertainty is supporting gold prices. On the other, traders are waiting for fresh economic signals before making aggressive bets. TECHNICAL SIGNALS STILL FAVOUR 'BUY ON DIPS'

Dr Ravi Singh, Chief Research Officer at Master Capital Services Limited, said MCX Gold June futures continue to hold a positive trend. "MCX Gold June futures maintained their upward trajectory, closing at 153,663, up 0.74%, as the metal capitalises on its recent breakout. This advance reinforces the bullish structure, with prices now holding firmly above the 153,000 level," Singh said. He said that technical indicators continue to support a 'buy on dips' approach, with immediate support around the Rs 1,52,000 level and resistance near Rs 1,55,300.

Singh also pointed to broader global factors helping gold prices stay firm.

## Short news

## Tribal woman urges officials to shut illegal liquor shops flags impact on families in Telangana

SANGAREDDY.(Agency)

Clutching her two children close, Roopa, a tribal woman from Sanjeevanraopet in Narayankhed mandal, approached the sub-collector's office on Monday with an appeal to shut down the 'belt shops' that she alleges are tearing families apart.

During Prajavani programme, Roopa approached sub-collector Uma Harathi and described how alcohol addiction had affected her family. She alleged that her husband, once a hardworking man, had become dependent on alcohol after the opening of a belt shop.



"My husband is frequently harassing the children and me due to alcohol addiction. He is selling ration rice and household groceries to buy liquor. The children's studies are getting affected by the toxic environment at home," Roopa told the sub-collector.

Roopa alleged that illegal liquor outlets were selling alcohol even to children, and said she and her children were sometimes forced to stay at neighbours' houses due to the situation at home. She urged authorities to shut down the illegal shops to prevent other families from facing similar problems. The sub-collector assured her that the issue would be examined and appropriate action taken. Officials said 27 applications related to various departments were received during Prajavani programme.

## Government demolished Kakatiya-era Shiva temple for hidden treasure: BRS leader Harish

WARANGAL.(Agency)

Former minister T Harish Rao has alleged that the government demolished an 800-year-old Kakatiya-era Shiva temple at Ashok Nagar village in Khanapur mandal of Warangal district in the name of constructing an Integrated School, while secretly searching for hidden treasure.

The Siddipet MLA on Monday visited the demolished temple, known as 'Mattikota Shivalayam' and offered prayers at the site.

Former minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao, former MLAs Peddi Sudarshan Reddy, Shankar Naik, Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar, Aroori Ramesh and other BRS leaders accompanied Harish Rao.

Speaking to the media, he said the Revanth Reddy government was not only neglecting education but had now started demolishing temples as well. According to him, the sanctum sanctorum was destroyed after digging through the large mud embankment protecting the temple premises.

Harish Rao alleged that between midnight and 1 am, authorities dug a massive 24-foot-deep pit beneath the sanctum. If the objective was genuinely school construction, he questioned why the excavation was carried out secretly at midnight.

## Andhra Pradesh HC grants permission for rally against thermal plant

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

The High Court has ruled that people cannot be prevented from expressing their dissent through peaceful protests and rallies. Hearing a petition filed by tribal groups opposing the proposed coal-based thermal power plant at Vennelavalasa in Sarubujili mandal of Srikakulam district, the court granted permission for a rally while



imposing several conditions. Justice Subendu Samanta observed that denying citizens the right to raise their voice on public issues would amount to curtailing constitutional freedoms. The petition was filed by representatives of the Anti-Thermal Power Plant Struggle Committee after the Srikakulam DSP refused permission for the rally. Counsel for the petitioners argued that rejecting permission for a peaceful rally violates constitutional rights and assured the court that organisers would follow all police guidelines. The police, however, contended that the rally could lead to law and order issues.

## 'Zero compliance with POSH Act': Women's panel files scathing report in TCS case

Mumbai.(Agency)

A fact-finding committee constituted by the National Commission for Women (NCW) has found evidence of "pervasive sexual harassment", systemic bullying, religious harassment and serious violations of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, at the Nashik office of Tata Consultancy Services.

In a press statement issued on Monday, the NCW said it had taken suo motu cognisance of complaints by several women employees and constituted a fact-finding committee under the direction of NCW chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar.

The committee comprised Justice Sadhna Jadhav, retired judge of the Bombay High Court, former Haryana DGP BK Sinha, Supreme Court advocate Monika Arora, and NCW senior coordinator Lilabati. The panel visited Nashik on April 18 and 19 and

interacted with complainants, members of the Internal Committee constituted under the POSH Act, police officials and other witnesses.



The Commission said the inquiry culminated in a report exceeding 50 pages with over 25 recommendations, which was submitted to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on May 8.

According to the report, the committee observed a "deeply disturbing and toxic

workplace environment" marked by sexual harassment, abuse of authority and sustained mental harassment of women employees.

"The accused persons had assumed effective control of the TCS, Nashik. They used to target young and vulnerable girls," the NCW said in the statement, adding that complainants had allegedly faced sexual, emotional and mental harassment, including alleged molestation attempts.

The report alleged that women employees were subjected to repeated religious insults and anti-religious commentary at the workplace. According to the committee, the accused allegedly denigrated Hindu mythology, beliefs, traditions and practices and attempted to portray Islam as "a far superior religion to Hinduism".

The report stated that the accused indulged in degrading and belittling the Hindu faith and created a coercive atmosphere through repeated anti-religious commentary directed at women employees.

## Chandigarh residents oppose plan to merge senior home with mental care facility

Chandigarh.(Agency)

The residents of Chandigarh have presented to UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria their concerns regarding the new plan to accommodate a Senior Citizens' Home in the same facility as Group Home, Sector 31, meant for individuals suffering from mental illnesses who lack family support. Kanchan Malhotra is a 75-year-old resident of Chandigarh's Sector 27 A, whose daughter (52) suffers from mental illness. Malhotra said the sudden announcement to accommodate both the facilities together is concerning.

Moreover, she said, the UT Social Welfare Department took the decision without any discussion or consultation with the UTTHAAN Group Home Society's governing body and executive committee.

"Families like ours are struggling with the hope that our children will live with dignity,

safety and security — their rightful entitlement under the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017. Such an undemocratic and insensitive approach towards persons with



disabilities is deeply disturbing," the mother said in the representation to the UT administrator.

