



MAHANAGAR METRO

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Chips, defence, clean energy: **India, Netherlands** upgrade ties to strategic level

► **Narendra Modi and Rob Jetten agreed in The Hague to elevate India-Netherlands ties to a strategic partnership. The move was paired with a push for wider cooperation in semiconductors, green hydrogen, investment and defence.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

India and the Netherlands on Saturday agreed to elevate their bilateral relationship to the level of a strategic partnership following wide-ranging discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten in The Hague. The decision came during Modi's two-day visit to the Netherlands as part of his broader multi-nation Europe tour focused on expanding India's strategic, economic and technological engagement with key European partners.

During the talks, the two leaders reviewed cooperation across sectors

including trade, defence, technology, water management, clean energy, healthcare and education. Several agreements were also signed to



deepen collaboration in priority areas. Addressing the meeting, PM Modi said India-Netherlands ties had witnessed "significant progress" over the last decade and described the Netherlands as one of India's key

European partners.

He said the relationship between the two countries was rooted in shared democratic values, strong economic cooperation and deep people-to-people connections.

"Democratic values, market economy and responsible behavior are part of our common approach," Modi said, while highlighting cooperation in sectors such as water management, healthcare and education.

Calling for greater collaboration in emerging sectors, Modi said India and the Netherlands should combine Dutch expertise with India's "speed and skill" to expand cooperation in innovation, sustainability, investment and defence.

'Provocative': Pakistan Army responds to Gen Dwivedi's remarks on 'harbouring terrorists'

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Pakistan Army on Sunday criticised recent remarks by Indian Army Chief Upendra Dwivedi as "provocative" and urged New Delhi to learn to "co-exist" peacefully. Gen Dwivedi on Saturday said that if Pakistan continues to harbour terrorists and operate against India, then they have to "decide whether they want to be part of geography or history or not".

The Pakistan Army said responsible nuclear states should reflect restraint, maturity and strategic sobriety.

"Threatening a sovereign nuclear neighbour with elimination from 'geography' is not strategic signalling or brinkmanship; it is sheer bankruptcy of cognitive capacities..." the army said in a statement.

"India needs to reconcile with Pakistan's salience and learn to peacefully co-exist with it," it said. It said that "any attempt to target Pakistan can trigger consequences

that shall neither be geographically confined nor strategically or politically palatable for India". Recalling the four-day conflict in May last year, it said Indian leadership "would be well advised not to attempt to push South Asia towards another crisis or war whose consequences would only be devastating for the complete region and beyond." India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year in response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed. It carried out airstrikes.



MAHANAGAR METRO EXCLUSIVE

Forensic Investigation Declares Viral Images of Acharya Shri SagarChandraSagarSurishwar Fake and Morphed

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Mekan

Ahmedabad: A shocking alleged blackmail and extortion racket operating under the guise of religious controversy has reportedly been exposed in Gujarat. The controversy revolves around viral social media images targeting Jain saint Acharya Shri SagarChandraSagarSurishwar, which forensic experts have now declared to be fake, morphed, and digitally manipulated. According to sources connected to the investigation, the alleged conspiracy was orchestrated with the intention of intimidating Jain monks and extorting large sums of money. Names that have surfaced in connection with the matter include Jagat Parekh, Vikram Bafna, Kalpesh Singhvi, and Hardik Hudiya. Accused Failed to Present Evidence Before Religious Leadership As the controversy escalated, Gachchhadhipati Shri Nardevsagar Surishwar reportedly took serious note of the allegations and summoned the accused individuals multiple times, demanding that they produce the original source and authentic proof behind the viral images if their claims



were genuine. However, despite repeated opportunities and several weeks passing, none of the accused allegedly appeared before the religious authority or submitted any verifiable evidence supporting their accusations. Forensic Examination Exposed Digital Manipulation Following the failure of the accused to provide proof, a high-level forensic investigation into the controversial images was reportedly conducted.

The forensic findings allegedly confirmed that the photographs had been tampered with and digitally edited. After reviewing the investigation report, religious authorities officially granted a clean chit to Acharya Shri



SagarChandraSagarSurishwar, dismissing the allegations as fabricated.

The development has triggered serious concerns within sections of the Jain community regarding the misuse of social media and digital manipulation to malign religious figures. Alleged Attempt to Use Media as a Pressure Tool The matter took another turn after allegations surfaced that certain individuals attempted to use media platforms to amplify the controversy. According to claims made in the report, Hardik Hudiya allegedly pressured media outlets, including Mahanagar Metro, to publish misleading press notes and reports related to the case. How-

ever, after conducting its own investigation and technical verification, the publication reportedly concluded that the case involved a deeper conspiracy linked to alleged blackmail attempts targeting Jain monks and community leaders. Old Reports Being Recycled on Social Media- Sources claim that after the alleged syndicate began facing exposure, old reports and newspaper clippings started resurfacing on social media in an attempt to create confusion and revive controversy around the matter.

Community members have been urged to remain cautious and avoid believing unverified content circulating online. Concerns Over Defamation and Religious Exploitation The controversy has reignited debate over the growing misuse of edited digital content, fake narratives, and social media campaigns to allegedly target public and religious personalities. Observers say the incident highlights the importance of forensic verification before accepting viral allegations as truth, especially in matters involving faith, public trust, and community harmony.

Jairam Ramesh writes to **Rajnath Singh**, flags Great Nicobar project as 'ecological disaster'

The Congress has repeatedly raised concerns over the project, alleging adverse impacts on ecology and tribal rights in the region.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday wrote to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh over the Great Nicobar Island Project, describing it in its current form as a recipe for "ecological disaster" and urging the government to explore alternatives with lower environmental costs. The Congress has repeatedly raised concerns over the project, alleging adverse impacts on ecology and tribal rights in the region.

In his letter to Singh, Ramesh acknowledged the importance of bolstering India's defence preparedness but suggested measures that, he said, could strengthen strategic capabilities around Great Nicobar with significantly less ecological damage.

He noted that such alternatives had been proposed by naval officers in their writings and could help improve the country's defence infrastructure without severely affecting the island's fragile ecosystem.

Sharing the letter on X, Ramesh said,

"After writing to the Union Minister of Environment, Forests, & Climate Change and the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, I have written to the Raksha Mantri on the Great Nicobar Island Project."

The former Environment Minister said the Centre had issued a press note titled 'The Great Nicobar Island Project: FAQs' on May 1. Referring to his earlier correspondence with Union ministers, Ramesh said he had written on May 10, 2026, to the Environment Minister, alleging the FAQs presented a "completely false picture" of the project's environmental clearances, which he claimed had been granted on "very dubious grounds". He further said that in a letter dated May 13, 2026, to the Tribal Affairs Minister, he had argued that the FAQs "misrepresent totally" the status of compliance with the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and "flagrantly violate, in letter and spirit, the individual and collective rights given to tribal communities by Parliament."



Tamil Nadu is different: Pawan Kalyan on comparisons with Vijay's political rise

► **Pawan Kalyan told Jana Sena workers that comparisons with Vijay's rise in Tamil Nadu were misplaced. He said the party's alliance with the TDP and BJP was shaped by Andhra Pradesh's political circumstances**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan has responded to comparisons between his political journey and the rapid rise of Vijay, saying the political conditions in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu cannot be viewed through the same lens. Speaking to Jana Sena workers at the party headquarters in Mangalagiri, Pawan Kalyan said he has been repeatedly questioned by party cadre and supporters over why Jana Sena chose to ally with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the BJP in the 2024 Andhra Pradesh elections, particularly after Vijay's dramatic ascent to power in Tamil Nadu. Referring to Vijay

of launching Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), Pawan Kalyan said many people were asking why Jana Sena did not pursue a similar independent political path.

"After seeing Vijay become Chief Minister in Tamil Nadu, many people have been questioning why we took the alliance route in Andhra Pradesh. But Tamil Nadu's circumstances are different from Andhra Pradesh's," he said.

Pawan Kalyan stressed that Jana Sena's political decisions were shaped by Andhra Pradesh's specific realities and by ideological considerations rather than electoral ambition. "I started this party with the belief that politics should bring social change. I closely watched



the Naxalism era, where many young people sacrificed their lives driven by ideology. Those experiences deeply influenced my thinking," he said. The actor-politician said Jana Sena was never created merely to secure

ideology was always more important than posts or power. That is the spirit with which I carried this party forward," he added.

He also acknowledged that many Jana Sena workers still believe the party should have contested independently in 2024. "Even now, many of you feel we should have fought alone instead of aligning with Telugu Desam. I hear that repeatedly from our cadre," he said.

However, Pawan Kalyan defended the alliance with the TDP and BJP, saying he took the decision only after "deep thinking" and keeping Andhra Pradesh's political stability in mind. "We had the strength to contest alone. At the Machilipatnam meeting itself, around 10 lakh people attended. But Andhra Pradesh

News box

Driver sneaks away with Mercedes in Gurgaon and crashes it

GURGAON.(Agency)

An FIR was registered on Friday against the driver of a business executive for taking a Mercedes-Benz car for a drive without permission, crashing it while speeding and then trying to get it repaired quietly before the owners learnt of the damage, police said.

According to the complaint filed at Sector 53 police station, the driver, Anuj, was employed by Amit Kapoor, a resident of The Verandas Society in Sector 54. Police said the Mercedes-Benz E220D, bearing registration number HR06AQ3064 and vehicle belonging to Park Non Woven Private Limited, had been provided to Kapoor for his personal use. Puneet Pipli, an authorised representative of the company, filed the complaint. He told police that on May 14, around 6.30pm, Anuj had allegedly taken the Mercedes-Benz from the parking area of Kapoor's society. He drove the vehicle at high speed late at night and crashed it, damaging the left side of the bonnet. He did not inform anyone about the accident and purportedly took the car to a mechanic named Sagar on May 15. Police said Sagar knew Kapoor and informed him about the damaged vehicle. Kapoor informed the company and dialled 112 to report the incident. After receiving Pipli's formal complaint, a team from Sector 53 police station verified the allegations and filed an FIR under sections 316(2) (criminal breach of trust by an employee or person entrusted with property) and 324(4) (mischief causing damage to property) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

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Woman attacked, looted inside home by intruder

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A 50-year-old woman was brutally assaulted inside her house in Sohna after confronting an intruder who had allegedly entered the premises in her absence and demanded jewellery at knifepoint-like threat, police said. The victim, Usha Rani, a resident of Band Colony who works as a cook in a private society, had gone to the local court on May 14 to meet her lawyer and returned home around 12.30pm. After unlocking the main gate and entering the house, she found a young man already inside. According to police, when she questioned him about his presence, the intruder threatened to kill her unless she handed over all the jewellery kept in the house. When she resisted, he allegedly struck her on the head multiple times with an iron spiked disc-like object, leaving her bleeding profusely. As the woman screamed for help, the accused fled with her Samsung mobile phone, silver anklets and some cash. Neighbours rushed to the spot after hearing her cries and took her to the govt hospital in Sohna. She was later referred to Nalhar Medical College in Nuh and subsequently shifted to Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi for further treatment. After receiving treatment, she returned home on Thursday.

Police said a team from the Phawara Chowk police post reached the house after receiving information about the assault and found bloodstains inside the residence. Fingerprint experts, a dog squad and the scene-of-crime team later inspected the spot and collected forensic and electronic evidence.

Biker on way home hits pole uprooted in storm, dies

Faridabad.(Agency)

An uprooted electricity pole turned into a fatal obstacle for two youths in Phase 2, after the motorcycle they were on crashed into it on Friday night, leaving one of them dead and the other critically injured.

The accident occurred near Panchsheel Balak Inter College where strong winds and heavy rain had caused the pole to fall over and block the adjacent road.

According to police, they were alerted about the accident around 3am. When a team reached the spot, they found the youths critically injured. Both were immediately shifted to a private hospital in Sector 137 for treatment.

However, one of them, Vishal Kumar, 22, succumbed to his injuries during treatment. Doctors said the second injured individual, Anurag Thakur, a resident of Jeetram Colony in Sector 81, is still undergoing treatment and his condition is being monitored.

Kumar, a native of Khatola village in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly, was employed with an oral health company in Advant Tower in Sector 141. He lived in a rented accommodation in Bhangel. Preliminary investigation suggests both were returning home after work when the incident took place.

Officials from the Phase-2 police station said the exact circumstances of the accident are being investigated and CCTV footage from nearby areas is being examined to reconstruct the sequence of events. The death of the young professional triggered grief among his family members, who rushed to the hospital after receiving information about the incident. Police have sent the body for post-mortem examination after completing legal formalities. The incident has once again raised concerns over the condition and maintenance of electricity poles in Noida and Greater Noida. Local residents claimed that several trees and electricity poles were uprooted during the storm, posing a major threat to commuters especially at night.

Similar incidents have been reported in the region earlier as well. In May 2025, several vehicles were damaged after a pole collapsed on the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway during a storm. Residents also flagged concerns over leaning poles near the Sector 101 Metro station in June last year. Experts believe poor maintenance, ageing infrastructure and weak foundations are major reasons behind such incidents. Former electricity department officials said many cement and iron poles installed years ago have become structurally weak due to lack of timely inspection and replacement. Construction activity, road widening projects and excavation work near poles often weaken their foundations, while excessive load on wires and illegal electricity connections further increase pressure on the structures, one official added. Authorities and safety experts have stressed the need for regular surveys and inspections before the monsoon and storm season. They suggested that tilted, rusted or damaged poles should be replaced immediately and warning signs or barricades should be installed near vulnerable locations.

Wider lanes at Subhash Chowk in Gurgaon to unclog Mumbai eway bottleneck

GURGAON.(Agency)

To ease persistent traffic congestion near Subhash Chowk at the entry point of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, authorities are planning key infrastructure changes. The distance between the entry and exit points will be increased to reduce bottlenecks, and the service road along the carriageway will be widened from two lanes to three. Officials said nearly 20,000 vehicles use this stretch daily, making the upgrades essential for smoother flow. Sohna Road — one of Cyber City's major arterial and busiest stretches — faces frequent bottlenecks. National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Gurgaon Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) have prepared a plan to decongest the corridor, aiming to reduce travel time for commuters and cut down pollution. Currently, the service lanes on both sides of the underpass are narrow, causing

traffic to halt due to illegal parking and abrupt turns by vehicles. Footpaths and an improved drainage system to prevent waterlogging are also part of the revamp.

Commuters, particularly during peak hours, often get stuck near Subhash Chowk. "It takes more than 15-20 minutes to cross the small stretch onto Sohna Road," Vikash Malhotra, a resident of Sector 48, said.

A blueprint has been prepared to redesign the entry-exit points at the Subhash Chowk underpass to eliminate congestion. This is expected to bring major relief to thousands of motorists who use the corridor and residents of the housing societies along Sohna Road. Commuters say the situation turns worse



during peak hours near the underpass. "Motorists get stuck in traffic jams daily between 8.30am and 11.30am and 5:30pm and 8:30pm. People travelling from Delhi to Jaipur and from old Gurgaon towards Sohna or Badshahpur get caught in jams stretching several

kilometres every day," said Pradeep Yadav, a resident of Sector 49.

Due to the congestion, every vehicle spends an additional 20 to 35 minutes on the stretch, leading to the wastage of thousands of litres of fuel daily and contributing significantly to the city's pollution levels. To address these issues permanently, NHAI will launch a detailed technical survey in the coming days. The biggest cause of the jam at Subhash Chowk, officials said, is vehicles getting entangled immediately after the underpass. "The distance between entry and exit points will be increased to eliminate the jam at Subhash Chowk underpass. In addition, the service road will also be widened. A plan has been prepared for this," NHAI's project officer Yogesh Tilak said.

Rain gone, IMD out with heatwave alert for this week

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city is headed towards an intense spell of summer heat, with temperatures gradually climbing and the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing a yellow alert for May 19 and 20 for the city amid the possibility of heatwave conditions returning to the state.

Dry and clear skies pushed up daytime temperatures in Gurgaon on Saturday. The maximum temperature was recorded at 39.9°C at Gurgaon KVK, up from 39°C a day earlier. Gurgaon AWS recorded 39.4°C against Friday's 38.7°C, and NorthCap University recorded 40.6°C, up from 40.1°C the previous day.

The minimum temperature, however, showed a marginal dip across stations. Gurgaon KVK recorded 24.3°C, down from 24.8°C on Friday. At NorthCap

University, the minimum temperature settled at 24.6°C, while Gurgaon AWS recorded 21°C compared to 23.5°C a day earlier. In Haryana, Sirsa was the hottest place in the state on Saturday, recording a



maximum temperature of 42°C.

According to the IMD, upper air cyclonic circulations lie over Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, along with a western disturbance

positioned over Jammu and adjoining north Pakistan. However, these systems are not expected to trigger any significant rainfall activity over the state.

