



A storm is coming: Rahul Gandhi says brace for economic shock in swipe at PM

► **Rahul Gandhi attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his ongoing five-nation tour, warning of an impending economic shock that he said would hit the common man in Uttar Pradesh and across the country.**

Raebareli.(Agency)

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday tore into Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ongoing five-nation trip, saying that in times of crisis, the Prime Minister is telling the world not to travel outside while he himself is travelling around the world. "In times of crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is telling the world not to travel outside, while he himself is travelling around the world."

He warned that the economic shock coming ahead would not affect Adani and Ambani, nor the Prime Minister, but would hit ordinary people the hardest. "He will sit in his palaces, and the youth of Uttar Pradesh and the public will face a complete shock."

The economic shock that is coming will not affect Adani and Ambani, nor will it affect Modi, but it will impact ordinary people."

Rahul Gandhi said the situation



would lead to a shock "unlike anything seen before" and warned that difficult times were ahead. "It will be a shock unlike anything seen before. Difficult times are ahead," he warned. The Congress MP made the attack on PM Modi while visiting the Churuwa Hanuman Temple in his

home constituency Raebareli on the occasion of Bada Mangal.

On questions about a possible alliance with Akhilesh Yadav, he said he did not want to divert attention from key issues, stressing that fuel prices remained a major concern.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is undertaking a five-nation diplomatic tour and is scheduled to visit Italy on Tuesday evening (IST). His trip has so far covered the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. As India faces a supply chain crisis due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, PM Modi's visit to these countries has centred on securing long-term energy security, transitioning to green energy alternatives, building resilient supply chains, and strengthening defence ties, among other key initiatives.

Congress terms Arunachal CM Khandu's continuation in office a 'travesty' after SC probe order in corruption case

Chennai.(Agency)

The Congress on Tuesday questioned why Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu had not been removed from office despite the Supreme Court ordering a CBI probe into allegations of corruption against him.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the continuation of Khandu in office amounted to a "gross travesty" of the Supreme Court's order.

Ramesh said that on April 6, 2026, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court had directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to commence a preliminary inquiry into allegations that firms linked to the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister's family were awarded contracts worth Rs 1,270 crore over a 10-year period from January 2015 to December 2025, raising concerns of conflict of interest. "This is not an order of a lower court or a High Court. It is of the Supreme Court. Yet the CM continues in office. He is also the PWD Minister and controls the files that the CBI will need to conduct its inquiry."



"Why is the man who once said 'na khaonga, na khaane doonga' quiet and why has the Arunachal Pradesh CM not been asked to step down? This is a gross travesty of the Supreme Court's verdict itself," he said in his post. "There are other BJP CMs as well who fall in the category of the Arunachal Pradesh CM," Ramesh added.

Chaturmas Sabotage Backfires

FIR Filed in MP Against Syndicate Accused of Extortion Through Morphed Photos; Jain Community in No-Compromise Mode, Countdown Begins for Alleged Blackmailers

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Makan

Ahmedabad: As the monsoon season approaches and preparations for Chaturmas intensify, an alleged extortion syndicate accused of targeting revered Jain monks through fake and morphed photographs has come under serious legal scrutiny. Following a forensic investigation that reportedly gave a "100% clean chit" to Surat Vesu's Acharya Shri Sagar Chandra Sagar Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb, an official police complaint has now been registered in Madhya Pradesh against several accused individuals. The accused — identified as Jagat Parekh, Hardik Hundia, Vikram Bafna, and Kalpesh Singhvi — are alleged to have operated an organized blackmailing network using newspapers, social media platforms, and manipulated content to spread fear within the Jain community and extort crores of rupees. Allegations of Organized Defamation and Extortion According to community sources, the accused allegedly circulated fake and digitally altered images of Jain saints in an attempt to damage their reputation and create controversy during the sensitive Chaturmas period. The alleged conspiracy is said to

have collapsed after a high-level forensic examination initiated under the guidance of Gachhadhipati Shri Nardevsagar Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb reportedly concluded that the viral images were completely fabricated. The revelations triggered outrage across sections of the Jain community, with many calling the alleged acts an attack on faith, religious dignity, and social harmony. Madhya Pradesh Police Begin Legal Action Following continued circulation of disputed material online,

legal action has now been initiated in Madhya Pradesh. Police are reportedly investigating the accused individuals' social media accounts, IP addresses, and suspicious financial transactions connected to the alleged blackmail operation. Legal experts believe that if charges related to organized extortion, digital forgery, and defamation are substantiated, the accused could face stringent legal consequences under non-bailable provisions. Key Developments in the Case FIR