She also said, "From the very beginning, the nodal officer of the Social Welfare

Department has kept the terms and conditions for admission to the Group Home extremely rigid — whether it is the exorbitant security deposit, untrained professional staff, lack of vocational and occupational activities or other shortcomings in the facility. Instead of addressing the problems faced by families... nodal officer (the UT Social Welfare Department) is trying to cover up this failure by diverting the Group Home to the Senior Citizens' Home."

Another resident of Haryana's Kalka, Swarleen Kaur, said, "The first admission notice invites applications for admission to a Senior Citizens' Home in Sector 31. This is the same building that was originally constructed as a group home for persons with mental and intellectual disabilities after a sustained effort of over six years by caregivers.

## TCS Nashik Case: AIMIM corporator's home where Nida Khan allegedly 'stayed' likely to be razed

Civic body sends him notice, mayor says he can be disqualified if charges are proven

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Aurangabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has issued a notice to All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) corporator Matin Patel, saying that some of his properties, including the house where Nashik TCS case accused Nida Khan allegedly stayed, were constructed illegally. AMC Mayor Sameer Rajurkar said the civic body would demolish the structures if Patel failed to provide a satisfactory response to the show-cause notice. He added that proof of illegal construction could also lead to the cancellation of Patel's membership in the municipal corporation.

Nida Khan, who had been absconding since April 10 in connection with the Nashik TCS case, was apprehended on May 7 from a two-storey bungalow in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar's Naregaon area, where she had been

staying with four relatives. The bungalow is allegedly owned by Patel. Speaking to The Indian Express, Rajurkar said notices were served to



Patel on May 9. Two of them his properties — the house in Kausar Baug where Nida Khan was allegedly staying and one of his offices in the same locality — have been flagged as illegal constructions.

"Prima facie, we are sure that both these properties have been constructed illegally, either partially or fully. As

per the rules, he has three days to respond to the notice. If the reply is found unsatisfactory, action will be taken in accordance with the law," Rajurkar said.

He added that if the allegations are proven, apart from demolition proceedings, Patel's membership as a corporator could also come under scrutiny.

"As of now, action will be taken against the structures. However, under the Maharashtra Municipal Corporations Act, a corporator's membership can be cancelled if he is found to have indulged in illegal construction," Rajurkar said. When asked whether the corporation intended to move for Patel's disqualification, Rajurkar remained non-committal and said, "That decision will be taken by the House and the municipal commissioner. For now, we are proceeding as per the law regarding..

## Before Bihar's Vikramshila bridge collapsed, a series of red flags — raised and ignored

Patna.(Agency)

In the two years leading up to the partial collapse of the Vikramshila bridge in Bihar last week, multiple inspection teams and officials raised red flags that were not acted upon, The has learnt.

According to officials, the partial collapse happened in two stages, beginning with a structural failure in pillar 133 at around 11.55 pm on May 3, followed by a total span collapse at 1.07 am on May 4, which split the 4.7-kilometre-long bridge over the Ganga into two. No casualties were reported.

The collapse led to a major disruption of traffic between a large part of Jharkhand and south Bihar on one end, and north and northeastern Bihar, as well as West Bengal, on the other. Traffic from both sides has now been diverted to a much longer route, making the distance between Munger and Khagaria 161 km via the Ganga bridge, up from 14 km over the Vikramshila Setu.

Engineers and experts from the Border Road Organisation (BRO), the Indian Army and IIT Patna, as well as officers from the state Road Construction Department (RCD) and the Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Limited (BRPNL), have been at the site to plan the repair efforts, expected to take up to three months. The BRPNL carries the onus of coordinating with the RCD to ensure the structural integrity of any bridge in the state. Both the BRPNL and the RCD had been made aware of the "precarious condition" of the bridge on multiple occasions over the past two months, sources said.

## Andhra Pradesh farmers hopeful of early monsoon, begin preparations for Kharif

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

With forecasts indicating an early onset of monsoon and the advance release of irrigation water, farmers across the State have begun hectic preparations for the ensuing Kharif season, with ploughing, land levelling and other pre-sowing operations picking up in major agricultural regions.

During Kharif-2025, crops were sown in 29.16 lakh hectares (72 lakh acres) across the State, and officials expect a similar cultivation extent this season as well.

Anticipating increased agricultural activity, the State government has drawn up an extensive action plan to ensure the timely supply of quality seeds, fertilisers and other essential farm inputs, besides coordinating irrigation and agricultural



support services to facilitate smooth cultivation operations.

Paddy remained the principal crop during the previous Kharif season, with cultivation spread over 15.59 lakh hectares, accounting for more than half of the total cropped area in the State, followed by cotton in 4.56 lakh hectares, pulses in 3.63 lakh hectares and oilseeds in

2.63 lakh hectares.

Among pulses, red gram dominated with 3.22 lakh hectares, while groundnut remained the major oilseed crop with 2.08 lakh hectares. Maize was cultivated in 1.87 lakh hectares, while sugarcane, tobacco, sesamum, castor, sunflower and soybean were also taken up in varying extents across the State during the season. Farmers in delta regions have already started preparing agricultural fields in anticipation of canal water release for transplantation activities.

It may be noted that the government has already decided to release irrigation water in phases from May 15 for the Kharif season, which will be more helpful to farmers. Under the Godavari Delta System, 51.67 TMC of water is currently

available.

In the Krishna Delta System, the Pulichintala project presently has a live storage of 24.43 TMC, of which 18.22 TMC is estimated to be required for initial Kharif needs in June.

Canal maintenance works began on May 2, and irrigation water release is planned from June 1 for the Krishna Eastern Delta and from July 1 for the Krishna Western Delta. Under North Andhra projects, 9.22 TMC of water is currently available and cultivation activities are expected to begin in the second week of June. Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir presently has 27.07 TMC of water, including Andhra Pradesh's share of 17.866 TMC, and the government is examining the release of 7,000 cusecs per day from May 15 to meet.

## NEWS BOX

## IPL 2026: Axar Patel fined for slow over-rate after PBKS vs DC

New Delhi. (Agency)

Delhi Capitals captain Axar Patel has been fined Rs 12 lakh after his team maintained a slow over-rate during their Indian Premier League 2026 clash against Punjab Kings in Dharamshala on Monday, May 11. The penalty came despite Delhi pulling off a thrilling three-wicket victory to keep their fading playoff hopes alive.

The IPL confirmed the sanction in an official media advisory after Match No. 55 of the season at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium. Delhi Capitals captain Axar Patel has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match No. 55 of TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Punjab Kings, the statement said. The league further clarified that this was Delhi Capitals' first over-rate offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL Code of Conduct, which deals with minimum over-rate violations. As a result, Axar received a



financial penalty of Rs 12 lakh.