According to IMD forecasts, weather conditions in Gurgaon and the rest of Haryana are likely to remain dry over the coming days, with the maximum temperature expected to rise further by 4°C to 5°C during the next four days. Heatwave conditions are likely to prevail at isolated places from May 18 onward, particularly over the south and south-western Haryana districts, including Gurgaon. The IMD has advised residents to limit outdoor exposure during afternoon hours, stay hydrated and take precautions against heat-related illnesses. The yellow alert indicates the possibility of heat stress, especially for vulnerable groups such as children, elderly residents and outdoor workers.

3 foreigners pose as women online, cheat many with fake forex charges

Noida.(Agency)

Three Nigerian nationals were arrested in Noida on Thursday for allegedly posing as women on social media, befriending people across India and cheating them on the pretext of foreign currency conversion charges and anti-money laundering clearances. Police said 19 mobile phones, one laptop and 18 Indian and international SIM cards were recovered from their possession during the operation.

The accused—Chinedu, James Sunday, and Jules Kakao—were wanted in connection with a cyber fraud case registered last year. The case began with a complaint on April 25, 2025, from a man who said he connected with a woman on Instagram and started communicating with her regularly.

During the interaction, the woman told the man that she had arrived in India and needed Rs 69,900 as registration charges at Mumbai Airport to convert her cheque into Indian currency. Trusting her, the



complainant transferred the amount into the bank account shared with him.

Police said that when the woman later demanded more money, the complainant realised that he had been cheated and approached the cops. During the investigation, cops traced the suspects to Noida in Uttar Pradesh on May 14 and arrested the trio. They were later produced before a court and taken on a one-day

police remand for questioning.

During preliminary interrogation, police found that James allegedly entered India illegally through Bangladesh in 2022, Chinedu came to India on a study visa in 2018, and Kakao entered India on a study visa in 2017. Police said none of the accused was found carrying a valid visa or passport at the time of arrest. Following this, relevant sections of the Passport Act and the Foreigners Act were also added to the case. Cops said they created fake female profiles on social media to target people in India. After gaining victims' trust, they extorted money for registration fees, anti-money laundering charges, and travel expenses to meet them. Sandeep Turan, police spokesperson, said that the mobile phones, SIM cards and laptop recovered from the accused are being examined to identify other victims, financial transactions and possible links to additional cyber fraud cases across the country.

80-year-old kills sleeping wife with axe, then walks to cops in Ghaziabad

NOIDA.(Agency)

An 80-year-old man allegedly hacked his 72-year-old wife to death with an axe as she slept outside their daughter's house in Rawli Kala village in Muradnagar, then walked into a nearby police outpost to confess on Saturday. Police said the accused, Harpal, a resident of Morta village, arrived at Rawli police outpost around 4 am and told officers that he had killed his wife with an axe. Police teams accompanied him to the house, where they found the body of his wife, Urmila, lying on a blood-soaked cot. She had suffered multiple deep axe wounds to the head, neck and shoulder. The woman was rushed to a community health centre, where doctors declared her dead on arrival. The elderly couple had been living with their daughter, Kanchan. At the time of the incident, Kanchan and her husband were away in Meerut for a relatives wedding. Two of Kanchan's sons, Ajay and Kunal, were asleep in another room, but said they heard nothing during the night. Returning home to news of her mother's death, Kanchan said the couple had fought throughout their lives. "Late, they had also stopped interacting with us. But we did not think the matter was this serious," she said. Kanchan, one of the couple's three children, said she lost her elder brother a few years ago. Her sons



told police that Harpal had been suffering from mental health issues and that arguments between him and Urmila were frequent. They cited an incident earlier that week in which Harpal had slapped

Urmila after she made a remark that angered him. He had also been verbally abusive towards his grandsons, they said. Senior police officials said Harpal has been arrested and is being questioned.

The axe was recovered from the scene. Preliminary investigation suggests prolonged domestic disputes may have contributed to the killing. The body has been sent for autopsy.

BJP Govt begins replacing Mamata's 'Biswa Bangla' logo with Ashoka emblem in Bengal

The West Bengal government has begun removing the Biswa Bangla logo from official platforms and public infrastructure. The change replaces a long-standing Trinamool-era symbol with the Ashoka emblem in a visible branding shift.

Bhopal. (Agency)

The BJP-led government in West Bengal has formally begun removing the “Biswa Bangla” logo — the signature emblem introduced during the tenure of former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee — from official platforms and public infrastructure across the state.

The logo, which for over a decade served as the visual identity of the Trinamool Congress-led administration, is now being replaced with India’s national emblem, the Ashoka Stambh, at several prominent locations. One of the most visible changes has taken place at Salt Lake Stadium, where the “Biswa Bangla” signage has been removed and replaced with the national emblem.

The rebranding exercise has also extended to

the state government’s digital platforms. The “Egiye Bangla” portal, which hosts links to multiple government departments and services, now features the Ashoka Stambh in place of the Biswa Bangla logo. The portal’s visual theme has also undergone a noticeable transformation, with the earlier white-and-blue colour scheme replaced by saffron accents after the BJP government assumed office.

Launched on September 16, 2013, the Biswa Bangla brand was conceived as a symbol representing Bengal’s cultural identity, tourism, traditional arts and handicrafts. The logo, designed around the



Bengali letter “B”, gradually became the official branding symbol across government websites, infrastructure projects, official correspondence and beautification initiatives during the

Trinamool Congress regime.

The updated Egiye Bangla portal now displays a white background carrying the Ashoka emblem along with a photograph of Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari. Departmental icons related to e-services, tourism, business, industry and agriculture have also been redesigned using saffron-themed graphics.

BJP leaders have defended the decision, arguing that a logo created by an individual should not function as the primary identity of a state government. Party leaders maintained that the Ashoka emblem remains the highest and most appropriate symbol for official government use.

The “Biswa Bangla” logo had earlier been at

the centre of a political controversy in 2017 when former BJP MLA Mukul Roy alleged that the logo was privately owned and not a government entity. The allegations were denied by Abhishek Banerjee, while Mamata Banerjee later clarified in the Assembly that she had personally created the logo and allowed the state government to use it without charging royalty.

For nearly 13 years, the Biswa Bangla emblem remained deeply associated with the Trinamool Congress government’s identity and public outreach.

Soon after the BJP government took oath, however, the logo began disappearing from official systems and state-controlled platforms, marking a symbolic shift in Bengal’s political and administrative branding.

Short news

Andhra Pradesh NGO rescues, reunites 75-year-old Bengal woman with family after 35 years

VISAKHAPATNAM. (Agency)

A 75-year-old woman identified as Geetha Biswas was safely reunited with her son and daughter-in-law in Kharija Kakribari in West Bengal after being separated from her family for nearly 35 years.

Geetha has two sons and daughters. Following the death of her younger son at the age of 11, her mental health reportedly deteriorated. At around 36 years of age, she left her home and went missing, leaving the family devastated and deprived of a mother’s care for decades.

In December 2025, AUTD staff rescued Geetha near the railway station in Vizag and shifted her to the TSR Women Shelter Home. She received treatment and care via Shraddha, following which her condition improved significantly.

She was taken from Vizag to her native village, where her son and daughter-in-law received her warmly at Howrah.

“Family members became emotional when Geetha asked about her husband, unaware that he had passed away nearly two years ago,” AUTD secretary Pragada Vasu said, adding that the family expressed gratitude to AUTD and the Shraddha organisation for reuniting their mother, whom they had long believed was no more.

OPSC to hold OCS preliminary exam in six cities across Odisha on June 7

CUTTACK. (Agency)

The Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) on Saturday announced that the Odisha Civil Services (OCS) Preliminary Examination-2025 will be conducted in six cities across the state, on June 7.

According to the notification, the examination will be held in Balasore, Berhampur, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Jeypore and Sambalpur.

The Commission has also announced the details of the schedule of the prelims. As per the schedule, the examination will be conducted in two sittings. General Studies Paper-I will be held from 10 am to 12 noon and contain 100 objective-type multiple-choice questions.

General Studies Paper-II is scheduled to be conducted from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm with 80 multiple-choice questions. Candidates will have to mark their responses on OMR answer sheets.

The Commission has also provided additional time for candidates belonging to the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) category. Such candidates will be allowed 40 extra minutes in each session. Accordingly, the morning sitting for PwD candidates will continue till 12.40 pm, while the afternoon session will end at 4.10 pm. “Admission certificates and instructions to all the admitted candidates will be available on the website of Commission from May 30,” the notification stated.

Naga, Kuki-Zo groups protest violence in Manipur

Kangpokpi. (Agency)

Fresh protests erupted in Manipur on Saturday as Naga and Kuki-Zo civil society organisations staged separate demonstrations over recent incidents of violence in Kangpokpi district, deepening concerns over the deteriorating security situation in the state. At Kanglatongbi in Kangpokpi district, protests demanding the safe release of six allegedly abducted Naga civilians intensified, with demonstrators accusing authorities of failing to act decisively amid rising unrest.

The agitation, spearheaded by the Koubru Range Liangmai Women’s Union, entered its fourth consecutive day on Friday and witnessed participation from several civil society and indigenous organisations.

Protesters carried placards bearing messages such as “Hostages are Human, Not Weapons” and “Where is Our Government?”, while raising slogans condemning violence and abduction.

According to organisers, 20 Naga civilians were allegedly abducted from Leilon Vaiphei village following the May 13



ambush incident in Kangpokpi district in which three church leaders were killed. While 14 of the abducted individuals have reportedly been released, six remain unaccounted for.

Civil society leaders appealed to both the Manipur government and the Centre to intervene urgently to secure the safe release of the remaining civilians and restore public confidence.

The protests come amid heightened tensions in parts of Manipur, particularly in Kangpokpi and neighbouring Noney district, following a series of violent incidents involving armed groups and community tensions.

Meanwhile, in Churachandpur district, thousands of people participated in a mass rally organised by the Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights (KWOHR) to protest the killing of three Kuki-Zo pastors between the Kotzim and Kotlen areas of Kangpokpi district earlier this week. Participants, including church leaders and community representatives, assembled at Koite village ground before marching to the Wall of Remembrance in Tuibong.

Protesters raised slogans including “Justice for Three Pastors”, “Respect Human Rights”, and “NSCN-IM Stop Killing”. Following the rally, KWOHR submitted a memorandum addressed to Union Home Minister Amit Shah through the Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur district. In the memorandum, the organisation demanded the re-imposition of President’s Rule in Manipur, enhanced deployment of security forces in Kuki-Zo areas, and a high-level investigation into the killing of the three pastors and other alleged acts of violence against Kuki-Zo civilians.

Vivah rerun: UP bride suffers burn injuries, groom marries her in hospital

Kanpur. (Agency)

In a moving scene from Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, a man married his fiancée at a hospital after she was severely injured in a fire incident that took place just days ahead of their scheduled wedding.

The emotional moment was reminiscent of the 2006 Bollywood film Vivah, in which Prem (Shahid Kapoor) married Poonam (Amrita Rao) while she was admitted to a hospital after sustaining burn injuries in a blaze. Something very similar transpired in Kanpur, where Vikas and Shweta were set to get married on Thursday. However, a mishap occurred at the woman’s house on Wednesday evening amid pre-wedding rituals when a



leakage in a gas cylinder pipe caused a fire there.

In the ensuing panic and attempts to douse the blaze, the situation took a turn for the worse when a cooking pot filled with hot oil overturned.

The incident left Shweta and 11 others injured. Though all of them were initially rushed to a government hospital, the bride-to-be was later shifted to a private one due to the severity of her burn injuries. Upon learning about the incident, Vikas, arrived at the hospital with his family. Despite advice from relatives, he refused to postpone the wedding and insisted that he would stand beside his fiancée under all circumstances. With permission from the hospital authorities and blessings from the two families, preparations were started to turn the private hospital’s burn ward into a symbolic wedding venue.

Pregnant woman dies after husband assaults her, inserts iron rod in private parts

After the incident, the accused allegedly tied the woman's body to the back of a motorcycle and took her to the Medical College Hospital in Ambikapur, claiming she had died in an accident. Doctors declared her dead on arrival, after which the accused fled from the hospital premises.

Surguja. (Agency)

A shocking case of alleged domestic violence has emerged from Chhattisgarh, where a 23-year-old pregnant woman was allegedly tortured and killed by her husband in a village near Ambikapur, who later tried to pass it off as an accident. The victim, identified as Heerabai, a resident of Chhattisgarh’s Sakariya village, was allegedly attacked by her husband Pradeep Agarja on May 14. According to police and family members, the accused brutally assaulted her before killing her inside their home.

After the incident, the accused allegedly tied the woman’s body to the back of a motorcycle and took her to the Medical College Hospital in Ambikapur, claiming she had died in an accident. Doctors declared her dead on arrival, after which

the accused fled from the hospital premises.

During the autopsy, it was found that the woman was approximately three months pregnant at the time of her death. The forensic team also recovered a nearly 27-centimetre-long iron file from her private parts during the procedure.

The postmortem also revealed multiple severe injuries, including deep head wounds caused by repeated blows from a heavy wooden stick that fractured her skull.

Medical experts said that there were at least 18 major injury marks on the victim’s body. Based on the injuries around the thighs and abdomen, doctors

suspect the object may have been forcefully pushed inside, leading to fatal internal injuries and the death of the



unborn child. Speaking about the findings, the head of the forensic department, Dr. Santu Bag, said, “During

the postmortem, we found several serious external and internal injuries. A 10-inch iron rod-like object was recovered from the victim’s private parts and seized for investigation.”

According to Station House Officer CP Tiwari, the accused initially attempted to portray the incident as an accident. However, the postmortem and forensic examination reportedly revealed signs of severe brutality.

Family members alleged that Pradeep Agarja had a history of violent behaviour and frequently assaulted his wife. They claimed he had previously attacked her with a sharp weapon and several complaints had been raised in the village regarding his conduct.

What it means for Congress to be party of the south

To be in a state of limbo or trishanku swarga—that is, to be perilously suspended between earth and heaven—is an idea available both in Christian theology and Hindu puranic texts. Though a deracinated Congress did not borrow it from either of the cultures, it has strangely found itself in a kind of electoral netherworld—the metaphorical realms of the idea in Indian politics. To be in limbo is undoubtedly a platitudinal appellation for the party that has been in decline since 2014. But the irony is that the Congress itself has not come to reflect or rue about its perch of non-progress. Rather, it has attempted to develop, with some reverse ingenuity, capital around its very state of being left dangling by the voter. The party neither has its feet on the ground, nor is its leadership at the top able to hold things together. The Congress, perhaps, stopped thinking like a national party a while ago. It tried to adopt the ideological agenda and smarts of regional outfits that fared better against the Modi regime, but those regional parties did not concede an inch to the Congress. Regional parties, which have been growing at the expense of the Congress since the 1970s, are unlikely to do any charity in the name of national interest or secular politics. There is a kind of consolatory half-truth spoken about the Congress these days when people say it has essentially become “a party of southern India”. It is an attempt to anchor the grand old party somewhere on the map, but the ground realities for the party in the south are quite harsh. Take the example of Kerala, where the Congress now leads the ruling coalition but does not have the numbers to form a government on its own. This limits its elbow room. Plus, the confusion created for almost 10 days over the choice of the state’s chief minister has eroded its image. It is astonishing that a national party created a fissure on a clean wall of victory to insert a dynasty-backed national general secretary in the chief-ministerial race—only to be stifled by coalition partners and grassroots reaction. This should tell us that the Congress is caught in a time warp, a limbo of another sort. They have not come out of the imperious mindset of their past, when they imposed rootless favourites from the top. The post-2014 lessons and serial defeats should have taught them otherwise. In Karnataka, the factional rivalry has been reduced to media entertainment. After the Kerala decision, D K Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah seem ready for a fresh round of slugfest at the expense of their Delhi leadership. The high command is now perceived as unable to transfer power to Shivakumar to honour its own word that was apparently given in May 2023. The central leadership’s procrastination has ensured that whatever change is made in the near future, it is likely to splinter the party in Karnataka. Neither Siddaramaiah nor Shivakumar is the forgiving type. To manage success is as vital as achieving it. That’s a lesson imparted by Karnataka, where the Congress secured an overwhelming majority in May 2023, yet ended up running a sort of coalition of snipers. Surveys suggest the party’s appeal has slipped since. What if there is little chance of recovery after that, like has happened for the party in several of Indian states where it has been pushed to a fringe of irrelevance? Its third state in the south, Telangana, looks calm for now. But the recent convivial public exchange between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should have disturbed the party’s slumber in Delhi.

Scroll down for woes galore

Doomscrolling is a slideshow akin to skimming through newspaper headlines. Some headlines seem not to have changed either. Whether it’s about an onion price crash, a stolen exam, dysfunctional schools or a foundering rupee, it’s difficult to summon up fresh outrage

In eternal India, a doomscroll is as good as a time machine. One executed late at night, when the human engine is turning at its lowest RPM and the human being is all thumbs, threw up depressing national news of a stolen exam, a foundering rupee, a flight of capital and yet another onion outrage. Like newspaper headlines from the Eighties, Nineties and Noughties. This is Eternal India. The NEET-UG test was cancelled because question papers were leaked to WhatsApp and Telegram well before the test. NEET is a high-stress competition against redoubtable odds—over 22 lakh candidates took the test to seek admission to medical courses. Arvind Kejriwal, who had passed a similar test to enter IIT-Kharagpur, says that families sell their homes to give their children a fighting chance. After the leak, parents pushed beyond endurance were calling for the death penalty—because previous perpetrators had walked free, ready to perpetrate the next leak. This one Indian education looks like a relentlessly active crime scene. The number of suspected leaks in about a decade has climbed to 89, with 48 retests. But sadly, it’s no novelty. In the 1990s, ‘education mafias’ in Bihar—nexuses of politicians, schools, colleges, exam board officials and middlemen—organised paper leaks, mass copying, inflated scores and fake degrees. Bihar Governor Satya Pal Malik had accused the mafia of turning BED colleges into profit centres. Candidate impersonation is so commonplace that it was immortalised in Munna Bhai MBBS. Overseas, Indian applicants for student visas now bear the cumulative burden of this legacy of cheating as they face extra scrutiny.

Recently, there was consternation over a Niti Aayog report which discovered some reasons for the soaring dropout rate in India—no electricity in almost 1.2 lakh schools and no girls’ toilets in almost 99,000. Digital teaching is being rolled out meanwhile. Microsoft plans to train 20 lakh teachers to work AI into classroom processes. Without electricity? It’s the latest chapter in a never-ending story. Earlier, it was about classrooms without blackboards and benches. Now, it’s about electricity and loots. That’s progress? Next up on the doomscroll was the rupee, which may cross 98 to the dollar this year if the oil trade remains disturbed. Plus, the government has notified rules for the application of four new labour codes which dilute worker’s rights and ease the process of hiring and firing—while AI eats away at jobs. Meanwhile, foreign portfolio investors have pulled out a record \$21 billion from Indian markets this year, which isn’t even half over. Foreign portfolio investment is at the lowest in 14 years.



As always, these numbers are contested because unseen factors are at play. For instance, part of the volume is round-tripped—Indian money spirited away overseas, laundered and boomeranged back to be reinvested in India. Warfare rages between amateur economists on X every other day over such imponderables. Let us choose the path of peace. If the numbers are unreliable, let us consider impressions. How often do you see new factories these days, compared to the Nineties? And how many new stalls selling chips and soft drinks spring up—plus startups to deliver them in minutes? Even India’s celebrated iPhone story is about assembly, not manufacturing. For years, businesses have had no stomach for the risks of manufacturing and have created few capital assets. While the government hails startups, entrepreneurs sell assets and invest in markets instead. Recently, the Union commerce minister waxed sarcastic about the children of Indian billionaires selling vegan ice cream and gluten-free cookies—selling American manias to the Indian rich—and passing off their businesses as ‘startups’. And almost 50 years ago, George Fernandes had laid down the line for American multinationals: “Computer chips, not potato chips.” But potato chips remain bestsellers, and though AI is surging, India does not have the wherewithal—or the computer chips—to take the lead. Meanwhile, a ₹1 bill

handed to a farmer is the talk of the internet. He sold 25 sacks of onions in Nashik, did not even recover costs and was charged one rupee instead. Nashik’s huge onion market is routinely permitted to be rigged, though the revenge of the onions has been a thing since 1998, when a price surge blew away the second BJP government of Delhi.

The latest onion outrage was the last story on the doomscroll which inspired this gloomy column. The crises it threw up are chronic, but have simple solutions. Not dramatic diktats from the commanding heights like demonetisation, thali-banging, Muslim-bashing and now, the communist-like denunciation of foreign travel, gold, personal transport, cooking oil and fertiliser.

But small, specific interventions can deliver results. Like, AAP’s makeover of Delhi’s government schools had taught lakhs of poor families to expect better. Now, Arvind Kejriwal is back, after fighting trumped-up charges which kept him behind bars and handed Delhi to the BJP. He offers to lead a people’s movement against the national government. It shouldn’t be necessary, but since politics is now reduced to election arithmetic and poll rigging, perhaps the people have exhausted all other possibilities. And at the very least, public action beats the apathy of lonesome, late-night doomscrolling in the entrails of Eternal India.

Halwara takes off: Aviation ambitions face test of sustainability

For Ludhiana, the Delhi-Halwara connection is a gateway to national and global markets

AFTER decades of waiting, missed deadlines and political promises, the sight of the first commercial flight landing at Halwara airport carries emotional and economic significance for Punjab. For Ludhiana, the Delhi-Halwara connection is a gateway to national and global markets. The launch has been greeted with excitement across central Punjab. Administrative authorities arranged transport for passengers, political leaders rushed to claim credit and tickets reportedly saw brisk demand even before operations formally began. That enthusiasm is understandable. Ludhiana’s exporters, industrialists and entrepreneurs have long complained that dependence on Chandigarh and Amritsar slowed business mobility and increased logistics costs. Halwara also arrives at an important moment. The Centre recently expanded the UDAN regional connectivity scheme with an outlay of nearly Rs 28,840 crore, compared to the original Rs 4,500 crore allocation. The programme

seeks to develop 100 new airports and airstrips. However, regional connectivity remains uneven.



North India accounts for nearly 30% of the country’s passenger traffic, but many smaller airports continue to

struggle with weak demand and irregular flights.

That is why Halwara’s success cannot be taken for granted. Many airports inaugurated with fanfare have become underutilised later. Infrastructure without sustained airline operations quickly turns into an expensive symbol rather than an economic asset. Still, Halwara possesses some advantages. The airport’s terminal, developed by expanding the Air Force base, can handle 300 passengers at a time, while Air India has begun operations with two daily flights to Delhi. Ludhiana’s industrial ecosystem gives the airport a natural passenger base that many UDAN airports never had. But the real test begins after the inaugural applause fades. Connectivity must become reliable, affordable and commercially sustainable. Cargo handling, last-mile transport and route expansion will determine whether Halwara truly transforms Punjab’s economy. The state must ensure the runway remains busy.

Kerala lesson for Punjab Congress

THE GREAT GAME: The faction-ridden party is waiting for Rahul Gandhi to decide — like waiting for salvation

THE Congress party’s penchant for snatching defeat from the jaws of victory has been on ample display in these state elections, but Kerala has pretty much taken the cake. A full ten days after it won the state handsomely, leading the United Democratic Front to a landslide victory (102 seats/140-MLA Assembly), the party finally rescued itself from public ignominy by naming six-time MLA VD Satheesan as its chief minister-elect. Even Rahul Gandhi realised that catapulting his chief lieutenant into God’s own country — KC Venugopal, the powerful general secretary in charge of the party’s organisation, better known as the “eyes and ears” of the grand old party’s most powerful leader — would not go down well with Kerala folk. Yes, they would swallow the bitter taste with their morning coffee. After all, a majority of the MLAs who won had lined up on Venugopal’s side only a week or so ago.

And then the noises grew and grew and the tide shifted. Seems Priyanka Gandhi, Wayanad MP, weighed in, which would have definitely helped. But it was the chorus of suppressed dissent — because who would openly dare dissent against the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, whose skills at the jujitsu martial arts are so intrinsic to his world-view that he even made Punjab Congress leaders Partap Bajwa and Raja Warring do push-ups at a party programme in Himachal Pradesh recently; but for that story you have to read my colleague Rajmeet Singh — that finally lit up the sky in favour of Vadassery Damodaran Satheesan (the first name is the ‘tharavad’ or house name, the second is his father’s name and the last his given name.)

But just as Kerala’s Congressmen and women break coconuts at the foot of the deity in Guruvayoor — as much in favour of Satheesan as the fact that Rahul Gandhi, not them, will continue to deal with Venugopal

directly for another five years; also, what happens in Delhi must stay in Delhi — senior RSS leader Dattatreya Hosabale dropped a verbal bombshell with his comments on Pakistan earlier this week.

Despite “pinpricks” like the Pulwama attack, people-to-people dialogue “should be tried more and more now.” Civil society relations will work “because we have been one nation.” The security and self-respect of a country have to be protected, but “we need not close the doors. We should always be ready to engage them in a dialogue.” Trade and commerce and issuance of visas should not stop. There should be a window (open) always for a dialogue.” Mr Hosabale told PTI, mere days after the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor.

The comments are remarkable for a variety of reasons. First, as the RSS ‘sahkaryavah’, or second seniormost man in the organisation, Mr Hosabale is a powerful leader whose words cannot be taken lightly. Second, they indicate the RSS is constantly engaged with the issues of the day, that their leaders don’t live in a remote cave. Third, while the comments differ from the government’s line that “terror and talks don’t go together”, they can be seen as preparing the ground for a revision of that policy. (As of now, there’s no such change.) Fourth, they have been given to a news agency, PTI, indicating the RSS believed the interview deserved wide dissemination. Fifth, they came soon after Mr Hosabale returned from the US, where he likely met a wide variety of people, who must have given him a sense of the changing world order vis-à-vis both Pakistan and China — remember, the RSS has a strong presence in the US and is intimately connected with large sections of the Indian diaspora. Sixth, they have been greeted with a certain silence, indicating the country is still absorbing the weight of his words. Seventh, only former Army

Chief Manoj Naravane and Jammu & Kashmir leader Farooq Abdullah have welcomed his comments (“we must always have dialogue to solve our problems,” Abdullah said). And eighth, Pakistan has described them as a “positive” development and expressed the hope “sanity will prevail in India.” Certainly, Pakistan must learn the strategic lesson from Op Sindoor, which is that



it cannot turn the terror tap on and off when it wants — India has suffered too much at Rawalpindi’s hands over the decades. Nobody knows this as well as Punjab, which, as a frontline state, has borne the brunt of Pakistan’s relentless policy of bleeding India with a thousand cuts — terrorism morphs at wont into gangsterism and the infusion of deadly drugs. Certainly, Pakistan cannot be made to feel as if it has been let off the hook, even as Donald Trump woos his “favourite Field Marshal.”

And that’s been the irony of this week — which is, that the Congress, a self-avowed secular organisation, has offered only mealy-mouthed criticism of Hosabale’s outreach to Pakistan, instead of welcoming it. While the RSS, the self-acknowledged proponent of Hindutva, is reaching out to Pakistan’s Muslims, arguing the “Akhand Bharat” argument, that since “we have been one nation,” we should not hesitate to dialogue with them. You could ask the question: Why is the Congress so afraid of doing the right thing? It barely rescued itself in Kerala, dumped its old ally in Tamil Nadu, the DMK, to ally with the ruling TVK which really doesn’t need it anymore — because it has the breakaway AIADMK, a former ally of the BJP, to support it. And in Bengal, it broke the INDIA bloc by fighting against Mamata Banerjee’s TMC — which helped fragment the Opposition vote — only for Rahul Gandhi to shut up his cadres once TMC lost.

The worst, mark my words, is yet to come. In Punjab, as most political parties polish their strategies for the upcoming elections, the Congress has hardly said anything worthwhile in response to the daily political drama around Enforcement Directorate arrests, defections and mergers — except looking bemused or supercilious, even as the party’s key leaders fight each other for the top job.

The faction-ridden party in Punjab is waiting for Rahul Gandhi to decide — a bit like waiting for salvation. Perhaps Punjab should take a lesson from Kerala’s Satheesan, who, as C. Gouridasan Nair writes, has won respect from both sides of the aisle by infusing his debating skills with data, besides crusading against the lottery mafia and in favour of protecting the ecology of the Western Ghats.



5 ideal Table top

Plants

to make your work desk lively

A work desk not only sets up the mood of a working environment but is also a reflection of one's personality. Considering the space crunch with piles of paper and stationery on the desk, decking up your workstation with minimal accessories is the way to go. And what's better than jazzing up your desk with table-top plants, making the place look lively.

To know more about the plants which would be ideal for an office environment, we spoke to Sanya Ahuja, Founder & CEO of Greenish- a plant gifting company. "Table-top plants require minimal maintenance and do not occupy a

tolerant of low light conditions and erratic watering—they need to be watered only when its soil starts to dry. It needs to be kept in the sunlight only once a week. The beauty of this plant lies in the texture of its leaves.

2. Syngonium

There are six to seven shades of Syngonium of which pink and green have a greater demand. These air-purifying plants are preferably grown using organic manure instead of soil. Organic manure is light in weight, has more nutrients than plain soil and it also tends to retain moisture for a longer time. Thus, this plant needs to be watered and kept in the sunlight only once a week, making them an ideal choice for the busy bees.

3. Philodendron

The beauty of this plant lies in the 'cut' of its leaf—the fast growing Philodendron hybrid has red leaves and extremely attractive foliage. It requires bright but indirect exposure to sunlight once a week to get the best foliage colour and should be watered only when the soil dries up. The brown leaves could be cut or trimmed as per the need.

4. Sansevieria

Interestingly known as mother-in-law's tongue, these are air purifying plants and are available in different types like straight, golden and green. These plants have hard-textured leaves and hence are perfect for beginners. Sansevieria needs to be watered once in few days and are also ideal to be kept in bedrooms as they are known to produce oxygen even at night.

5. Chlorophytum

This again is an air-purifying plant. They have dark green leaves with white margins and are extremely tolerant to harsh conditions-- thus making them an ideal choice for beginners or forgetful owners.



lot of space—they are less than half-a-foot tall, thus making them suitable for the office desk. An ideal plant is chosen on the basis of whether it acts as an air purifier i.e., absorbs toxins from the environment, beautifies or is easy on maintenance. They are mostly priced between INR 450-600," said Ahuja.

Read to know more about the five ideal table top plants, according to Ahuja, and pick the one which would make your desk look lively at work:

1. Golden Pothos

Golden Pothos belongs to the money plant family and is very easy to maintain too. This is an air purifying plant which means it absorbs toxins from the air apart from producing oxygen. They are



Helpful ways to make your home eco-friendly!

With the rising temperatures, global warming is making its presence felt, making it the right time to develop an eco conscience.

Did you know that small modifications at home can make your living space eco-friendly? TOI helps you go green with these simple tips...

Switch to CFL lights

They may not be as soothing as incandescent lights, but CFL bulbs save a lot of energy. For those who complain about them being too bright, there are several options available in the market these days so that you get the effect you desire. What's more, CFL bulbs are light on your pocket.

Plant a herb garden

Many of us like having potted plants at home, but instead of growing decorative flowers, plant a herb garden. They don't require a lot of effort since they are easy to grow. Plus, it's great to know that your herbs are pesticide-free and that what you are eating is healthy.



M a k e a compost bin

Composting is a great way to turn household trash into nutrient-rich supplement for plants. Take a bin (such as an old bucket) and make a couple of holes on the side and bottom. Layer this with broken bricks and sprinkle some water. Now place bagasse (the residue of sugarcane once the juice is squeezed out) and place it on the bricks. Sprinkle more water. Add a fistful of compost and the pit is ready.

Stop using plastic bags

The reason you have to pay for plastic bags at stores is to discourage its use. Keep a reusable bag in your handbag or car so that it comes in handy whenever you go shopping -be it at the grocery store or the mall.

Use cloth instead of paper to clean

Find yourself always reaching out for kitchen towels or tissues to clean up a mess? Break the habit and use cloth instead. And you don't have to go out and buy fancy towels either; simply recycle and make rags out of old T shirts or towels.

Use low flow shower heads

Replace your existing shower heads with low flow ones as this can save around a 100 litres of water a day (depending on use). Also ensure that your water heater is insulated well to save energy, or replace it with a solar heater.

Switch off all lights at home

Most Indian families leave at least one light on at night as people believe that a house must not be draped in darkness. But this is a criminal waste of electricity and is really not required.

Plug leaks

Have a leaky faucet? Get it fixed! You may think that the single drop of water that drips every few seconds isn't some thing that you must bother about, but that single drop accumulates into sever al litres a day . Pay a plumber a nominal . fee to fix a leak and to save water and see a marked difference in your water bill.

Live an unplugged life

Electric appliances like TVs, computers and iPod docks continue to consume large amounts of energy even when they are in standby mode. So ensure that you switch them off completely and even take the socket out of the plug point.