While the fine will be a minor setback, Axar would take greater satisfaction from Delhi's dramatic win in a must-win encounter.

Axar and Miller rescue Delhi in tense chase Chasing a formidable 211-run target, Delhi Capitals found themselves in serious trouble at 74 for 4 after Punjab Kings made early inroads. However, captain Axar led from the front with a composed yet aggressive 56, stabilising the innings when his side desperately needed momentum. David Miller then provided the finishing punch with a counter-attacking 51 as Delhi clawed their way back into the contest. Contributions from Ashutosh Sharma and Madhav Tiwari ensured the chase was completed in just 19 overs, with DC finishing on 216 for 7.

Earlier, Punjab Kings had posted 210 for 5 after a strong batting performance. Priyansh Arya gave them a flying start with a 33-ball 56, while Prabhsimran Singh chipped in with 18 in a 78-run opening stand. After the openers departed, PBKS skipper Shreyas Iyer anchored the innings superbly with an unbeaten 59 off 36 deliveries. Cooper Connolly also made an important contribution with 38 off 27 balls.

## French Open: Stan Wawrinka, Gael Monfils given wildcard entries for Roland Garros



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 a traw 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. Despite slipping to World No. 125, Wawrinka remains a revered figure in Paris, where he owns a strong record and has consistently produced some of his best tennis. Across 20 previous appearances, he has reached the final twice and the semi-finals once, building a lasting connection with the tournament. Monfils' inclusion carries a similarly emotional weight, particularly for the home crowd. The 39-year-old Frenchman has long been one of the most entertaining and charismatic players on tour. Ranked No. 222, Monfils will make yet another appearance at his home Grand Slam, where his electrifying athleticism and crowd-pleasing style made him a fan favourite for nearly two decades.

## No mat, no mercy: Vinesh Phogat vs wrestling federation latest episode explained

➔ **The dispute between Vinesh Phogat and the Wrestling Federation of India has evolved into a major governance battle. As both sides continue to defend their positions, the standoff has raised larger questions about how international clearances and domestic federation regulations intersect in Indian sport.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Vinesh Phogat's comeback attempt hit a wall on Monday, and she made sure the world knew it. The three-time Olympian travelled to the National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, for what would have been her first competitive bout since retiring after the Paris Olympics. She did not compete. Upon arriving at the venue, she was neither allowed to complete her verification nor permitted to use the training hall — effectively shutting the door before she could step anywhere near the mat. In a post on X,

she was blunt: "I don't want any special privileges, I just want to compete on merit." On the same day, she also formally responded to WFI's show-cause notice — issued just two days earlier — asserting she remains eligible to compete and will submit a detailed reply within the prescribed 14-day period. The standoff between one of India's most decorated wrestlers and the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has now deepened into a full-blown governance crisis, with no resolution in sight. The latest flashpoint came in May 2026 when Vinesh arrived at the National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda expecting to compete, only to be informed by WFI that she was ineligible.

Despite being informed she was ineligible to compete, Vinesh met WFI president Sanjay Singh at the venue and later addressed the media, strongly rejecting the federation's stance. "If I had violated any rule, then NADA India would have given me a show-cause notice. Or they would have banned me. Or WADA would have given me a show-cause notice," she said.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN?

The roots of the dispute trace back to the 2024

Paris Olympics, where Vinesh was disqualified from the women's 50kg final for failing to make weight. She subsequently announced her retirement from wrestling, but ambiguity soon emerged over whether that retirement had been formally processed



through official channels.

While her husband later stated that she had not formally retired through the required procedures, WFI maintained that communication from United World Wrestling (UWW) in December 2024 confirmed she had informed the International Testing Agency (ITA) of her

retirement. The situation shifted again in December 2025 when Vinesh officially informed UWW, the Sports Authority of India (SAI), and WFI of her intention to return to competition. Around the same time, WFI flagged a missed whereabouts filing dated December 18, 2025, which Vinesh attributed to personal circumstances, including her responsibilities as an elected MLA. "I had missed one whereabouts. And there are three of them. I had become a mother at that time. I had an assembly session. I forgot to update. I even apologised to WADA for that. They gave me a clean chit. They told me that I can participate in any international event," she said. Vinesh also said she had undergone multiple doping tests after announcing her return and had cleared each of them. "Even after that, I got my doping test done twice. It's not like I came to the competition after avoiding my doping test. I got my doping test and came clean," she said.

"I have always been clean in sports. And I am not taking anyone's right. I am completely clean."

**Axar Patel, David Miller redemption party keeps DC afloat in Dharamshala thriller**

Dharamshala. (Agency)

Somewhere between Priyansh Arya launching sixes into the hills and Delhi Capitals collapsing again inside the Powerplay, this match had started looking like another one of those IPL 2026 nights where DC would quietly disappear from the playoff race. Delhi Capitals pulled off the highest successful chase in the history of the HPCA Stadium, hunting down 211 in just 19 overs against Punjab Kings, thanks largely to two players who had spent most of this season dealing with criticism instead of applause: Axar Patel and David Miller. The conditions in Dharamshala almost guaranteed madness. At that altitude, even misfits can disappear into the stands and bowlers rarely feel fully in control once the ball starts flying.

Punjab understood that quickly.

Priyansh Arya came out swinging from the very first over, smashing Mitchell Starc for 22 runs and completely setting the tone for Punjab's innings. The young opener hammered 56 off just 33 balls with six sixes as Delhi's pacers



struggled badly whenever they pitched the ball up during the Powerplay. At 72/0 after six overs, Punjab looked ready to push well beyond 220. Delhi slowly dragged themselves back into the contest after changing their lengths and attacking the surface harder. Auqib Nabi played a major role in that shift, using hard lengths smartly to disrupt Punjab's momentum after the explosive start.

Debutant Madhav Tiwari then added another big moment by dismissing Priyansh for his maiden IPL wicket, while Delhi's bowlers managed to stop Punjab from completely running away with the innings through the middle overs.

Even then, 210 still looked a massive target once Delhi's chase began unraveling in familiar fashion. Abhishek Porel, KL Rahul and Sahil Parakh were all back in the pavilion inside the first six overs as DC stumbled to 47/3, miles behind Punjab's own Powerplay start. That was when Axar finally produced the innings Delhi had been desperately waiting for all season.