Simple ways to Freshen up your home

Here are some more easy ways to bring the best of the season into your home. Take out any dark accessories like velvet pillows, wool throws, and even that dark leather club chair and ottoman. Don't worry! You can bring them back in when the weather changes. Nothing brings freshness like a casual decor. Use wicker, rush, iron, or painted white garden furniture in place of heavy upholstered pieces. Add colourful pillows. Sheer, pretty curtains keep a room feeling cool and open while offering some privacy. White is always a good choice, but don't shy away from some of the new citrusy pastels. Subtle colour and texture make a big difference to mind and body. Colour choices such as white, almond, soft shades of orchid, dusky blue and corn silk yellow can turn your bedroom into an oasis of calm. Don't forget to bring the outdoors in. Toss out leggy, brown plants that you're trying to nurse. Bring in fresh, flowering new ones. Flowers bring freshness into any room. Choose your favourite glass vase or colourful ceramic jug and keep it full of fresh cut stems from your garden, the neighbours, or the flower market. Add fresh flowers and plants to your guest room or bedroom. Enjoy colourful, cheery, summery new flowered bed linens. Layer sheer, frothy fabrics on tables, as a second layer on a bed skirts, and even make a sheer pillow cover for a dark pillow. Add a touch of whimsy with

embroidered sheer fabric. When you enter a home, the first scent you smell makes a significant impact on you. You may quickly formulate impressions or opinions about the home, even if you are not conscious of this occurring. Make sure you fill your own home with inviting and pleasant scents, both for your own enjoyment and the enjoyment of guests. Make a



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

homemade liquid potpourri to simmer on your stove top. Revive your home and perk up your senses with homemade liquid potpourri. A few items from your cupboard or refrigerator are all you need to create an aroma that is pleasing. Use potpourri in the bathroom or bedroom to create a mood. Potpourri mixes can be purchased from stores, but you can experiment with different combinations of fruits and spices until you find the perfect fragrance for your home.

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

Choose the perfect colour combo for Your house



Using the perfect combination for the colour story of the walls, floor and ceiling can complete a room. Here's how colour changes perception...

- For a wider look in your room, use a dark floor with pale walls and ceiling.
 - When you have a dark floor and ceiling, it widens the room and also cuts short the height of the room.
 - If you want to emphasise the horizontal lines, then have dark walls, but keep the floor and ceiling light.
 - When your floor, ceiling and back wall are light, while the other three walls are relatively darker, the room will look narrower, deeper and higher.
 - In order to decrease the depth of space in a room, you need to have a dark back wall with pale side walls and a pale floor.
 - For a basement-like effect, keep the colour of the ceiling light. The floor and all four walls of your room could be dark.
 - If you have a pale and light floor and a similar back wall, but dark side walls and ceiling, then you could end up creating a tunnel effect in a room.
- Psst...
- If you opt for an all-dark look, the space may lose its personality and shape. An all-light floor and walls may look spacious, but would give off an impersonal aura.



Give your bedroom a romantic touch

Bedroom decor should have a romantic essence to it, don't you think?

Considering that we spend a major part of our lives in our bedrooms, we should make it one of the most comfortable zones in our homes. It should be a room that spells romance and makes you feel good as soon as you step inside — a space that stimulates your senses. So, what do you need to make your boudoir a cosy love nest? Read on to find out some tips...

Make it look great

The way your bedroom is lit, can make or break the look you want to create. Interior designer Ketki Passi says, "The right kind of lighting can help create a romantic ambience." Candles can work wonders — they are what romance is all about. The mysterious light and shadow effect of a candle can give a very special aura to your bedroom. Bright, harsh bulbs are a big no-no. For the ideal romantic look dim, soft lights are key. Use heavy curtains to escape the glare of harsh street-

lights. Of course, table and floor lamps are indispensable.

Make it comfortable

A bed that looks comfortable is a basic essential here. Four-poster beds look romantic. Use light fabric drapes in pastel shades around the bed to get a soft look. When it comes to bedspreads and covers, avoid rough and uncomfortable fabrics — soft, smooth and comfortable ones like satin, silk and very good quality airy cotton are essential. Using sexy colours makes your room look, well, sexy. Choose bright bold colours like red, orange or rust.

Place plush pillows on the bed of different sizes to make it look comfortable and inviting. Two large pillows, four medium rectangular pillows and around four to five smaller square cushions. A fluffy and soft comforter can add to the romantic look.

Prioritise privacy

Curtains spell romance — pretty, flimsy, sheer curtains that sway with the breeze, light ones in lovely pastel shades that leave you feeling calm and relaxed. Of course, you should also have those heavy drapes to guard your privacy.

Indulge the senses Romance is about titillating the senses and the sense of smell is important. Spraying room freshener is passe.

Opt for fragrances

of incense sticks, scented sachet, aromatic candles in lavender, vanilla, and camomile etc. Go and have fun doing up your bedroom!



How to choose the best Furniture

Look for furniture that is ample in size. To see if the seating space in a chair is roomy, park yourself in it.

Try to lift the chair you like and see how it feels. A good quality chair, table, sofa, or chaise will have more raw materials including springs, frame, and cushion; such pieces are usually heavier than average quality models.

Observe the finish

The piece should have a rich and deep finish or paint that hasn't been applied to cover flaws. A translucent finish would ideally be even and the wood's grain would show through. An opaque finish will again have even consistency sans any bubbles or remnants of brush strokes. As for items made from wicker and rattan, they won't have any splinters or loose ends, while the weaves will be uniform.

Mind the cushions

The perfect cushion is neat, has well-defined corners if angular or curves if rounded, comes with buttons and detailing that are rock solid, and inconspicuous seams. Other key elements of quality cushions are plump contours; a squashed cushion is a sign of inadequate stuffing. A cushion that leaks feathers has not been properly sewn and lined.

Turn the piece over

Lift the furniture or look beneath the

surface to gauge its construction. Watch out for inaccuracies like badly sewn padding and loose screws, uneven support, and unprotected springs. You can't expect perfection since you will be looking at a raw sample at the department store but this trick will give you an idea about how carefully the item was made.

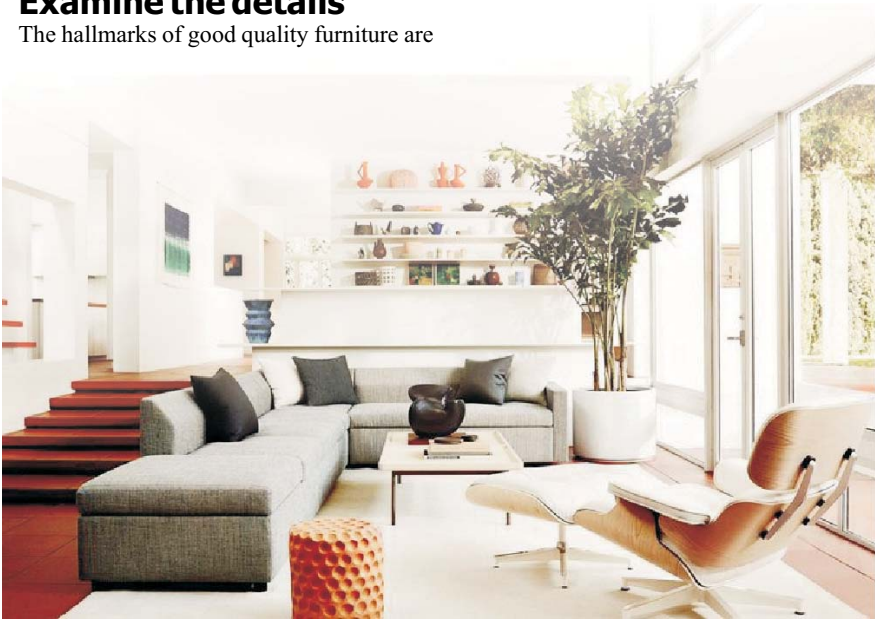
Examine the details

The hallmarks of good quality furniture are

impeccable sanding and finishing, discreet welding, straight welting and details that hide hardware. The nuts, screws and bolts must be painted in a colour that matches the furniture.

Plan by location

It's not enough to find good quality furniture. Think about where you will place the piece and what it will be surrounded by. If your chair is going to sit in front of a window, its fabric might fade over time due to exposure to the sun. So, buy one that has a simple print and few colours. If the table is for the study where your boisterous kids also solve puzzles, look for one with a tough finish.



Not constitutional imperative: Centre defends CJI exclusion from EC panel

The Centre, in an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court, defended the 2023 Act as constitutionally valid and emphasised the independence of the Election Commission is maintained through constitutional safeguards, not judicial inclusion in appointments.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Centre told the Supreme Court that the Constitution does not require the inclusion of judicial members in the selection committee for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners, asserting that the presence of a judge on the panel is a "legislative choice" and not a constitutional mandate.

In a counter-affidavit filed before the apex court, the Centre defended the constitutional validity of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which governs appointments to the

Election Commission.

The affidavit was submitted in response to a batch of petitions challenging the law, which replaced the Chief Justice of India (CJI) with a Union Cabinet minister in the three-member selection committee.

Under the 2023 law, which came into effect on January 2, 2024, the President appoints the CEC and Election Commissioners based on the recommendation of a panel comprising the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet minister nominated by the Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, or the leader of the single largest opposition party. "It



must be noted that the Constitution does not mandate judicial representation on the Election Commission's appointment committees. Inclusion of a member representing the judiciary is a legislative

choice, not a constitutional imperative," the Centre said in its affidavit filed on May 13.

Referring to Article 324 of the Constitution, the Centre argued that the Constitution does not prescribe any fixed structure for the appointment panel and leaves it to Parliament to enact a law governing the process.

"It must be noted that the Constitution does not mandate judicial representation on the Election Commission's appointment committees. Inclusion of a member representing the judiciary is a legislative choice, not a constitutional imperative," the affidavit stated. The government further

argued that the independence of the Election Commission stems from its constitutional status, security of tenure, removal safeguards and statutory protections, and not from the inclusion of judges in the appointment process. "Substantive independence of the Election Commission arises from its constitutional status, security of tenure, removal safeguards and statutory protections of its functions and emoluments. The 2023 Act, while preserving these features, adds procedural transparency in their appointment," the affidavit noted. The affidavit also said that any suggestion that judicial participation was necessary to validate.

Delhi Police K9 unit gets 54 Labradors, Belgian Malinois

New Delhi.(Agency)

With wagging tails and sharp instincts, 54 trained dogs have become the newest members of Delhi Police, strengthening the force's frontline security, rescue and crime detection capabilities across the capital.

The dogs were recently inducted into the Delhi Police K9 unit from the Remount Veterinary Corps, officials said. The move is part of efforts to enhance the canine squad, which plays a crucial role in modern policing and specialised security operations.

The newly inducted canines include 40 Labradors and 14 Belgian Malinois. Labradors are known for their intelligence, calm temperament and quick learning ability, making them suitable for assistance and detection duties. Belgian Malinois are recognised for their agility, discipline and loyalty, and are considered among the world's finest working dog breeds.

Established in 1968, the Delhi Police K9 Squad, also known as the Dog Squad, is an integral part of law enforcement operations. The trained dogs assist police personnel in explosives detection, suspect tracking, narcotics detection and combat operations, besides helping during large public events and emergency situations.

According to officials, each dog has undergone specialised training for specific assignments. Among the new recruits, 11 dogs are trained in explosives detection and can identify hidden threats in crowded public places and sensitive locations.

Sixteen dogs have been trained in narcotics detection to support anti-drug operations, while 13 tracker dogs are skilled in tracing suspects and locating missing persons. Fourteen others have been prepared for combat assault operations, where speed, alertness and discipline are critical, an officer said.

India adds new punch to its missile-rocket force with back-to-back tests

New Delhi.(Agency)

In the first week of May, as the Iran war reminded the world what modern long-range firepower can do, India held a missile festival of its own. There was no single dramatic announcement. No grand proclamation. Just a few boilerplate press releases that, taken together, provided a snapshot of India's existing missile and rocket force and a peek into what the future may hold.

Between May 1 and May 10, India carried out a series of tests: a long-range hypersonic anti-ship missile launch around May 1; the maiden flight trial of the Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation weapon, or TARA, on May 7; a new test of an advanced Agni missile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle, or MIRV, technology on May 8; and, on May 9, a long-duration test of a scramjet engine.

That is quite the alphabet soup. This article is an attempt to decode it. First, the context. The Iran war has brought renewed attention to an old military truth: the side that can strike most accurately from the farthest distance has an advantage.

India did not discover this lesson in May. Its missile programme has been decades in the making, shaped by the twin threats of Pakistan and China. India possesses a broad missile ecosystem, ranging from the BrahMos cruise missile, arguably among the best in the world, to the Agni series of ballistic missiles, which forms the backbone of the country's land-based nuclear deterrent. What the May tests did was provide a progress report on this rocket and missile force.

Seen together, the four tests point to four different ambitions: hit ships farther out at sea, make cheap bombs smarter, get one strategic missile to do the work of several, and build the engine technology for the next generation of hypersonic weapons. The last of these -- the scramjet test -- may sound the most obscure, but it probably was the most important. We will get to why. This test has not been formally acknowledged. But according to a Times of India report, India test-launched the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, or LR-AShM sometime around May 1.

NEET paper leak an inside job? NTA official now under CBI scanner

New Delhi.(Agency)

The investigation into the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak is uncovering increasingly murky details, with an unnamed official associated with the National Testing Agency (NTA) now reportedly under the CBI's scrutiny. The revelation comes following the arrests of Manisha Sanjay Waghmare and chemistry lecturer PV Kulkarni in connection with the paper leak, which led to the cancellation of the May 3 examination. Both the accused have been sent to 10-day CBI custody.

INSIDE JOB LEAD TO PAPER LEAK?

Sources said that while seeking Waghmare's custody, the CBI

uncovered signs of a possible inside job. The agency alleged that Waghmare, in conspiracy with the other accused and an unnamed NTA



official, allegedly received the question papers and answer keys on April 27.

Waghmare was introduced to Kulkarni -- the alleged kingpin behind the paper leak -- through

biology lecturer Manisha Mandhare, a member of the NTA's paper-setting committee who has been sent to 14-day CBI custody, the agency said.

According to the CBI, Waghmare collected the questions from Kulkarni and provided them to another accused, Dhananjay Lokhande, and others in exchange for money. Lokhande, who was arrested from Maharashtra's Ahilyanagar on May 13, is accused of further distributing the questions. The

handwritten chemistry questions shared by Kulkarni with aspirants have reportedly been destroyed. Waghmare is also said to have destroyed papers after the examination on May 3.

CNG Gets Costlier In Delhi, Second Price Hike In Two Days

New Delhi.(Agency)

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) will be costlier in Delhi and nearby regions from today. The CNG prices has been hiked by a rupee per kilogram in Delhi-NCR, in the second such hike in two days as the global energy markets finds itself rattled by the extended closure of the Strait of Hormuz due to the war in the Middle East.

CNG, which powers thousands of autos and cabs across the NCR, will now cost Rs 80.09 per kg in Delhi. The price is Rs 88.70 per kg in Noida and Ghaziabad and Rs 85.12 in Gurugram. It will cost Rs 88.58 per kg in Muzaffarnagar, Meerut and Shamli, Rs 91.42 per kg in Kanpur, Rs 89.44 in Ajmer, Rs 86.42 in Banda, and Rs 89.70 in Hapur. Major natural gas distributor Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) said that the price hike aims to marginally

offset the impact of increase in input gas cost along with steep appreciation of US dollar.

"The retail selling price of CNG has been increased by Rs 1/kg wef 6 am on 17.05.2026 in all GAs of IGL. The



revision in retail prices of CNG has been effected only to marginally offset the impact of increase in input gas cost along with steep appreciation of USD. Even after revision, CNG would still offer upto 45% savings towards the running cost when

compared to vehicles running on alternate fuel at the current level of prices," the IGL said.

The government had raised CNG prices by Rs 2 a couple of days ago in Delhi, raising it from Rs 77.09 per kg to Rs

79.09 per kg. A day earlier, a similar hike was seen in CNG prices in Mumbai - it now costs Rs 84 per kg in the financial capital. Fuel prices were also increased for the first time in four years, with petrol and diesel costing about three rupees more since Friday.

The CNG price hike impacts public transportation, feeding into retail inflation. With a large section of public transports now running on CNG, it is expected that the increased cost would be passed on to the commuters. In Mumbai, autorickshaw unions have already started demanding a rupee increase to the Rs 26 base fare.

Four held for running honey-trap racket using dating apps, fake police identity

Investigation found gang members created fake female profiles on dating apps called victims to public places and then took them to rented flats where fake police raids were staged.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Police has arrested four men and busted a honey-trap and extortion racket in which they allegedly posed as police officers and extorted money from victims through dating applications, officials said.

On May 12, police laid a trap near Kalyan Jewellers, Rajouri Garden and intercepted a suspected vehicle during the operation. Three accused initially fled while Sushil Kumar (53) from Najafgarh was caught on the spot along with the victim.



During interrogation Sushil disclosed associates Deepak Vinod and Neeraj who were later arrested. Investigation found gang members created fake female profiles on dating apps called victims to public places and then took them to rented flats where fake police raids were staged. They impersonated police officers to threaten victims with false rape cases and demanded large settlement money. In one case complainant met a woman named Kirti through a dating app was called to Janakpuri and taken to a flat where four accused including one in uniform threatened him and demanded Rs 15 lakh.

Deepak allegedly created fake female profiles while Vinod and Neeraj helped provide accounts and funds Sushil had earlier been involved in similar cases and was arrested in 2017. Deepak was also addicted to gambling and suffered financial losses. All four were arrested from different locations after coordinated raids and are being interrogated, police said. Sushil used to impersonate a police official during fake raids while Deepak's role was to create fake profiles and lure targets.

Big relief for NCR commuters: Gaur Chowk underpass in Greater Noida set to open soon

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a move that will come as a relief to a lakh vehicles that travel everyday through Gaur Chowk in Greater Noida, one of the busiest intersections in the NCR, an eight-lane underpass is expected to open by mid-August.

The 700-metre-long underpass will run parallel to the Taj Highway and connect Greater Noida (Surajpur) and Gaur City. Officials said 76% of the construction has been completed, and the project is expected to be done ahead of schedule.

The Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) had planned the project in 2024 to alleviate traffic snarls. The Chowk is a crucial point, leading to Ghaziabad in the North, Greater Noida (Surajpur) in the South, Delhi in the East and National Highway 24 in the West. "Around 1 lakh vehicles pass through the intersection every day,"

said an official, adding that 30,000 vehicles are expected to use the underpass. The official also said it was a six-lane underpass earlier, which has now been expanded to eight.

Officials said though the project starting in 2024, it took almost an year to relocate sewer lines, cables, gas pipelines and create diversions for commuters. When The Indian Express visited the spot on a Tuesday afternoon last week, dozens of auto rickshaws were parked haphazardly along the road going to Surajpur. Among them was Chandra Shekhar (45), originally from UP's Etah, waiting impatiently for a passenger. "I try getting as many rides as I can during the afternoon since when

the evening sets in, all four roads are packed," he said. "If I pick up a ride from Surajpur towards Gaur City, I have to



take a long U-turn after crossing towards Delhi, adding roughly 1 km in each direction. During evening rush hour, this can add up to 30 minutes to the journey," he said, adding that once the underpass

is operational, vehicles will be able to continue traveling straight.

Shekhar said the underpass would provide 90% relief between 7 am and 10 am and again after 6 pm. "The morning rush largely comprises vehicles headed towards Delhi and the evening flow moving in the opposite direction," he added.

The estimated cost of the project is Rs 82 crore. "The most challenging phase involved deep excavation in the covered section of the underpass, which is now finished. The remaining work primarily consists of building the entry and exit ramps, with one side towards Surajpur already completed," informed the official, adding that delay was also caused due to pollution restrictions under the Graded Response Action Plan.

Vodafone Idea rings in the first profit in six years; to raise capital from Singapore

New Delhi..(Agency)
Vodafone Idea has rung in consolidated net profit of Rs 51,970 crore for the Jan-March quarter (Q4), for the first time in six years. The telecom operator posted a loss of Rs 7,167 crore in Q4FY25. Vodafone Idea reported an operating loss of about Rs 5,515 crore for the Q4FY26 period and Rs 24,059 crore for the entire FY26 before exceptional items comprising relief on adjusted gross revenue, revealed data from the statutory filing by the company. The consolidated revenue from operations went up by about 3% to Rs 11,332 crore during Q4FY26 against Rs 11,229 crore in Q4FY25. The company posted a profit of Rs 34,552 crore in FY26 against a loss of Rs 27,384 crore in FY25. Though the apparent doom significantly dispelled following relief in statutory liabilities, the company still has a long way to go in terms of getting back into shape.

Deferred payment obligation
The deferred payment obligation against the telecom operator stood at Rs 1,27,360 crore towards spectrum and Rs 25,254 crore towards AGR as on March 31, 2026. The management said in the statutory filing that the instalment payable against deferred payment obligations on Vi, is Rs 7,076 crore by the end of the current financial year.

Reports said that Vodafone reported stabilisation of customer base after years with net addition of monthly subscribers since February. The total subscriber base of the Kumarmangalam Birla-led company stood at 19.28 crore at the end of Q4FY26. Average revenue per user or ARPU went up to Rs 190 in the Jan-March quarter. Though it was the lowest in absolute terms among the telecom operators, in percentage terms the growth of 8.3% (Y-o-Y) was the highest in the sector.

Plan to raise funds
According to the structure of the instrument, 25% of the warrant exercise price shall be payable at the time of subscription of warrants. The balance 75% shall be payable at the time of exercise of the right attached to warrant to subscribe to equity shares. Incidentally, Kumar Mangalam Birla's appointment for the second time as non-executive chairman came following the government's adjustment of gross revenue liability on Vi by about 27% to Rs 64,046 crore after reassessing the statutory dues from Rs 87,695 crore.

The company has to clear the dues in two sets over 10 years. Vodafone will need to pay a minimum of Rs 100 crore every year over four years from FY32 to FY35. The remaining amount has to be paid in six equal instalments every year from FY36 to FY41.

Silver import crackdown: Centre tightens rules on white metal — all you need to know

Kolkata .(Agency)
India has tightened silver imports in a major policy move to stop traders from taking advantage of a fresh duty gap created after the government raised import taxes on precious metals. Once duties on gold and silver were increased to 15%, concerns grew that lower-duty silver could start entering India through Dubai under the India-UAE free trade agreement, giving importers a way to avoid the full burden of the higher tariff.

To shut that route, the Centre has shifted silver imports from the "free" category to "restricted", which means traders will now need government approval before bringing silver into the country. The decision, announced just days after the duty hike, is part of a wider effort to control precious metal inflows, protect foreign exchange reserves, and close trade loopholes.

New rules for silver imports
On May 16, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), through Notification No. 17/2026-27, changed silver's import status from "free" to "restricted" with immediate effect. This means importers now need a government licence to import silver into India. The new rule also covers silver alloys mixed with gold and platinum.

20,000-tonne LPG carrier Symi arrives in Gujarat after crossing Strait of Hormuz

NEW YORK.(Agency)
The Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Symi, an LPG carrier transporting nearly 20,000 tonnes of liquid propane and butane, has safely docked at Deendayal Port in Kandla. The vessel crossed the Strait of Hormuz on May 13, marking another crucial movement of energy supplies through the key maritime route amid the ongoing Middle East crisis. The vessel has 21 crew members onboard, with eight Ukrainians and 13 Filipinos. Symi was the 11th LPG tanker to cross the Strait in the current monitored operations. According to officials, these safe passages were made possible through close coordination between DG Shipping and the ministries of external affairs, defence, and petroleum and natural gas. These shipments come at a time when global energy supplies have been under pressure due to the ongoing Middle East conflict. India's crude reserves have shrunk sharply in the months as the Strait of Hormuz has continued to see disruptions for over 75 days now, with stockpiles have dropping by nearly 15%. Data from commodities analytics firm Kpler estimates that India's total crude stockpile, including strategic petroleum reserves, refinery holdings and commercial storage, but excluding pipeline stocks, has fallen to 91 million barrels from 107 million barrels recorded at the end of February, when the conflict began.

CNG prices increased in Delhi-NCR by Re 1, second hike in 2 days

CNG will now cost Rs 80.09 per kg in Delhi, while consumers in Noida and Ghaziabad will pay Rs 88.70 per kg. The latest increase comes just two days after CNG prices were raised by Rs 2 per kg on Friday, resulting in an overall hike of Rs 3 per kg.

New Delhi..(Agency)
The prices of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) were increased by Re 1 per kg in Delhi-NCR on Saturday, marking the second hike in fuel prices this week as rising global crude oil rates continue to put pressure on oil marketing companies. With the latest revision, CNG in Delhi will now cost Rs 80.09 per kg, while consumers in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad will pay Rs 88.70 per kg. The latest increase comes just two days after

CNG prices were raised by Rs 2 per kg on May 15, taking the cumulative increase in CNG rates to Rs 3 per kg in 48 hours. The earlier hike had come alongside an increase in petrol and diesel prices across the country. On May 15, petrol and diesel rates were raised by Rs 3 per litre for the first time in more than four years as state-run fuel retailers began passing on part of the losses caused by soaring international crude oil prices amid the ongoing US-Iran war. With the revision, petrol in Delhi now costs Rs 97.77 per litre, up from Rs 94.77, while diesel is priced at Rs 90.67 per litre compared to the earlier Rs 87.67. Prices vary across states due to differences in value-added tax.

HORMUZ DISRUPTION BEHIND PRICE SPIKE
CNG prices were also increased in Mumbai earlier this week, where the fuel now costs Rs 84 per kg. However, prices of piped natural gas supplied to households and domestic LPG cylinders have remained unchanged for now. Global

crude oil prices have surged by more than 50 per cent since US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 and Tehran's retaliatory actions disrupted energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial



route for global oil shipments. Despite the spike in international crude prices, retail fuel rates in India had remained frozen for weeks as the government attempted to shield consumers from the immediate impact of rising energy costs. Opposition parties, however, accused the Centre of delaying the price revision due to ongoing

Assembly elections in key states. The latest price revision came shortly after the elections concluded, with the BJP strengthening its political position by winning three of the five poll-bound states, including West Bengal.

PETROL, DIESEL AT HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 2022
Petrol and diesel prices are now at their highest levels since May 2022. Fuel rates had largely remained unchanged since April 2022, barring a one-time reduction of Rs 2 per litre in March 2024 ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. In Mumbai, petrol now costs Rs 106.68 per litre and diesel Rs 93.14 per litre. In Kolkata, petrol prices have risen to Rs 108.74 while diesel costs Rs 95.13. Chennai has also seen prices increase, with petrol now retailing at Rs 103.67 and diesel at Rs 95.25 per litre. Industry sources said the latest hikes remain modest compared to the scale of increase in global crude prices and that oil marketing companies continue to absorb significant losses.

US-Iran tensions, crude oil spike, Q4 earnings among key factors likely to drive Dalal Street

New Delhi.(Agency)
Indian benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty snapped their two-session winning streak on Friday amid profit booking triggered by weak global cues, rising crude oil prices, and continued pressure on the Indian rupee. Investors are now expected to closely track geopolitical developments in the Middle East, oil price movement, ongoing corporate earnings, and currency fluctuations in the coming week. The 30-share Sensex declined 161 points, or 0.21 per cent, to settle at 75,237.99, while the Nifty fell 46 points, or 0.19 per cent, to close at 23,643.50. Commenting on the technical outlook, experts said that 23,800 now acts as the immediate resistance level, followed by the crucial 24,000 psychological zone where Call OI concentration remains significantly high. "On the downside, 23,500 acts as the immediate support, followed by 23,300 where fresh buying demand

may emerge alongside the weekly swing low," an analyst stated. "A decisive breakdown below this range could drag the index toward the 23,000 Put wall, which remains the strongest OI-based support zone for now," as per the analyst. Market sentiment remained



cautious due to escalating concerns surrounding the prolonged conflict involving the US and Iran. The geopolitical standoff has entered its third month with no breakthrough in negotiations so far. In the latest development, Iran said it will soon

present a proposal regarding maritime traffic management through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz. Any disruption in the region could significantly impact global crude oil supply and increase volatility across financial markets.

Crude oil prices surged more than 3 per cent on Friday after comments from US President Donald Trump and Iran's foreign minister dampened hopes of a near-term agreement aimed at stopping attacks and seizures of ships near the Strait of Hormuz. Investors will also keep a close watch on the ongoing Q4 FY26 earnings season. More than 500 companies are scheduled to announce their financial results for the quarter ended March 2026 during the upcoming week. Apart from domestic triggers, global market trends, foreign institutional investor activity, and developments in the US bond market are also expected to influence trading sentiment on Dalal Street in the week ahead.

SBI branches may remain closed for 6 days: Here's why

New Delhi..(Agency)
State Bank of India (SBI) customers may face major branch disruptions later this month as bank branches could remain closed for up to six consecutive days due to weekends, employee strike, and Bakrid holidays. The main reason is a two-day nationwide strike planned by the All India State Bank of India Staff Federation (AISBISF) on May 25 and May 26, 2026. The union says employees' issues have been ignored for a long time and several agreements have not been properly implemented. Before the strike, banks will already remain closed on May 23 because it is the fourth Saturday and on May 24 due to Sunday. After that, May 27 and May 28 may also see closures in several states because of Bakrid-related holidays. This could result in six straight days of branch disruption for many customers.

The strike mainly affects employees in the workmen category. The union says many important decisions are being taken without discussing them with staff, which weakens employee rights. AISBISF has submitted 16 demands to the bank management. These include issues related to new recruitment, pensions, promotions, salary structure, and better working conditions. One of the major problems is that the recruitment of messenger and support staff has been put on hold for years which has almost wiped out the positions. Employees have also raised concern over the absence of armed guards in the branches and have demanded for tighter security measures. Also Read: How much monthly income will Rs 25 lakh FD generate for Senior Citizen and general public? Interest rates and other details explained

NPS and Salary Issues
Workers have also raised objections over the National Pension System (NPS). They say they do not get the option to change their pension fund manager, while employees in other public sector banks have that flexibility. The union has also complained about salary inequality, saying officers are receiving special pay benefits while workmen staff are being left out. What customers should do To avoid any inconvenience, customers are advised to complete important branch-related work like cash deposits, cheque clearance, passbook updates, loan paperwork and account verification before May 23. However, online banking, mobile banking, UPI, ATM withdrawals, and internet banking services are expected to continue working normally unless separately notified by the bank.

EPF withdrawals: EPFO to soon launch auto-processing of final payment

Every retiree in India waits for EPF (Employees' Provident Fund) final payments. The EPFO has been trying to speed up payments for final withdrawals as it has done with early withdrawals. It could cause major relief to retiring employees who have to take out their corpus in EPF account.

New Delhi.(Agency)
EPFO or The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation is going to bring a major relief to those going to retire from service. The retirement funds body is taking steps to automate final PF withdrawal, which is likely to cut down delays and expedite transfers of funds directly into the bank accounts of employees. "We are also going to initiate, as far as feasible, auto-settlement for now...which was

(available) only for advances. Now we are going in for auto-settlement of final withdrawals," Ramesh Krishnamurthi, Central Provident Fund Commissioner, EPFO has said while addressing an audience at the ASSOCHAM. As things stand now, EPFO allows auto-settlement for some withdrawals only. These are typically up to Rs 5 lakh and pertain to advance withdrawal claims. The new plan is to extend the auto-processing system to final EPF withdrawals as well. Once this is done it will lend speed to the entire exit process faster and minimise paperwork for salaried employees. Nowadays a lot of people change jobs frequently. For them it will also be smooth if they want to take out the corpus accumulated in the EPF account. Delays are common Right now a number of employees face long processing windows, technical errors and employer verification delays. Cases of documentation mismatches are also reported when the hour of final withdrawal comes. If the desired level of

automation is achieved, many of these roadblocks could be removed. Backend verification processes can be simplified. EPFO has come a long way to shed its image of shedding its fuddy duddy image



and move towards automatic account migration when an employee switches jobs and take out money from the EPF account before retirement. Delay in EPF

claim settlements has traditionally been one of the major retirement frustrations for salaried workers. Those who find themselves suddenly out of jobs — and such incidents are rising nowadays — are also equally frustrated by these delays in taking money out from the EPF. Four labour codes notified On May 8, the new labour codes have been notified by the government. In his address Krishnamurthi said that the next set of notifications pertaining to EPFO will be published shortly. Under the new framework, EPF Scheme 1952, Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme 1976 and Employees Pension Scheme 1995 will be notified again. "We have not gone in for major changes. We have tried to integrate all the learnings from the past. We have included all the recent central board of trustees approved decisions, which include simplification of the withdrawals and other such reforms, including a major overhaul of the provisions relating to the exempt trust. Those have been included in the new schemes," said Krishnamurthi.

Short news

Three held from Bihar over Rayagada youth's murder, police mum on motive

Kolkata.(Agency)

In a major breakthrough in the sensational murder of Nikhil Hadapa in Rayagada, police have arrested three prime accused from Bihar for the gang-war-like killing that triggered tension across the district.

The accused, Umesh Hial, Raj Simeli and Akshaya Samal alias Tinkulu, were arrested from the Madanpur police station area in Bihar's Aurangabad district and brought to Rayagada on transit remand on Friday for further investigation.

According to police, a group of miscreants allegedly chased Nikhil around 10 pm on May 9. Following an argument, Nikhil reportedly attempted to flee but was shot, abducted and later murdered. His body was reportedly dumped in the Nagabali riverbed near Tumbiguda in Rayagada town.

Police said the accused had repeatedly managed to evade arrest despite investigators closing in on them several times during the probe. Six separate teams were formed to conduct raids within and outside Odisha. The investigation is being supervised by Rayagada SP Swathi S Kumar and additional SP Ramendra Prasad with assistance from the technical investigation team.

Police suspect the murder was linked to longstanding rivalry between two gangs and disputes over sharing loot from gambling operations. Nikhil, a resident of Ambedkar Street near Indira Nagar 3rd Line in Rayagada town, was allegedly involved in several criminal activities, police sources said. Basing on a complaint lodged by Nikhil's parents, police had registered a case naming several local suspects.

'All registrations executed as per law': RERA defends JDA housing projects

Shimla.(Agency)

The Himachal Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority (HP RERA) has defended its role in registering Joint Development Agreement (JDA)-based housing projects involving agriculturists and non-agriculturists, stating that "all registrations were carried out strictly within the statutory framework of the law".