## IPL playoff scenario: Punjab Kings enter danger zone, Delhi Capitals cling on

New Delhi. (Agency)

The playoff race in IPL 2026 is intensifying with every passing match. On Sunday, Lucknow Super Giants became the first team to be eliminated from playoff contention, before Mumbai Indians followed them out of the race. However, eight teams are still battling for the remaining four spots. On Monday, Delhi Capitals were on the verge of becoming the third team to be knocked out, but Axar Patel's side kept their hopes alive with a thrilling three-wicket win over Punjab Kings at the HPCA Stadium. With 15 matches still left in the league stage, no team can afford to relax not even table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who could also find themselves under pressure from teams closely chasing them. Sides like Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings endured difficult starts to their campaigns before staging strong recoveries. PBKS, meanwhile, were unbeaten in their first seven matches, but four consecutive defeats have suddenly left



them searching for answers. As the league phase enters its decisive stretch, the playoff battle is only expected to get tighter, with every result likely to have a major impact on the standings. The 'One foot in the door'

zone — RCB, SRH, GT

Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Gujarat Titans are all locked on 14 points from 11 matches, putting them firmly in contention for the playoffs. In the previous six IPL seasons featuring 10 teams, 14 points was enough for RCB to qualify in 2024, showing that seven wins can realistically secure a playoff berth. RCB, SRH and GT now need just one more victory each to confirm their place in the playoffs. Notably, no team with 16 points in a 10-team IPL season has ever failed to qualify for the playoffs.

Delhi Capitals hanging by a thread When it comes to qualifying with 14 points, Delhi Capitals have only one possible route to the playoffs. However, even victories in their remaining two matches would not guarantee qualification, as net run rate could become the deciding factor.

That is where the Capitals are at a major disadvantage, with a net run rate of -0.993, especially considering that the other teams in the top six all have positive net run rates.

## IPL Play of the Day: PBKS bowling sways in Dharamshala's winds, hurts playoff hopes

Dharamshala. (Agency)

With the bat swinging freely in the Dharamshala breeze, Punjab Kings bowlers seemed more focused on throwing the bowl down the hill of the HPCA Stadium in Dharamshala than testing the shaky middle order of Delhi Capitals. The side led by Shreyas Iyer gave away 17 runs in wides and 1 no ball as they faltered in their defence against the struggling DC on Monday, May 11. PBKS' bowling unit unravelled under pressure, turning a defensible total into yet another collapse in execution in a rapidly fading campaign. Their inability to control lines, build sustained pressure, or seize key moments exposed the recurring flaws that have plagued Punjab throughout the season.

The 18 extras alone reflected the chaos in their bowling plans. Add to that the dropped chances, inconsistent lengths and PBKS once again found themselves losing control of a game they had firmly gripped in the powerplay. PBKS succumbed to their fourth successive defeat after a magical

unbeaten start in the 2026 season of the Indian Premier League. "I don't want to beat around the bush. I'll just say fielding



and bowling," Iyer said after the game against DC. **PBKS BOWLING FAILS TO CAPITALISE**

Punjab's bowling has been a persistent concern all season. They have picked up the fewest wickets among all teams in the competition, a worrying statistic that has consistently exposed their inability to break partnerships in crucial phases. Their

problems have only worsened with poor fielding support, as PBKS also lead the charts for most dropped catches this

season. Against Delhi, their lack of penetration after the powerplay came to hurt them. PBKS had DC reeling at 33 for 3 early in the chase, with the seamers extracting a bit of movement under lights and forcing mistakes. But once the ball softened, Punjab's attack lost direction completely. The biggest turning point came when PBKS failed to capitalise after Tristan Stubbs' run-out. With Delhi at 74 for 4, Axar Patel was handed a lifeline on 25 when Arshdeep Singh dropped a regulation chance. Punjab's inability to convert half-chances into wickets has repeatedly cost them this season, and this miss proved equally damaging. Before this match, Axar had managed only 44 runs off 59 balls across the season at a strike rate of 74.57. Yet PBKS allowed him to settle through loose lines and poor execution in the middle overs.

## IPL, GT vs SRH: Gujarat Titans host SRH as playoff race enters decisive phase

➔ **IPL, GT vs SRH: Third-placed Gujarat Titans host second-placed Sunrisers Hyderabad in a high-stakes IPL 2026 clash in Ahmedabad on Tuesday, with the playoff race heating up and the battle for a top-two finish gathering pace.**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

The IPL 2026 play-off race has reached a critical stage and Tuesday's clash between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad could have a huge say in how the top four eventually shape up. With Royal Challengers Bengaluru, SRH and GT all tied on 14 points, net run rate is becoming increasingly important, making every game and every over count in the closing stages of the league phase. SRH heads into the contest

in second place after hitting form at the right time. Their commanding 33-run win over Punjab Kings once again showcased the strength of their batting after they piled up 235 for 4 in Hyderabad. Even so, Pat Cummins' side know there is little margin for error left in the tournament, with the play-off race remaining too close for comfort. GT, on the other hand, have quietly turned their season around after a slow beginning. Their emphatic 77-run victory over Rajasthan Royals lifted them to third on the table and reinforced the feeling that Shubman Gill's side is beginning to find its best rhythm at the business end of the season. **FOR SRH, BALANCE IS THE KEY** SRH have once again established themselves as one of the most dangerous batting sides in the tournament. The top-order combination of Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head, Ishan Kishan and Heinrich Klaasen has consistently put opposition attacks under pressure with their fearless approach. Their

aggressive intent is reflected in the numbers. SRH have crossed the 200-run mark eight times this season, including a mammoth 249 against Mumbai Indians, underlining the



explosive nature of their batting unit.

The return of captain Pat Cummins after injury has also strengthened the bowling attack considerably. Cummins has brought intensity and aggression back into the side, while Sri Lankan pacer Eshan Malinga has

emerged as one of the standout performers of the season. With 16 wickets to his name, Malinga has regularly delivered breakthroughs and impressed with his control during pressure situations. At the same time, SRH's aggressive batting approach has occasionally exposed their vulnerabilities. Early wickets have often put pressure on a middle order that has looked fragile at times, while fielding lapses have also prevented the side from fully dominating matches.

**SHUBMAN LEADS GT'S CHARGE**

Much of Gujarat's revival has revolved around skipper Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan, who have given the side consistency and stability at the top. GT's batting philosophy has largely centred around building a platform before attacking in the latter half of the innings, an approach that has worked effectively both while chasing and setting totals.





# Sonakshi Sinha

**On Her Character In System: 'Neha Is Layered, Flawed And Constantly Evolving'**

The much-awaited legal drama *System*, starring Sonakshi Sinha and Jyotika, will soon drop on Amazon Prime Video. *System* revolves around two women whose lives exist at opposite ends of the social spectrum. Sonakshi's Neha Rajvansh is a high-profile public prosecutor who moves with authority and confidence, while Jyotika's Sarika Rawat works quietly as a courtroom stenographer, navigating a far more constrained reality. Their worlds collide within the same judicial space, and what begins as a professional overlap gradually spirals into something far more personal. The intersection of their lives sets off a chain reaction that challenges their beliefs, choices and sense of identity. Through the journeys of Neha and Sarika, *System* looks at how truth can be shaped, contested, and, at times, distorted.

Speaking about her character and its world in the film, Sonakshi shared, "What stayed with me the most was Neha as a character, she's layered, she's flawed, and she's constantly evolving. And then the world of the film feels very real and relevant. The questions it raises about access to justice and how differently it can look depending on where you stand in society, and that's what really pulled me in." Over the years, Sonakshi has steadily moved towards roles that push her beyond conventional spaces, from commercial entertainers to more emotionally intense and morally layered characters. Reflecting on that evolution, Sonakshi said, "I think it's been a very organic journey."

She added, "Dabangg was my introduction, Akira allowed me to explore a very physical and intense space, and *System* is far more internal and layered. Over time, I've been drawn to characters that challenge me in different ways, and right now I'm really enjoying exploring roles that have emotional depth and moral complexity."

Created and directed by Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and produced under the banner of Baweja Studios, *System* features Sonakshi Sinha, Jyotika, and Ashutosh Gowariker in lead roles. The upcoming Original movie is set to premiere exclusively on Prime Video across India and in over 240 countries and territories worldwide on May 22, 2026.



**Kubbra Sait On Her Small Role In Salman Khan's Ready: 'Would Never Have Become Kuku In Sacred Games If...'**



Before becoming the unforgettable Kuku in *Sacred Games*, Kubbra Sait was just another hopeful newcomer trying to find her place in Mumbai. In a recent video, the actress took a nostalgic trip down memory lane and opened up about bagging her very first film, *Ready*, directed by Anees Bazmee and headlined by Salman Khan.

The actress, who played the small role of a maid in the Salman Khan starrer, recalled going for the audition wearing a short black dress and waiting anxiously for Anees Bazmee's approval. Recalling how she initially had no dialogues in the film, Kubbra shared that it was Salman who suggested adding a quirky twist to her character by making her speak broken English.

Talking about her experience, Kubbra Sait shared, "This audition is the audition where I wore, like, a short black dress and waited for Anees Bazmee to walk into the office and give me a nod of approval. This was an audition where I was now going to be playing a maid in the film *Ready*, and I am so excited about this."

The crazy self-belief I always had while doing this film, because this film was a new experience for me. Like, I had never done a film. Also, I did not actually have any lines in the film at all, but then, like, Salman Khan, he was like, 'Why don't you make her like the maid who talks in broken language, like in broken English?' And Anees sir really liked the idea, and that's why I have lines in the film."

The actress candidly shared how many people around her believed she was "mad" and "impatient" for accepting such a small role in a big commercial film and said, "Every person told me I was mad, I was mental, and I was impatient for doing Sunaina Kapoor's role in *Ready*. But if I had not done *Ready*, if I were not mad enough to do *Ready*, I would have never been Kuku."

**Arjun Kapoor Celebrates 14 Years In Bollywood, Says Ishaqzaade's Parma 'Still Feels Like The Beginning'**



Actor Arjun Kapoor celebrated 14 years in Bollywood as his debut drama "Ishaqzaade" completed one more year of being released on Monday. Dropping a few sketches of his popular scenes from the drama, Arjun claimed that his character Parma still feels like the beginning of his cinematic journey, which he intends to take forward with exciting projects ahead.

Arjun penned on his official Instagram handle, "14 years later, Parma still feels like the beginning of everything. #Ishaqzaade was the start of my journey as an actor, in cinema and with all of you... And it continues (red heart emoji) (sic)." Helmed and directed by Habib Faisal, "Ishaqzaade" has been backed by Aditya Chopra under the banner of Yash Raj Films.

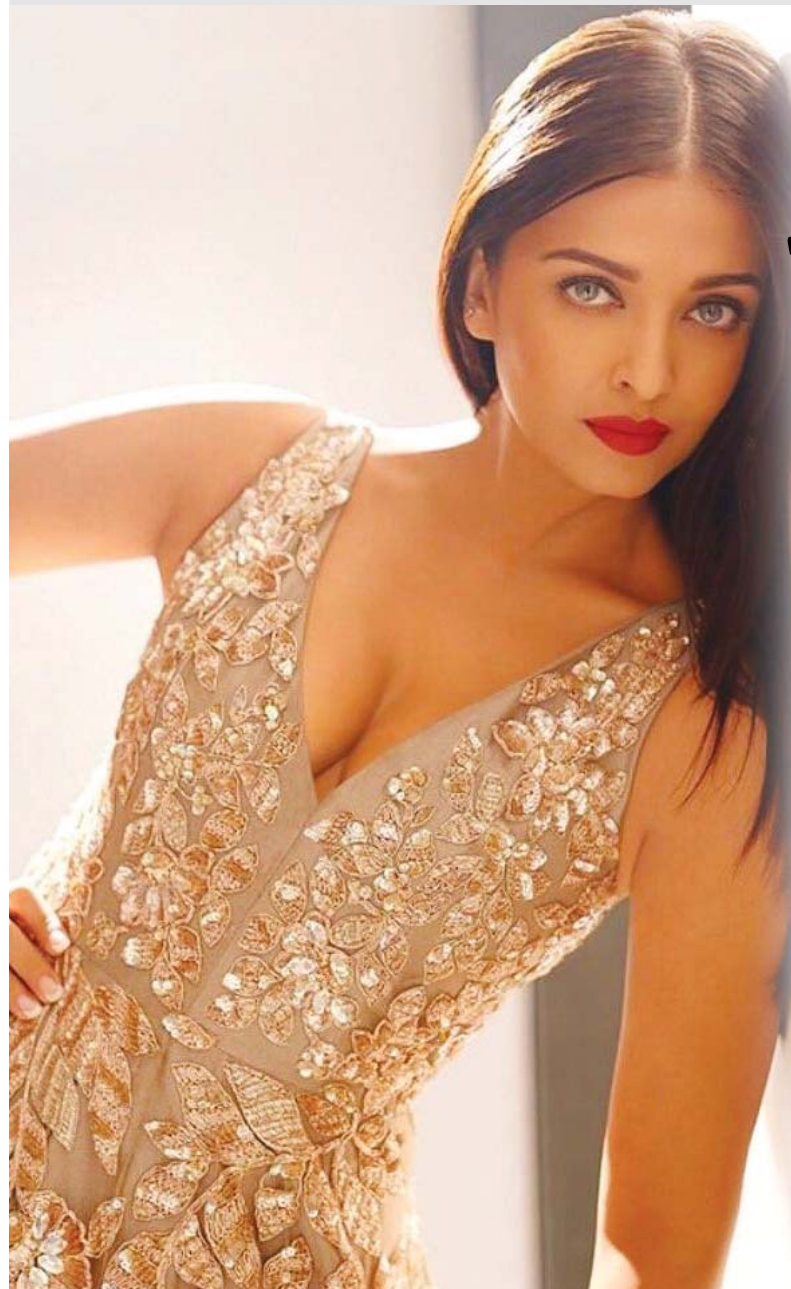
With Parineeti Chopra as the female lead, the romantic actioner further starred Gauahar Khan, Natasha Rastogi, Anil Rastogi, and Shashank Khaitan in ancillary roles, along with others.