The Regulatory Authority said this in a 10-page reply submitted before the Additional Secretary (Housing) and the Himachal Pradesh Vigilance Bureau on May 13 in the response to officiating Chief Secretary Sanjay Gupta's letter last week, directing the Additional Secretary (Housing) and state vigilance to collect all relevant information about the JDAs, including about the Chester Hill-2 and Chester Hill-4 projects in Solan district, amid growing controversy over the multi-crore housing projects and allegations of violations of Section 118 of the HP Tenancy and Land Reforms Act, 1972.

In their reply, RERA officials mentioned about a detailed order issued by the Chief Secretary (Town & Country Planning (TCP) on November 6 last, wherein the chief secretary reportedly held that "no violation of Section 118 had taken place in the Chester Hill-2, Chester Hill-4 matter, because the Joint Development Agreement itself had subsequently become a 'non-est' document in the eyes of law". Referring to Para 21 of the Chief Secretary's order, RERA clarified, "The TCP department had categorically observed that once the JDA stood cancelled, it became a non-est document which should not be considered by any authority for any purpose in future.

Nominations continue in Kharar despite High Court stay

Mohali.(Agency)

Despite the Punjab and Haryana High Court staying the Kharar Municipal Council elections, the nomination process continued on Saturday, further deepening the legal uncertainty surrounding the civic polls. The administration maintained that no official directions had yet been received from the Punjab State Election Commission to halt the process.

The SDM-cum-Election Officer said no written order regarding suspension of the nomination process had reached his office from the Election Commission. "We are functioning strictly as per the directions of the Election Commission. Without any official communication, the nomination process could not be stopped," the officer said.

Officials said confusion prevailed among candidates since morning following reports of the High Court stay. While fewer candidates from Kharar reached the nomination centre, people from New Chandigarh and adjoining areas continued arriving to file papers. However, as no formal stay order reached the administration till around 3 pm on the final day of nominations, candidates proceeded with filing their nomination papers.

According to officials, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) managed to file nomination papers for all its candidates. No nomination paper was filed by the Congress, while the BJP filed only three nominations and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) filed two. A few Independent candidates also submitted their papers, though the political contest could not fully take shape.

Mumbai driver left 17-year-old in vegetative state. He's let off with Rs 20,000 fine

Mumbai.(Agency)

Nine years after a 17-year-old girl who was crossing the road at a zebra crossing on Marine Drive was knocked down by a speeding car, rendering her in a vegetative state, a magistrate court found the driver guilty of rash and negligent driving. The 66-year-old man, employed with a senior railway official, was let off with a fine of Rs 20,000. The court said that it was taking a lenient view calling it a "single lapse on his part".

"Considering the fact that the accused is a first offender, the incident occurred in the year 2017, more than eight years have passed, the accused has already faced the ordeal of trial and taking into consideration his family background and the fact that it was a single lapse on his part, the Court is inclined to take a lenient view. Imposing fine will be the appropriate sentence in present matter," Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Supriya Nikam said in the order, passed on

Friday.

The court said that the fine amount of Rs 20,000 be paid to the victim as compensation. It said that if he defaulted on the fine, he would be sentenced to three months in jail.

Nidhi Jethmalani was crossing the road along with her friends on May 28, 2017, near Marine Plaza hotel. She was on her way to K C College, just down the road, to seek admission in Class 12, when the accused, P Narayanasamy, in an Innova collided with her. Nidhi suffered injuries to her head and



Asansol violence: Mob 'pelts stones', 'vandalises' police outpost over curbs on mosque loudspeakers

Kolkata.(Agency)

Violence broke out in West Bengal's Asansol on Friday night after a mob allegedly pelted stones and vandalised a police post following complaints against the volume of loudspeakers at a mosque. At least seven people have been arrested in the incident, the police said Saturday.

Police sources claimed a police team urged the locals and mosque authorities to reduce the loudspeaker's volume in Asansol's Jahangir Mohalla, following a complaint. This angered the locals who protested outside the police outpost at around 9 pm.

Soon, a scuffle broke out in front of the police outpost, and the mob allegedly pelted stones and vandalised the police outpost. Police claimed that several police and civilian



vehicles were also damaged in the incident. A huge police contingent later arrived at the spot, and the police lathicharged the protesters to pacify the situation and disperse the mob.

Meanwhile, police pickets have been put up in the area and the situation is now under control, as per the police sources.

Throughout the state, the police and

administration held meetings with religious leaders with a set of guidelines issued by the Supreme Court. As per the Apex court guidelines, no religious activity is allowed by blocking the roads. Besides, all loudspeakers at religious places must maintain a volume between 65 to 75 decibels.

Dhruva Das, Deputy Commissioner of Police at Asansol-Durgapur Police Commissionerate, told media on Saturday: "Last night a crowd had gathered to discuss some issue. Police personnel were also there. Two groups had formed amid the crowd, and they started an argument with each other. Police attempted to break it off... However a section of the mob pelted stones at the police outpost, which caused minor damage. So, we are examining the CCTV to identify those involved. Strict action will be taken."

Youth Time Bank bridges students, society, aiding thousands in Vijayawada hospitals

So far, 2,089 volunteers have participated in the programme, contributing nearly 9,000 service hours

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

Inspired by a successful model implemented in Switzerland, the innovative 'Youth Time Bank' initiative has emerged as a notable volunteer-driven public service programme in Vijayawada, creating a meaningful bridge between students and society through community service.

Launched on March 17 at the New Government General Hospital in Vijayawada by District Collector G Lakshmisha, the initiative has been receiving an encouraging response from students and NSS volunteers. So far, 2,089 volunteers have participated in the programme, contributing nearly 9,000 service hours and extending assistance to 4,887 patients. Under the programme, every day one college participates in the service activity, with nearly 30 to

50 NSS volunteers and students taking part in the Youth Time Bank services. The volunteers primarily assist elderly persons, differently-abled individuals,



patients who are unable to walk, and illiterate visitors arriving at the hospital.

From the moment patients enter the hospital premises, the volunteers remain with them throughout the

process helping them obtain OP registration, guiding them to consult doctors. The volunteers ensure that patients, especially those who are vulnerable and unfamiliar with hospital procedures, receive support and guidance during their visit.

NTR Collector G Lakshmisha said, "With the collaboration of Vasavya Mahila Mandali, we launched this as a pilot project and now it has become stable. Similar volunteer service initiatives achieved great success in Western countries where youth voluntarily participate in community services. I wanted to introduce this concept during my tenure as Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Commissioner, and now it has materialised successfully in Vijayawada."

They've lived next to Mumbai's garbage mountain for years. Now the world is taking notice

Mumbai.(Agency)

Mumbai's eastern suburbs wake up every day under the shadow of a mountain that never stops growing.

At Kanjurmarg, where Mumbai sends nearly 86 per cent of its daily waste, the city's garbage has risen into towering mounds visible from kilometres away. But for residents living in Kannamwar Nagar, Vikhroli, Bhandup and adjoining neighbourhoods, the landfill is not simply an eyesore. It has become a permanent environmental and public health emergency that dictates how they breathe, sleep and live.

On most evenings, Archana Mane, 66, sits quietly on a bench inside her residential compound at Kannamwar Nagar. From



there, the giant waste hill looms over the housing colony. "Living here feels like staying inside a gas chamber," she says.

For residents like Mane, the Kanjurmarg landfill has fundamentally altered daily life over the last fifteen years. Windows remain shut throughout the day despite Mumbai's heat and humidity because

opening them means inviting unbearable stench indoors. Evening walks are cut short once the odour intensifies after sunset. Many residents say that prolonged exposure to the smell leads to nausea, headaches, dizziness and breathing discomfort. "One evening the smell became so strong that my nose started burning and I felt dizzy," Mane recalls. "My family told me not to step outside for several days." Prachi Gawande, 61, who lives nearby, says even her three-year-old spitz, Snowy, has not been spared. "Unlike humans, animals can't express how they feel. My dog often falls sick and hides in the corner of our house. The veterinarian told us Snowy is behaving this way because of the pollutants from the landfill," she says.

A city's waste, a neighbourhood's burden

Operational since 2011, the Kanjurmarg landfill processes nearly 6,100 metric tonnes of waste every day, which is roughly 86 per cent of Mumbai's total garbage generation. Spread across 144 hectares, the site has become the city's primary waste processing centre after older landfills at Deonar, Gorai, Mulund and Malad were gradually shut or restricted (see box). Over time, nearly 189 lakh metric tonnes of waste have accumulated at the site, forming garbage mounds that rise up to 50 metres — nearly twice the height of the Gateway of India — more than double the permissible limit under environmental norms. The landfill today dominates the skyline of eastern Mumbai.

Suvendu government orders re-verification of 1.69 crore caste certificates, dials up heat on SIR deletions

Kolkata.(Agency)

In a major decision, the newly elected Suvendu Adhikari-led BJP government in West Bengal has ordered re-verification of around 1.69 crore caste certificates issued in the state since 2011, when the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) had first come to power.

The government's order also states that caste certificates issued to people whose names have been deleted in the Election Commission (EC)'s recent Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will be examined and "may be cancelled".

The Adhikari government's move comes in the backdrop of allegations of fake caste certificates being issued to several people in recent years.

"There were complaints from different quarters that fake SC (Scheduled Caste), ST (Scheduled Tribe) and OBC (Other Backward Class) certificates have been issued to a large number of people since 2011. There is a need for scrutiny. That is why we have asked the authorities to re-verify all the caste certificates. If any officer is found guilty of issuing fake certificates, strict action will be taken against him or her," Kshudiram Tudu, Minister for Backward Classes Welfare, said. The order dated May 14 was issued by the Backward Classes Welfare Department secretary to all district magistrates of the state.

"You are aware that around 1.69 crore caste certificates have been issued since 2011 (SC: 1.00 crore, ST: 21 lakh and OBC: 48 lakh). Of these, around 47.80 lakh caste certificates (SC: 32.51 lakh, ST: 6.65 lakh & OBC: 8.64 lakh) have been issued by the respective certificate issuing authorities against applications received through the Duare Sarkar camps (in 10 phases) within the stipulated time frame," the order stated.

Ernakulam records 99.61% pass rate in SSLC exams; girls lead in A+ scores

Thiruvananthapuram.(Agency)

Eight months after its inauguration, the Rs 10-crore modern abattoir at Kunnukuzhy is finally set to commence full-scale operations, with the city corporation conducting the first trial run of the facility on Thursday.

The modernised slaughterhouse, expected to become fully operational next week, has the capacity to slaughter and process 50 to 75 animals in a single shift. Mayor V V Rajesh said the formal launch of operations would be held next week. He said that the civic body will put an end to all illegal slaughtering happening in the capital.

"We will launch corporation.

Corporation veterinary surgeon Dr Sreerag Jayan said processing around 100 animals a day could generate the civic body nearly Rs 2 lakh in monthly revenue.

"A survey will be launched immediately to assess the total number of animals slaughtered each day in the city. This will help streamline operations at the abattoir. The facility can be scaled up to process as many as 200 animals a day," he said.

Under the agreement with the private operator, the corporation will receive Rs 75 for every large animal and Rs 15 for every small animal processed at the facility, with a 10 per cent annual escalation clause.

NEWS BOX

Mat-amorphosis: Eyeing Asiad medals, men wrestlers make Lucknow SAI centre their own

CHENNAI. (Agency)

The wrestling hall at the SAI's Netaji Subhas Regional Centre, Lucknow is adorned with framed photographs of renowned women wrestlers. Be it the lone Olympic medallist woman wrestler from the country, Sakshi Malik or two-time World Championships medallist Vinesh Phogat or the history-making Phogat sisters, Geeta and Babita, the hall has pictures of almost every female grappler, who has medalled for the country.

It began in 2021 when the sports ministry upgraded the centre by building an air-conditioned wrestling hall at the cost of ₹7.5 crore. It was decided that the centre would serve as an exclusive training centre for women wrestlers. Women wrestlers' national camp was shifted to the venue and the facility got a major facelift when former sports minister Anurag Thakur inaugurated the hall, a 300-bedded hostel exclusively for women athletes and sports medicine centre in February 2023. However, a protest launched by renowned wrestlers like Bajrang Punia, Sakshi and Vinesh against the then president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh intensified a



couple of months later. It forced authorities to shift the camp from Lucknow. Allegations levelled against Brij Bhushan included a complaint of sexual harassment and with the strongman hailing from Uttar Pradesh, the Lucknow venue was deemed unsafe for women by the protesting wrestlers.

Cut to present and the centre is a house to around 100 women athletes including upcoming wrestlers. Elite women wrestlers might have their national camp moved to IG Stadium in New Delhi but the facilities, once being upgraded keeping them in mind, is now being utilised by their male counterparts across both styles — freestyle and Greco-Roman. Be it the 2024 Paris Olympics bronze medallist Aman Sehrawat or world No. 1 in 65kg weight category Sujeet Kalkal or multiple Asian Championships and 2023 Asian Games medallist Greco-Roman wrestler, Sunil Kumar, the cream of Indian men's wrestling is at the venue toiling for the Asian Games.

Nikhat Zareen's no to 48kg; Nitu Ghanghas-Jyoti Gulia in trial bout for World Championships



NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Nikhat Zareen has declined the national federation BFI's offer to compete in the women's 48kg category at next month's senior World Cup in China, choosing instead to remain focused on her long-term ambitions in the 51kg division ahead of the Olympic qualification cycle and next year's World Championships.

"It's already difficult for her to make 51kg since her weight generally hovers between 54-55kg normally. Dropping to 48kg could adversely affect her body, diet and performance," a source said.

It has been learnt that Nikhat's decision prompted the federation to organise a one-off selection trial between former world champion Nitu Ghanghas and rising boxer Jyoti Gulia for the 48kg berth.

The bout is expected to take place at NS NIS Patiala on Monday or Tues-day, although BFI has not officially announced the decision. The development emerged following a BFI selection committee meeting on Friday evening after the conclusion of the three-day trials here to select India's squads for the upcoming CWG and Asian Games. TOI published the final list of selected boxers in its Saturday edition. The women's 51kg category turned out to be the most competitive division. Former two-time world champion Nikhat entered the trials as one of the favourites. However, she was stunned by Army's Sakshi Chaudhary, who had dropped down from 54kg to 51kg. Reigning world champion Minakshi Hooda, who competes in 48kg, had also moved up because her preferred weight class is not in the CWG and Asiad roster. She was defeated by Sakshi in the final.

IPL Super Sunday: Playoffs race reaches boiling point in Dharamsala and Delhi

IPL 2026: A Super Sunday with real consequence: Punjab Kings must beat table-toppers RCB to keep their playoff hopes alive in Dharamsala, while Rajasthan Royals look to rediscover form against a spirited Delhi Capitals side in the national capital.

New Delhi. (Agency)

It is a double-header day in the Indian Premier League that could, for better or worse, write the next chapter of two very different stories. First, a Punjab Kings side in alarming freefall — and neck-deep in off-field drama — take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the picture-postcard setting of Dharamsala. Then, as the sun dips over the capital, Rajasthan Royals return from a week-long hibernation to face Delhi Capitals on their own patch. High stakes, frayed nerves, and

no shortage of subplots. Super Sunday has rarely felt more apt. Punjab Kings' collapse has been the kind that makes you rub your eyes in disbelief. Not so long ago, Shreyas Iyer's men were the most exciting team in the tournament. When they hunted down 264 in Delhi, they did not just win a game — they sent a message. Thirteen points from seven matches had them strolling towards the playoffs. Now, five defeats in a row later, that stroll has become a desperate scramble. They remain in fourth place, but the points column has stubbornly refused to budge, and a sixth successive defeat against the table-toppers on Sunday could bring the curtain down on their season — completing one of the most spectacular second-half implosions this tournament has ever seen.

And it is not just the cricket that has been falling apart. The mountains have offered Punjab Kings no sanctuary. While the team has specialised in snatching defeat from the jaws of victory on the field, the dressing room has been leaking in ways that have

nothing to do with the weather. Whether the noise has seeped into the dressing room is the question no one at PBKS is willing to answer publicly. That reluctance was on full display Saturday evening, when the franchise dispatched physio Andrew Leipus to face the



press — a transparent attempt to avoid difficult questions on the eve of their season-defining fixture.

What was visible at the training ground, at least, offered a sliver of encouragement. Iyer, his form having deserted him at the worst possible moment, put in a long, purposeful

session in the nets. He then took his shoes off and lingered on the field — talking to his bowlers, his batters, his support staff — the kind of quiet leadership that suggests a captain who has not given up. Prabhsimran Singh, freshly revived by a fifty against Mumbai Indians on Thursday, followed with a punishing 45-minute hit. A rain shower threatened to cut proceedings short, but Punjab returned after the break, with young Suryansh Shegde getting his time in the middle as well. The challenge ahead of them is clear enough. Earlier in the season, a batting unit that feasted on 200-plus totals was providing enough cover to paper over the bowling cracks. Those cracks are now chasms. Arshdeep Singh has been the one man fighting the fire, but he cannot do it alone — and

Marco Jansen has been leaking runs with the kind of regularity that gives captains sleepless nights. Lockie Ferguson could come into the reckoning, with Leipus confirming a fully fit squad, though the bowlers' workload in Saturday's session was notably light.