"Ishaqzaade" is an official remake of the 2009 Bengali drama "Dujone".

Set against the backdrop of a fictional town of Almor in Uttar Pradesh, the drama shares the journey of Parma Chauhan (Played by Arjun) and Zoya Qureshi (Played by Parineeti), who belong to rival political families. Their passionate romance ends up shaking the deeply rooted religious divides in the society. While the film marked Arjun's primary appearance on the big screen, it was Parineeti's second project after her debut with "Ladies vs Ricky Bahl" in 2011.

Shifting our focus to Arjun's recent projects, he last appeared in the romantic comedy "Mere Husband Ki Biwi", co-starring Rakul Preet Singh and Bhumi Pednekar. The movie failed to perform well at the box office.

Arjun has yet to announce his next project. Additionally, he was also recently seen as the primary antagonist in Rohit Shetty's "Singham Again". He ended up receiving a lot of acclaim for his performance in the cop drama.



# Aishwarya Rai

**'Redeemed Herself': Sufi Motiwala Says 'Pressure To Outdo' Reason Behind Tame Cannes Looks**

The 79th edition of the annual Cannes Film Festival is all set to kick-start on May 12 in the French Riviera. Apart from debutants like Tara Sutaria, Ammy Virk and Sufi Motiwala, the film festival will see a bevy of Indian celebrities returning to it. Revisiting the gala is also Aishwarya Rai Bachchan as the global ambassador for L'Oréal Paris. The former beauty pageant winner has attended the festival over 20 times since her debut in 2002 for the screening of *Devdas*. She happened to turn very Cannes appearance into a global fashion moment, raising the bar with her commanding red carpet presence, until the last few years when she faced criticism from those who felt her fashion outings had lost their earlier edge.

Needless to say, all eyes are set on the diva's looks this week! Speaking exclusively to News18, fashion commentator Sufi breaks down what he thinks went wrong with her choices in the recent past. "It's the pressure of outdoing herself. Since the beginning of Aishwarya at Cannes, she had set a standard so high. I feel that's something even the MET Gala is suffering from," he opines. "It has reached a point of exhaustion. First, she did the saree look [in 2002], then she became our Cinderella and then she did the purple lipstick. Every year, she pulled things out of herself that are expressive and creative and at the same time, fashionable and perfect. It's really hard," he adds.

Aishwarya's purple lips in the 2016 edition of the festival drew mixed reviews. Talking about it, Sufi tells us, "That year, they thought of going ten levels above and gag it but that didn't translate for the audience. But you've to give them grace. And then, a few years ago, when she tried to go extra with the FSPs, there was an idea even then but it wasn't executed perfectly."

But in Sufi's words, she managed to 'redeem' herself last year with two looks – a Kadwa Benarasi saree and a black velvet gown. "Last year what she did with Manish Malhotra and Gaurav Gupta, it beautifully reflected where she's in her life at this stage – ever so fashionable, obviously, but all the more put together and not trying to be anyone but herself. It was so much fun!" Sufi says.



NEWS BOX

Epstein files on display at New York pop-up exhibit, all 3.5 million pages

**KATHMANDU. (Agency)**  
A US transparency advocacy group has opened a temporary exhibition in New York with only one text on display: a print-out of all the files released by the US Department of Justice -- roughly 3.5 million pages -- relating to financier and convicted sex criminal Jeffrey Epstein. The library, dubbed "The Donald J. Trump and Jeffrey Epstein Memorial Reading Room," has bound all the documents released under the Epstein Files Transparency Act in 3,437 volumes, all numbered and organized on shelves. "The truth is hard to deny when it's printed and bound for you to see," reads the website for the Institute of Primary Facts, the Washington-based nonprofit behind the display. Those interested in seeing the files at the library in Tribeca can do so by registering online. However, due to errors by the Department of Justice in failing to redact the names of some of the victims included in the documents, the general public is not allowed to consult the files. The exhibit offers exceptions for some professionals like journalists and lawyers. The pop-up also has a display on the longstanding relationship between President Donald Trump and Epstein, who died in federal custody in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges involving minors.

The pair were friends for decades before they reportedly fell out in 2004 over a property deal, after which Trump reportedly denounced his former ally. He has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing after showing up repeatedly in the so-called "Epstein Files." "We're a pro-democracy organization, with the goal of educating the public using these kinds of sort of pop-up museums and other in-real-life experiences to help people understand the corruption in the United States, the dangers to democracy," David Garrett, one of the creators behind the project, told AFP.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang Excluded From Trump's China Visit: Report

**World. (Agency)**  
Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang is not going to Beijing during President Donald Trump's trip to China this week, a person familiar with the matter said on Monday. Huang was not invited, the source said, with the White House focusing more on agriculture and commercial aviation matters, such as orders for Boeing planes, on the current trip. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A number of CEOs were expected to travel with Trump to help drum up business for US companies, a top priority for his administration.

A person familiar with the matter confirmed last week that Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser was invited. Qualcomm CEO Cristiano Amon will attend as long as the trip goes ahead as planned, another source with knowledge of the matter said last week.

Trump has developed a strong relationship with Huang since he has been in office and agreed to allow the company's H200 AI chips to be exported to China. But they have not yet been sold, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said on April 22nd, citing difficulties with Chinese companies getting permission to buy them from the Chinese government.

Quest for a rare bird, a landfill visit, a deadly outbreak: How Leo Schilperoord became hantavirus 'patient zero'

**World. (Agency)**  
Dutch ornithologist Leo Schilperoord, whose lifelong quest for the rare and the beautiful ended in a global health emergency, has been identified as patient zero in the deadly hantavirus outbreak aboard the expedition cruise ship MV Hondius, according to Argentine authorities.

Authorities believe the 70-year-old and his wife, Mirjam Schilperoord, 69, contracted the virus during a birdwatching visit to a landfill outside Ushuaia in late March. The couple, from Haulerwijk, had spent five months traveling across South America. They first arrived in Argentina on November 27 before traveling through Chile and Uruguay and returning to Argentina for another birdwatching trip. Longtime bird enthusiasts, the Schilperoods co-authored a study on pink-footed geese in the Dutch ornithological magazine *Het Vogeljaar* in 1984. Their travels also took them to Sri Lanka in 2013, where they joined a private birdwatching and wildlife tour and spotted the rare Serendib Scops Owl. On March 27, the couple visited a landfill outside Ushuaia that attracts birdwatchers searching for the white-throated caracara, also known as Darwin's caracara after Charles Darwin. Authorities suspect the couple inhaled virus particles from the feces of long-tailed pygmy rice rats carrying the Andes strain of hantavirus, the only known form capable of spreading from person to person. "It is common for birdwatchers to visit landfills because there are many birds there," photographer and local guide Gaston Bretti told *Ansa Latina*, adding, "It's a mountain of waste that today far exceeds the limit initially established by the authorities," as quoted by the *New York Post*. Four days later, the couple boarded the MV Hondius in Ushuaia on April 1 along with more than 100 passengers, many of them birdwatchers and scientists. Leo Schilperoord developed symptoms including fever, headache, stomach pain and diarrhea on April 6 and died on board five days later.

Trump and Xi appear intent on keeping deep differences over Iran war from overshadowing China summit

**Beijing publicly insists that it wants to see the war end, and has been working diplomatically behind the scenes to help its ally Pakistan push to broker a peace agreement.**

**WASHINGTON. (Agency)**  
President Donald Trump on Tuesday is set to leave for Beijing to meet with President Xi Jinping after weeks of trying, and failing, to persuade the Chinese government to use its considerable leverage to prod Iran to agree to US terms to end the two-month old war -- or at the very least, reopen the critical Strait of Hormuz. Trump has veered between venting that China, the world's biggest buyer of Iranian oil, hasn't done more to get the Islamic Republic in line,

and acknowledging that Xi's government helped de-escalate the conflict last month by nudging Tehran back to ceasefire talks when negotiations wobbled. But ahead of the US leader's high-stakes visit, the White House has set low expectations that Trump will be able to persuade Xi to change China's posture. Instead, the administration seems determined not to let differences on Iran overshadow efforts to make headway on other difficult matters in the complicated relationship -- ranging from trade to further Chinese cooperation to block exports of fentanyl precursors.

"We don't want this to be something that derails the broader relationship or the agreements that might come out of our meeting in Beijing," US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said on Bloomberg TV last week. US administration sanctioned China ahead of the trip. Beijing publicly insists that it wants to see the war end, and has been working diplomatically behind the scenes to help its ally Pakistan push to broker a peace agreement. It has also sent a "subtle

message of discontent to Iran" for closing the Strait of Hormuz, and to the US for its blockade of Iranian shipping, said Ahmed Aboudouh, a specialist on China's influence in the Middle East with the London-based Chatham House think tank.



"They are very cautious, risk-averse, and they don't want to be involved in anything that would drag them into something that they don't consider their problem," he said. In recent days, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent have stepped up their calls for China to use its influence to help reopen the

strait, through which about 20% of the world's crude flowed before the war began. The State Department announced on Friday that it was sanctioning four entities, including three China-based firms, for providing sensitive satellite imagery that enables Iranian military strikes against US forces in the Middle East. Earlier, the Treasury Department moved to target Chinese oil refineries accused of purchasing oil from Tehran, as well as shippers of the oil. The sanctions cut off the companies from the US financial system and penalize anyone who does business with them. Beijing has called the sanctions "illegal unilateral pressure" and enacted a blocking statute -- passed in 2021 and never used until now -- that prohibits any Chinese entity from recognizing or complying with the sanctions. Ahead of Trump's arrival, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi last week hosted his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi in Beijing. The Chinese foreign minister used the moment to defend Iran's right to develop civilian nuclear energy.

Pakistan quietly sheltered Iranian military aircraft during US conflict: Report

**PESHAWAR. (Agency)**  
Pakistan has allowed Iranian military aircraft to use its airfields during the recent Iran-US conflict, despite publicly positioning itself as a mediator between Tehran and Washington, according to US officials familiar with the matter.

Officials told CBS News that, shortly after President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire with Iran in early April, Tehran moved several aircraft to Pakistan Air Force Base Nur Khan near Rawalpindi, one of Pakistan's most strategically significant military installations.

Among them was reportedly an Iranian Air Force RC-130 reconnaissance aircraft, a surveillance variant of the Lockheed C-130 Hercules. Iran also moved at least one civilian aircraft into neighboring Afghanistan, officials said, in what appeared to be a broader effort to shield aviation assets from potential U.S. strikes as the conflict

escalated. However, Pakistan denied the allegations. A senior Pakistani official told CBS News that claims about Iranian aircraft at Nur Khan Air



Base were "not true," arguing that such movements could not go unnoticed because the base is located in a densely populated urban area. In Afghanistan, an aviation official said an Iranian Mahan Air plane landed in Kabul shortly before hostilities began and remained stranded after Iranian airspace closed. The aircraft was later relocated to Herat Airport near the

Iranian border after Pakistani airstrikes around Kabul during heightened tensions with the Taliban government.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied any Iranian aircraft were being sheltered in Afghanistan. The revelations underscore Pakistan's delicate balancing act during the crisis. Islamabad has sought to maintain close ties with Washington while avoiding friction with Tehran and Beijing, its key strategic partners. China, which now supplies roughly 80% of Pakistan's major arms imports according to SIPRI data, has publicly praised Pakistan's role in facilitating indirect U.S. - Iran communications. Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts to stabilize the ceasefire remain fragile. Iranian state media said Tehran's latest proposal to end the conflict included demands for US reparations, recognition of Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, and the lifting of American sanctions.

Southern California mayor resigns, will plead guilty to acting as agent for Chinese government

**TENERIFE. (Agency)**  
A Southern California mayor has agreed to plead guilty to acting as an illegal agent for the Chinese government, and has resigned from her city position, officials said Monday. Eileen Wang, the mayor of Arcadia, was charged in April with one count of acting in the United States as an illegal agent of a foreign government. She was accused of doing the bidding of Chinese officials, such as sharing articles favorable to Beijing, without prior notification to the U.S. government as required by law.