Best to drop catches now, than in playoffs: Shubman Gill after loss vs KKR



Dharamsala. (Agency)

Gujarat Titans captain Shubman Gill did not shy away from criticising his side's fielding effort after their 29-run defeat against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens on Saturday. After watching Gujarat Titans drop four catches in a costly outing on the field, Gill admitted that his team simply did not deserve to win the contest despite producing a spirited batting effort in the chase.

KKR vs GT, IPL 2026: Highlights | Scorecard Gill, however, tried to look at the brighter side of the defeat, suggesting that such mistakes were better made now than during the playoffs. "We set a certain standard and dropping three sitters, we didn't deserve to win this one. Looking at it that way, best to have a game like this now than in the Qualifiers," Gill said after the match.

The Gujarat Titans skipper could only manage a wry smile while reflecting on the fielding lapses that allowed KKR to post a mammoth 247 for 2, a total that eventually proved beyond the visitors despite them finishing with 218 runs on the board. GT's sloppy fielding effort began early in the innings when they handed Finn Allen multiple reprieves. The aggressive New Zealand batter made Gujarat pay heavily, smashing a sensational 93 off just 35 deliveries with 10 sixes and four boundaries. Allen was not the only beneficiary of Gujarat's poor catching display. Young batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi, who went on to score 82 off 44 balls, was also handed a life in the middle overs, while Cameron Green survived another opportunity before contributing a brisk unbeaten 52 off 28 balls. The trio's assault powered Kolkata Knight Riders to one of their biggest totals of the season and brought an abrupt end to Gujarat Titans' five-match winning streak. Gill felt the pitch at Eden Gardens was not unmanageable and believed Gujarat would have comfortably stayed in the game had they fielded better. "Looking at the wicket, 200-210 was par score but we dropped too many catches. Pitch was good, the odd one was stopping but I felt we batted well to get to the score we did.

Pakistan's Fatima Sana scores fastest Women's T20I fifty, smashes Richa Ghosh's record

New Delhi. (Agency)

Fatima Sana etched her name into the record books after smashing the fastest half-century in Women's T20I history during Pakistan's third T20I against Zimbabwe in Karachi. The Pakistan skipper raced to fifty in only 15 deliveries, surpassing the previous benchmark of 18 balls jointly held by Sophie Devine, Phoebe Litchfield and Richa Ghosh. The Indian wicketkeeper scored her fifty off 18 balls during the clash against the West Indies on December 2024. Her breathtaking knock also equalled the fastest fifty recorded in all women's T20 cricket, matching feats achieved by Marie Kelly for Warwickshire in 2022 and Laura Harris for Otago in the 2025 Super Smash. Before Sana's blitz, Pakistan's quickest T20I fifty belonged to Nida Dar, who had reached the landmark in 20 balls against South Africa in 2019.

Batting first in the series finale, Pakistan were already well-placed at 152/4 when Sana walked in during the 17th over. She wasted little time settling in, collecting a

boundary off her opening delivery from Michelle Mavunga before launching a fierce assault on the Zimbabwe bowlers. Kudzai Chigora bore the brunt first as Sana



hammered four consecutive boundaries in one over. The real carnage arrived in the 19th over against Nomvelo Sibanda. Sana unleashed a sequence of 4, 4, 6, 6 and 4, plundering 24 runs from the over and moving to 48 from just 14 balls. At the opposite end, Saira Jabeen also played a

fluent hand. Sana brought up the record-breaking milestone with a couple off the bowling of Zimunu in the final over before finishing unbeaten on a stunning 62 from only 19 deliveries, an innings decorated with 10 fours and two sixes. Jabeen remained not out on 50 from 32 balls as Pakistan piled up 223/4, their second-highest total in Women's T20Is.

Zimbabwe never threatened in reply and were dismissed for 90. Pakistan's bowling unit dominated, with Sadia Iqbal and Nushra Sandhu sharing five wickets, while Sana also chipped in with 1/28.

Sana has enjoyed a sensational run in T20Is this year. She is currently Pakistan's leading run-scorer in the format in 2026, amassing 229 runs in five innings at a strike rate above 206. Earlier this year, she also produced her career-best T20I score — a blistering 90 off 41 balls against South Africa.

IPL Play of the Day: GT follows PBKS footsteps, forgets to catch them all

Kolkata. (Agency)

Gujarat Titans, much like Punjab Kings, seemed to have forgotten cricket's most iconic childhood mantra — "Gotta catch 'em all!" On Saturday night, May 16, at the iconic Eden Gardens, that lapse proved costly as GT dropped four crucial catches, allowing the Kolkata Knight Riders batters to escape pressure situations and evolve themselves into match-turning monsters in a high-stakes encounter.

KKR vs GT, IPL 2026: Highlights | Scorecard "I think our fielding could have been a lot better. Dropping three sitters in a game like this, I don't think we deserved to win this one," were the first few remarks of GT captain Shubman Gill following their 30-run defeat to KKR. GT's dropped catches tally was the joint-most by the franchise in a single IPL innings. This also marked their seventh such instance of multiple dropped chances in an IPL match, underlining a recurring issue in their fielding standards.

In a contest where margins are razor-thin, GT were once again reminded that missed chances can be just as damaging as poor batting or bowling.



KKR's BATTING "MONSTERS" PUNISH GT ERRORS

The match had already tilted heavily when KKR posted a daunting 247-run target against a playoff-chasing GT side. The innings was powered by aggressive contributions from Finn Allen, Angkrish Raghuvanshi and Cameron Green, all of

whom benefited from crucial reprieves offered by GT's fielders. Allen, who eventually smashed a destructive 93 off just 35 balls, was handed two lifelines. The first came on 14 when a difficult chance went down at extra cover, with Jason Holder unable to cling on despite a full-stretch effort. The second, and more costly, arrived in the seventh over when Mohammed Siraj dropped a regulation catch when Allen was on 33. That moment proved decisive, as Allen immediately shifted gears and launched a brutal assault on the GT bowling attack, particularly targeting Arshad Khan, taking 22 runs off one of his overs. By the time Allen was finally dismissed, the damage had already been inflicted, with KKR well on their way to a massive total that ultimately shaped the outcome of the match. Raghuvanshi and Green then ensured there was no respite for GT. The duo stitched together a devastating 108-run partnership.

Ronaldo snubs runners-up medal after Al Nassr's AFC Champions League 2 final loss

Cristiano Ronaldo walked straight down the tunnel after Al Nassr lost 1-0 to Gamba Osaka in the AFC Champions League 2 final. The Portuguese superstar didn't turn up to collect the runners-up medal during the presentation.

Dharamsala. (Agency)

Cristiano Ronaldo refused to collect his runners-up medal after Al-Nassr suffered a 1-0 defeat to Gamba Osaka in the AFC Champions League Two final on Saturday night. Deniz Hommet's decisive strike at Al-Awwal Park in Riyadh proved enough to hand Gamba Osaka the title and leave Ronaldo still searching for his first major title

with the Saudi side. After the final whistle, Cristiano Ronaldo was seen walking away from his Al-Nassr teammates and heading straight down the tunnel, skipping the medal ceremony. He did not return to the pitch as Al-Nassr head coach Jorge Jesus led the squad up to the podium to receive their silver medals.

Despite the disappointment, Al-Nassr remains in contention for the domestic title. A win against relegation-threatened Damac would secure them the league title, which would mark Ronaldo's first trophy with the club since his arrival in 2023.

HOW THE GAME UNFOLDED

Al-Nassr controlled large parts of the game at the King Saud University Stadium but found themselves frustrated by the brilliance of Gamba Osaka's 18-year-old goalkeeper Rui Araki. Araki made an early impact, tipping Abdulrahman Ghareeb's seventh-minute effort around the

post, before Sadio Mané narrowly missed the target, hitting the side-netting 16 minutes



later as the Saudi side pushed forward aggressively. However, against the run of play, Gamba

Osaka struck on the half-hour mark. Deniz Hommet finished calmly from 16 yards, latching onto Issam Jebali's perfectly timed through ball and placing it into the bottom corner past Bento. Al-Nassr came close to equalising before the break, with Ghareeb missing narrowly and Cristiano Ronaldo heading just wide in stoppage time, as Jorge Jesus' side continued to dominate possession and chances. The pressure continued in the second half, but Joao Felix was denied by the woodwork in the 77th minute, his long-range effort bouncing off the post after Araki was finally beaten. Late on, Gamba Osaka defender Takeru Kishimoto produced a crucial sliding block to deny Felix again, just moments after Ronaldo's clever backheel had carved open space for the Portuguese forward inside the box.

Despite relentless pressure, Al-Nassr were left to rue their missed chances as Gamba held firm to seal a famous victory.

Kiara Advani

Doesn't Want Daughter To 'Feel Like She Has To Date Only One Person': 'There Is No Restriction'

Kiara Advani has opened up about the relationship advice she would like to give her daughter Saraayah when she grows older. Kiara said that she wouldn't want her daughter to feel like she can only date one person and has to marry that same person. The actress said that she wants Saraayah to have a full life, and Kiara would support her even if her daughter didn't want to get married. Kiara Advani said on Raj Shamani's podcast. "I would want her to see a very full life. I don't want her to feel like she has to only date one person or she has to... Like, there's no restriction of if you want to get married, get married and if you don't want to get married, don't get married..." Kiara said that everyone she dated, she thought she was going to marry them.

She said, "Life doesn't turn out like that. Thank god it didn't turn out like that because I'm very happy with who god chose as my eventual life partner (Sidharth Malhotra). But all those relations that you have in your life growing up, they all teach you something. They eventually make you the person that you are..."

The actress said, "I'll tell her (Saraayah) that it's okay to experience life in totality, to decide what you want and what you don't want, and you will make mistakes along the way. You will make some choices that, you may, in hindsight, feel were not the best, but it's how you learn from those and what you take from those."

Kiara and Sidharth welcomed their daughter, Saraayah, on July 15, 2025. While they haven't revealed their daughter's face to the public, they often express their love for her in interviews and on social media. Kiara recently celebrated her first Mother's Day as a mom herself, and Sidharth Malhotra surprised her with pancakes.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Kiara Advani will be seen in Toxic: A Fairytale for Grownups. The film is directed by Geetu Mohandas and also stars Yash, Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi and Tara Sutaria. A final release date of the film has yet to be announced. It is currently postponed from its previously scheduled release on June 4, 2026.

Salman Khan Says He Has Never Read A Full Script Despite Decades In Bollywood



For decades, Salman Khan has been one of Bollywood's most bankable stars, delivering films that have shaped the commercial cinema landscape in India. But the superstar has now shared a behind-the-scenes confession about his working style that has left fans doing a double take. During a recent chat with Variety India, Salman opened up about his career, films and even the luxury accessories that often become a talking point online. However, it was one particular statement from the actor that quickly grabbed attention across social media. The actor revealed that despite spending over three decades in the industry, he has never actually sat down to read a full screenplay. "I've never read a script in my entire life. I've written them, but I've never read them," Salman said in the video released by Variety India.

The actor has previously hinted that he prefers understanding the mood, treatment and overall commercial potential of a project rather than reading scripts page by page.

The conversation also touched upon another topic that regularly trends online — Salman's collection of luxury watches. The actor is frequently spotted wearing expensive timepieces during events and public appearances, with several reports claiming some of them are worth over ₹1 crore.

Addressing the buzz around the watches, Salman clarified in Hindi, "You see me wearing watches that don't mean the watches are mine. It is this friend and that friend's watch..."

On the work front, Salman is gearing up for his upcoming film Maatrubhumi, which has reportedly undergone major changes in recent months. The project was earlier being referred to as Battle of Galwan and was believed to be inspired by the clash between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley. However, the makers have now changed the title and reportedly removed references to both China and the Galwan Valley, while also carrying out extensive reshoots.

'Humare Dil Se Aapke Dilo Tak': Sara Ali Khan Shares BTS Photos From Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Sets



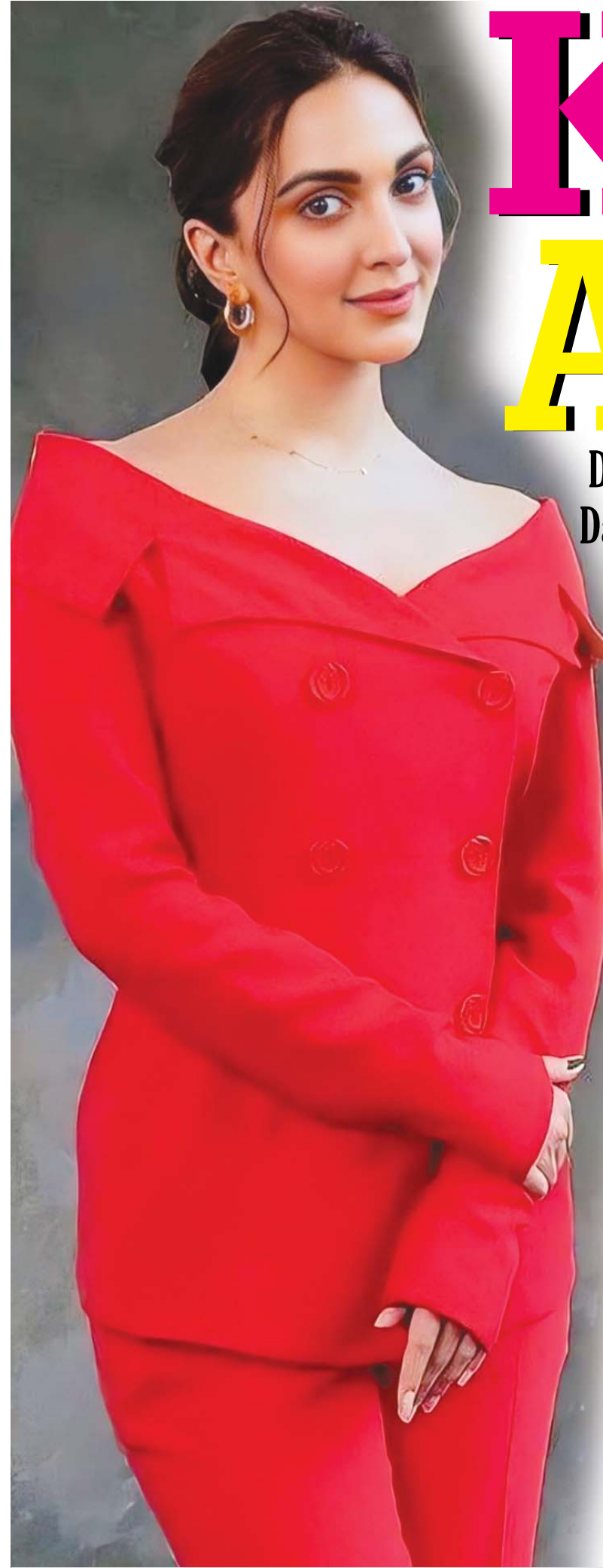
Actor Sara Ali Khan treated fans by sharing a series of behind-the-scenes photos from the sets of Pati Patni Aur Woh Do. The BTS photos offered fans a glimpse into the fun-filled atmosphere on set, featuring candid moments, laughter, and interactions between the cast and crew. The film has been released and has been winning hearts with its storyline and songs. Taking to her Instagram handle, Sara Ali Khan shared the photos with Wamiqa Gabbi, Ayushmann Khurrana, and Rakul Preet Singh. "Humare Dil se aapke Dilo Tak, Sabko khabar kar do humari film aagayi hai, Kindly wish us love and luck, Oh yes-and jinna sonna laga hume sabko hi lage, Jaao theatre to laugh out loud- rakho no shanka no shak." Fans reacted. One of the fans wrote, "Chanchal Kumari can't wait to experience your magic." Another wrote, "So cute and sweet both of you."

Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Does NOT Promote Infidelity, Says Director Recently, Mudassar Aziz has clarified that the sequel does not promote infidelity. Mudassar Aziz told Hindustan Times, "You are also challenging yourself. You have a quest to give the audience something new this time. I said to myself, 'How about if we make this subject with a nihaayati patnivrata (extremely devoted to wife), jisko kehate hain na ki ekdum sabhya purush (extremely civilised man)?"

He added, "When BR [Chopra] Sahab tackled it, he did so in the context of changing times, when men were beginning to understand what working women around them would be like. Then, when I tackled it in 2019 (with the Kartik Aaryan-starrer), I talked about the boredom of marriage."

The filmmaker said, "It's not necessarily that the person is wrong, but sometimes communication breaks down between two people, and things can go wrong. So this time I said, 'Give yourself this luxury, let's make a Pati Patni Aur Woh in which the pati (husband) does not have a roving eye.'"