The 58-year-old was elected in November 2022 to a five-person city council, from which the mayor is selected on a rotating basis. City manager Dominic Lazzaretto said in a news release that no city finances or staff were involved. "We want to be clear: this investigation concerns individual conduct, and the charges are for conduct that ceased after Ms. Wang was sworn into office in December 2022," he said.

Federal officials said she has agreed to plead guilty to the felony, which comes with a maximum sentence of 10 years in federal prison. Wang's attorneys Jason Liang and Brian Sun said in a statement that she recognizes the seriousness of the charge and accepts responsibility for "past personal mistakes."

"She apologizes and is sorry for the mistakes she has made in her personal life," Wang's attorneys Jason Liang and Brian Sun said in a statement. "Her love and devotion for the Arcadia community have not changed and did not waver." According to her plea agreement, Wang and a colleague, Yaoning "Mike" Sun, worked on behalf of government officials for the People's Republic of China from the end of 2020 to 2022 to promote their interests by promoting pro-PRC propaganda in the U.S. Sun is serving a four-year sentence after he pleaded guilty to the same charge last October. He was also listed in campaign filings as the treasurer for Wang's 2022 election campaign. Wang and Sun operated the news website U.S. News Center, aimed at the Chinese American community, and were instructed by Chinese government officials to post pro-PRC content on it. In one instance in June 2021, a government official sent Wang a link to a letter to the editor published in the Los Angeles Times written by the consul general of the People's Republic of China in Los Angeles. The piece refuted reports of the persecution, forced labor, and abuse of Uyghers in China's Xinjiang province, stating, "There has never been genocide in Xinjiang or forced labor in the region's cotton fields or any other sector."

Hantavirus Detected In 1 Spanish Evacuee From MV Hondius In Tenerife

**WORLD. (Agency)**  
One of the 14 Spanish evacuees from the hantavirus-hit cruise ship MV Hondius on Sunday has tested preliminarily positive for the virus, Spanish Health Minister Monica Garcia has said. Garcia wrote on X on Monday (local time) that one of the Spanish passengers currently under isolation at Madrid's Gomez Ulla hospital had tested preliminarily positive in a PCR test conducted upon arrival. "The person remains in isolation, without symptoms and in general good health, under continued clinical observation in accordance with established safety and epidemiological protocols," she wrote.

The other 13 Spaniards tested provisionally negative, while final results were expected in the coming hours, the minister said. According to health authorities and the World Health Organization (WHO), the outbreak is believed to involve the

Andes strain of hantavirus, a variant known for possible person-to-person transmission through close contact. The virus is typically transmitted through exposure to infected rodent urine or droppings. The Spanish evacuees were transferred to Madrid as part of an evacuation operation launched after the MV Hondius arrived in Spain's Canary Islands over the weekend, reports Xinhua news agency. Multiple confirmed and suspected cases have so far been linked to the outbreak, including passengers transferred to several countries for treatment and monitoring. The final group of evacuees left the ship on Monday after the vessel briefly docked at the Port of Granadilla on the Spanish island of Tenerife due to adverse weather conditions. The ship later departed for Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, the European Commission said Monday that it is coordinating and supporting

national authorities' response to a hantavirus outbreak, while the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) assesses the risk to the general population in Europe as very low. Since Spain activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism on May 6, the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre has been facilitating the safe evacuation of people aboard the MV Hondius cruise ship, which was anchored off Tenerife. Five repatriation flights coordinated by the EU took place on Sunday and were carried out by France, Spain, the Netherlands, Greece and Ireland. A sixth and final flight, operated by the Netherlands, departed on Monday, according to the Commission. The EU is also mobilising response capabilities and stockpiles from its strategic reserve. A medical evacuation aircraft from the EU fleet, hosted by Norway,

Supreme Court halts order for Alabama to use US House map with two largely Black districts

**WASHINGTON. (Agency)**  
The US Supreme Court on Monday set the stage for Alabama to eliminate one of two largely Black congressional districts before this year's midterm elections, creating an opening for Republicans to gain an additional U.S. House seat in a partisan battle for control of the closely divided chamber. The decision follows a Supreme Court ruling in April that struck down a majority-Black U.S. House district in Louisiana as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, significantly weakening a provision of the federal Voting Rights Act.

Alabama officials had pointed to the Louisiana case as reason for the Supreme Court to end a judicial order to use a court-imposed House map until after the 2030 census. The high court on Monday overturned that order and directed a lower court to reconsider the case in light of the Louisiana decision. That could free the state to instead use a map approved in 2023 by the Republican-led legislature that includes only one district where Black residents comprise a majority. Anticipating

a court reversal, Alabama officials recently enacted a law allowing it to void the results of a May 19 primary for some congressional districts and instead hold a new primary under the revised district boundaries. Alabama had asked for an expedited decision ahead of the primary.

Alabama Republicans praised the decision. "Today, the Supreme Court vindicated the state's long-held position. Now, the power to draw Alabama's maps goes back to the people's elected representatives. That's our Legislature," Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said in a video statement. Marshall said his job was "to put the legislature in the best possible legal position to draw a congressional map that favors Republicans seven-to-zero." He concluded with the statement, "Stay tuned." Republican House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter called the decision "a massive victory not just for Alabama, but for conservatives across the

country." In a dissent to Monday's brief ruling, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the Louisiana case had reversed only one of the grounds upon which the Alabama case had been decided. Although the Voting



Rights Act violation is gone, Sotomayor said a lower court could still find that Alabama had intentionally discriminated against Black voters in violation of the 14th Amendment. The decision was a setback for Black residents and groups that had waged a legal

fight for several years to get a second Alabama congressional district where Black voters had an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice. "We are witnessing a return to Jim Crow. And anybody who is alarmed by these developments -- as everybody should be -- better be making a plan to vote in November to put an end to this madness while we still can," NAACP National President Derrick Johnson said in a statement. Deuel Ross, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorney who argued the Alabama case, said, "We will consider all of our options to fight to protect the rights of these voters and keep the court ordered map in place." Shalela Dowdy, a plaintiff in the Alabama redistricting case, said she was disappointed in the decision. "For me, I feel like this is a step backwards towards the Jim Crow era for congressional representation. The state is not going to stop here," Dowdy said, predicting Alabama will eventually go after the remaining district.