"There is this official in the Forest Department, Prajapati Pandey, who loves his wife very much, and some comedy of errors occurs in his life. The world starts to feel that there is no man worse than him. The story gets to a point where you feel, 'Bhai, someone please support this shareef aadmi (decent man)'," the filmmaker said, explaining the plot.



Ayesha Khan

SLAMS Trolls Targeting Alia Bhatt Over Cannes Red Carpet Moment: 'She Breathes And People Have...'

Alia Bhatt's appearance at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival has remained one of the most talked-about moments online. However, the actress also faced a wave of trolling after some videos from the red carpet allegedly showed international photographers not recognising her or paying her enough attention. While the internet remained divided



over the incident, actress Ayesha Khan has now come out strongly in Alia's support. She slammed the "unnecessary hate" directed at the Bollywood star and reminded social media users of her achievements as an actor, mother, entrepreneur and producer.

Ayesha Khan Slams Trolls Targeting Alia Bhatt

Reacting to an Instagram post, Ayesha Khan wrote, "The unnecessary hate this woman gets

is insane, she breathes and people have a problem, she is THE ALIA BHATT! A phenomenal actor, the same person who was Vaidehi in Badrinath ki dulhania and also sehmata in Raazi. She is a mother, an actor, an entrepreneur, is creatively involved in her own production house and what not!"

Ayesha further questioned why people from India were pulling down their own representation on a global platform simply because some photographers may not have recognised her.

She added, "She has given us so many incredible performances, and here people of our own country want to drag their representation just because a few media people couldn't recognise her? And how does that even matter? She is there to represent us not them! We can definitely do better!"

Alia Bhatt Responds Gracefully To Cannes Troll

Amid the trolling, Alia shared a reel on Instagram on Wednesday, giving fans a closer look at her regal Cannes appearance. The actress was seen in a custom ivory silk saree-gown, which received praise from several fans for its elegance and old-world charm. However, one user commented, "What a pity, no one noticed you," along with a laughing emoji.



NEWS BOX

Car plows into pedestrians in Italy's Modena, 8 injured, 4 critically, mayor says

ROME. (Agency)

UA car plowed into pedestrians in the northern Italian city of Modena on Saturday, injuring eight people, four of them critically, local authorities said.

Mayor Massimo Mezzetti said no one was killed in the dramatic crash but four victims were in serious condition. He said a woman was pinned against a shop window and required the amputation of both legs. The driver is a 31-year-old man born in Bergamo and raised in the province of Modena, Mezzetti said. He was detained and was being questioned at police headquarters as authorities worked to determine whether he was under the influence of substances or acted deliberately, the mayor said. Mezzetti said the vehicle entered one of the city's main streets and "drove onto the sidewalk, sending several people flying," before crashing into the shop window.

At least eight people were injured, four of them in very serious condition, according to the mayor. Victims were taken to hospitals in Modena and Bologna, including by helicopter for the most critical cases.

The driver attempted to flee but was stopped first by some of the citizens involved in the crash and then by police and taken to headquarters for questioning.

Witnesses reported the man was holding a knife, but he did not manage to stab anyone, the mayor said, adding that investigators are still working to determine whether the act was deliberate or linked to other causes. "Whatever the nature, it is a very serious act," Mezzetti said. "If it were an attack, it would be even more serious." Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni called the incident "extremely serious" in a social media post and expressed solidarity with the victims and their families. Meloni thanked citizens who intervened to help stop the suspect and praised law enforcement, adding she was in contact with local authorities and expected the suspect to be held fully accountable.

"Charlie spoke repeatedly against women": Candace Owens challenges Charlie Kirk succession story surrounding Erika Kirk and TPUSA future

world.(Agency)

The fight around Candace Owens, Charlie Kirk, and Erika Kirk took another turn after political commentator Jammles shared a long post defending Turning Point USA's leadership decision online. Jammles wrote that people should stop treating TPUSA like "public property" and argued that Charlie Kirk built the organization himself and trusted the people around him before his death. The post quickly gained attention after Candace Owens directly replied and raised questions about whether Charlie Kirk truly wanted Erika Kirk to take over the organization. Candace Owens pointed to past public comments where both Charlie Kirk and Erika Kirk reportedly spoke against women climbing the corporate ladder. Because of that, she said it was hard to believe Charlie Kirk would suddenly change his position shortly before his death. She also questioned claims surrounding an alleged video message connected to the leadership announcement.

In her response on X, Candace Owens wrote: "Charlie spoke repeatedly against women climbing the corporate ladder, even those with living spouses. Erika reinforced this position repeatedly by his side in multiple appearances. We are to believe he suddenly pulled a drastic 180 a couple of weeks before he died? You don't get why this matters? Because if Charlie did not legally put her in charge via his documents and corporate will—plus they lied about the existence of an authentic video, instead of which she callously walked out to an A.I.-created audio to gloriously accept his position, then we'd be looking at the seeds of a motive."

The comments immediately sparked debate online, with supporters and critics reacting strongly to Owens' claims.

'I have realized something': Redditor shares one-year experience of living in India after spending 12 years in US

World.(Agency)

Taking the decision to return to India after spending years abroad is always a tough one as there are many aspects to consider. No two people's situations are ever the same but NRIs share tips and insights on social media channels that may help others in a similar plight. A Redditor shared the experience of living in India for a year after returning in 2025 and many social media users found the takeaways relatable. The Redditor stayed in the US for 12 years but abruptly made the decision to return to India because of mother's health. "I took the decision to return quite abruptly. I remember my father telling me about my mother's health issues and I was so overwhelmed with sadness that I booked my return ticket on Feb 15, 2025 and 3 months later, I was in India," the Redditor said. "In hindsight, I should have planned my move well in advance. My initial thought was to hire a CA after returning to India - I should have hired a CA before returning to India. I also came to know about several forms such as W8BEN which one needs to file with US banks after returning to India." "I was fortunate enough to find a job within 2 weeks of landing here. But it took me 6 months to get my Aadhaar (my payroll was initially frozen due to no Aadhaar) and I got it only after meeting with a BLO officer," the post added.

Israel strikes south Lebanon day after ceasefire extension

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

Israel launched a massive series of airstrikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday, despite an extension of the truce between the two countries. Israel says it is targeting Hezbollah but the strikes were preceded by an evacuation warning covering nine villages. And the continuing bombardment has only increased scepticism about the truce among the many thousands of Lebanese driven from their homes in the south. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported strikes on more than two dozen villages on Saturday, including one more than 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the border. It also reported a new exodus of residents towards the southern city of Sidon and the capital Beirut. Later Saturday, Hezbollah announced it had struck a military target in northern Israel. It said its fighters had targeted "the Ya'ara barracks... with a swarm of attack drones", after having announced multiple operations against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon. On

Friday, the two countries agreed to extend a ceasefire, which began on April 17 but has been marred by numerous violations, by another 45 days.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said on Saturday that he "welcomes" the extension and "urges all actors to fully respect the cessation of hostilities". Despite the ceasefire, Israel continues to conduct strikes in Lebanon, and its forces are occupying territory near the border.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, regularly claims attacks on northern Israel and against the Israeli military in southern Lebanon, including multiple attacks on Israeli forces on Saturday. Israel's military said Saturday that one of its soldiers died in combat in southern Lebanon, bringing its losses to 21 personnel since the war with Hezbollah began in early March. What kind of a truce is this? Israeli attacks since the start of the war have killed more than 2,900 people in Lebanon, including more than 400 since the truce took effect, according to Lebanese authorities. The latest strikes come after

envoys from Israel and Lebanon held negotiations in Washington, following the first direct talks in decades last month between the two countries, which do not have diplomatic relation. They agreed to



extend the ceasefire.

Iran-backed Hezbollah opposes the negotiations and claimed an attack against Israeli troops in the Lebanese town of Khiam on Saturday. The group justified their action by accusing Israel of ceasefire violations and "attacks that targeted villages in southern Lebanon".

In a statement on Saturday, the group called the proposed establishment of a US-facilitated security track a fresh addition "to the series of free concessions" the Lebanese government "offers the enemy".

"Many Lebanese see the extension of the ceasefire through this track as an extension of their ongoing killing and a cover for the aggression on them and their homeland," the statement said. Displaced residents from southern Lebanon say the truce is not being implemented. "This is not a truce as long as Israeli attacks continue against the south and its people, with deaths, injuries and destruction," said Ali Salameh, 60, from a school in Beirut where he has been displaced since the start of the war. Others said they backed Hezbollah to keep fighting Israel in retaliation for its attacks.

"What kind of truce is this when they have just threatened villages and people are being displaced? Where is the state? We stand only with the resistance," said Nawal Mezahir, also displaced from the south. Lasting stability.

USS Ford returns home after 11-month deployment supporting Iran war and Maduro's capture

NORFOLK.(Agency)

The USS Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, returned home to Virginia on Saturday after an 11-month deployment, the longest since the Vietnam War, that saw it support the US war with Iran and the capture of Nicolás Maduro when he was Venezuela's president. The most advanced US warship and two accompanying destroyers docked at Naval Station Norfolk with about 5,000 sailors waiting to see their families for the first time since June. Besides combat operations and traversing continents, the sailors aboard the carrier faced a noncombat-related fire that left hundreds without places to sleep and forced lengthy repairs on the Greek island of Crete. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth was on hand for the arrival of the warships, which included the destroyer USS Bainbridge. Hegseth commended the crew of the Bainbridge for a "job well done." "You didn't just accomplish a mission, you made history," Hegseth said on the destroyer's deck. "You made a nation proud." Hegseth also spoke to the crews of the USS Mahan, a destroyer,

and the Ford. In recognition of their service during the Iran war, the Ford and the accompanying ships were awarded the prestigious Presidential Unit Citation, lauded for "outstanding performance in action" against "a determined enemy." It's the highest award a unit can receive and one



typically reserved for significant achievement in combat.

The Ford's 326 days at sea are the most for an aircraft carrier in the past 50 years and broke the record for the longest post-Vietnam War deployment, according to US Naval Institute News, a news outlet run by the US Naval Institute, a nonprofit organization. The only longer deployments were the 1973 deployment of USS Midway at

332 days and the 1965 deployment of USS Coral Sea at 329 days. The Ford's long time at sea has raised questions about the impact on service members who are away from home for long periods as well as about increasing strain on the ship and its equipment beyond the fire, which started in one of the carrier's laundry spaces. When the Ford first left Virginia's coast in June, it headed to the Mediterranean Sea. It was then rerouted to the Caribbean Sea in October as part of the largest naval buildup in the region in generations. The carrier took part in the military operation in January to capture Maduro. Then it would see more battle, heading toward the Middle East as tensions with Iran escalated. The Ford participated in the opening days of the Iran war from the Mediterranean Sea before going through the Suez Canal and heading into the Red Sea in early March.

Technically, the crew of the USS Nimitz was on duty and away from home for a total of 341 days in 2020 and 2021. However, that included extended isolation periods ashore in the US meant to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

WHO declares Ebola outbreak in Congo, Uganda a global public health emergency

BEIJING.(Agency)

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Sunday, May 17, 2026 declared an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda a "public health emergency of international concern".

The WHO said the outbreak, caused by the Bundibugyo virus, does not currently qualify as a pandemic-level emergency, but warned that countries sharing land borders with the DRC face a high risk of further transmission, news agency Reuters reported. According to UN health agency's statement, 80 suspected deaths, eight laboratory-confirmed cases and 246 suspected cases had been reported as of Saturday in DRC's Ituri province across at least three health zones,

including Bunia, Rwampara and Mongbwalu. International spread documented, WHO says

The DRC Health Ministry said on Friday



that 80 people had died in the latest outbreak in the country's eastern province. The WHO warned that there could possibly be a much larger outbreak than the number of currently

detected and reported cases, citing the high positivity rate of the initial samples and the rising number of suspected cases being reported.

The outbreak is being described "extraordinary", as there are no approved Bundibugyo virus-specific therapeutics or vaccines, unlike for Ebola-zaire strains. The WHO said the DRC-Uganda outbreak poses a significant public health risk to other countries, with some such cases of an international transmission already having been documented. The agency urged countries to activate their national disaster and emergency response mechanisms, while also strengthening cross-border surveillance and screening along major internal transport routes.

Rescue Diver Dies In Search Of 4 Italians Who Drowned In Maldives

JERUSALEM.(Agency)

Maldivian authorities on Saturday suspended the search for the bodies of four Italian divers believed to be deep inside an underwater cave, after a military diver died during a perilous mission to try to reach them.

The group of five Italian divers is believed to have died while exploring a cave at a depth of about 50 metres (160 feet) in Vaavu Atoll on Thursday, according to Italy's Foreign Ministry. The recreational diving limit in the Maldives is 30 metres (98 feet).

Maldives presidential spokesman Mohamed Hussain Shareef said the search was suspended after Mohamed Mahudhee, a member of the Maldivian National Defense Force, died of underwater decompression sickness after being transferred to a hospital in the capital. Authorities are awaiting the arrival of three Finnish divers, experts in deep and cave diving, on Sunday, to rethink their search strategy, he said. Mahudhee will be buried with military honours in a funeral attended by President Mohamed Muzzu on Saturday night. The diver was part of the group that had briefed Muizzu on the rescue plan when he visited the search site on Friday. The death goes to show the difficulty of the mission, Shareef said.

Rough weather has repeatedly hampered rescue efforts.

Search operations on Saturday involved eight local divers who worked in shifts to locate the missing Italians, the Italian Foreign Ministry said. Initial teams had already dived to identify and mark the entrance to the cave system where the Italians disappeared. The cause of the deaths remains under investigation.

Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said everything possible would be done to bring the victims home. He offered his condolences for the death of the Maldivian diver during the rescue efforts. The victims have been identified as Monica Montefalcone, an associate professor of ecology at the University of Genoa; her daughter, Giorgia Sommacal; marine biologist Federico Gualtieri; researcher Muriel Oddenino; and diving instructor Gianluca Benedetti, according to the Maldivian government. Benedetti's body was recovered on Thursday. His body was found near the mouth of the cave and authorities believed the remaining four had entered the cave. Montefalcone and Oddenino were in the Maldives on an official scientific mission to monitor marine environments and study the effects of climate change on tropical biodiversity, the University of Genoa said in a statement Friday. However, the scuba diving activity during which the deadly accident occurred was not part of the planned research and was "undertaken privately," it said. The statement also said the two other victims - student Sommacal and recent graduate Gualtieri - were not involved in the scientific mission. Carlo Sommacal, Montefalcone's husband and Giorgia's father.

The Venezuelan immigration authority in a short statement Saturday did not explicitly say where it had sent Saab but said the decision was made based on several ongoing criminal investigations in the US.

MIAMI.(Agency)

Venezuela's government said Saturday it deported a close ally of Nicolás Maduro facing several criminal investigations in the US less than three years after the businessman was pardoned by President Joe Biden as part of a prisoner swap.

The decision marks a stark reversal for Alex Saab, who Maduro fought tooth and nail to

bring home after his previous international arrest in 2020. Now, the Colombian-born insider, long described by US officials as Maduro's "bag man," may be asked to testify against his former protector, who is awaiting trial on drug charges in Manhattan after being captured in a shock raid by the US military in January.

The Venezuelan immigration authority in a short statement Saturday did not explicitly say where it had sent Saab but said the decision was made based on several ongoing criminal investigations in the US.

The statement's reference to Saab only as a "Colombian citizen" appeared to be a nod to Venezuelan law, which prohibits the extradition of its nationals. Following his last arrest, Venezuela's government submitted a copy of what it said was Saab's Venezuelan passport to a U.S. court, with then Vice President Delcy Rodríguez — now acting President — claiming he was an "innocent Venezuelan diplomat" who had been illegally "kidnapped" while on a humanitarian mission to Iran to circumvent

the "immoral, imperial blockade" imposed by the United States. A fortune built from government contracts Saab, 54, amassed a fortune through Venezuelan government contracts. But he fell out of favor with the



country's new leadership that took power following Maduro's ouster. Since taking over from Maduro on Jan. 3, Rodríguez demoted Saab, firing him from her Cabinet and stripping him of his role as the main conduit for foreign companies looking to invest in Venezuela. For months conflicting news accounts have circulated that he was imprisoned or under house

arrest. His removal to the United States is likely to deepen divisions inside Rodríguez's fragile ruling coalition of Chavistas, named for the movement started by the late Hugo Chávez. Rodríguez has generated enormous goodwill in Washington and successfully stalled any talk of new elections as she bends to the Trump administration's demands to open up its oil and mining industries to American investment. But those concessions to what Chavistas have long decried as the U.S. "Empire" have angered many of her more radical, ideologically driven allies, some of whom, like Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, wield great influence inside the Venezuelan security forces and face criminal charges themselves in the U.S. US investigation into food corruption The Associated Press reported in February that federal prosecutors have been digging for months into Saab's role in an alleged bribery conspiracy involving Venezuelan government contracts to import food.