Registered in Madhya Pradesh: Police action has officially begun against the alleged syndicate. Focus on Main Accused: Jagat Parekh and Hardik Hundia are reportedly under active scrutiny. Forensic Findings: The viral photographs in question were allegedly proven fake during forensic examination. Community Reaction: Jain organizations and followers have expressed strong anger and are demanding strict punishment for those involved. Growing Anger Within Jain Community: Members of the Jain community have described the alleged conspiracy as a direct assault on the sanctity of Jain saints and institutions. Several religious groups are now demanding social boycott and strict legal punishment for anyone found guilty of manipulating content for extortion or defamation. Community leaders say this FIR is only the beginning of a larger legal battle and have vowed to continue pursuing the matter until all alleged conspirators are brought to justice under the law.

In High Court Judge Contempt Case, Notice To Arvind Kejriwal, AAP Leaders

The contempt action was initiated after Justice Sharma took note of social media posts by Arvind Kejriwal and other leaders alleging judge's bias in the Delhi excise policy case.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi High Court on Tuesday issued notice to Aam Aadmi Party leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and others in criminal contempt proceedings initiated by Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma. Justice Sharma started the contempt proceedings against the AAP leaders over "orchestrated social media campaign" against her in relation to the liquor policy case proceedings.

A division bench comprising Justice Navin Chawla and Justice Ravinder Dubeja has asked all the leaders to file their responses within four weeks in the contempt case.



The contempt action was initiated after Justice Sharma took note of social media posts by Arvind Kejriwal and other leaders raising questions on the conduct of the judge in the Delhi excise policy case. Kejriwal and 22 other accused were discharged by the trial court in the Delhi liquor policy case and the court had severely criticised the CBI probe in the case.

The CBI later appealed in the Delhi High Court against the discharge of the accused. Kejriwal and other accused, including Sisodia, then filed an application seeking recusal of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma from the case alleging bias. Justice Sharma had in the last hearing termed the accusations defamatory and had initiated the contempt proceedings against the AAP leadership. She had earlier rejected the recusal applications by Kejriwal and others.

Kejriwal and Sisodia then scaled up the fight with the judge stating that they will not appear in her court during the hearings. Justice Sharma has now transferred the CBI matter to another bench. The court on Tuesday asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to ensure that respondents Kejriwal, Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak are intimated that the case is transferred and if they want to appear.

Curtains for Siddaramaiah? Buzz over meet with Congress brass amid power tussle

► **While Siddaramaiah has sought a meeting with the Congress high command, a Karnataka minister said 'curtains will fall' soon on the leadership**

Bengaluru.(Agency)

Speculation over a possible leadership change in Karnataka has intensified once again after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah sought a meeting with the Congress high command. Sources said Siddaramaiah spoke to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who informed him that he would be called to Delhi soon.

According to sources, Siddaramaiah wants to discuss a possible Cabinet reshuffle with the party leadership.

At the same time, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, whose supporters have been pressing for him to take over as Chief Minister, has reportedly conveyed to the



only after addressing the alleged "2.5-year promise".

Several MLAs and Congress leaders loyal to Shivakumar have recently stepped up their demand for a leadership change as the

maintain that the Congress leadership had agreed to a 2.5-year power-sharing arrangement between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar when the government was formed. Adding to the speculation, Karnataka minister Satish Jarkiholi "the curtains will fall" on the matter as suspense over the leadership issue may end soon in the Delhi meeting. "They will call us to Delhi as soon as possible. Since it will be settled there, there is no need for me to say anything here. Yes, the curtain will fall," he said when asked about the possibility of a leadership change.

Jarkiholi said discussions on the issue would take place and a final decision would eventually emerge.

Rajanna claimed that informal discussions on a possible leadership change may have taken place in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday, where Congress leaders had gathered for the swearing-in ceremony of Kerala's new chief minister. However, Rajanna said that if Siddaramaiah were to be replaced, Home Minister G Parameshwara should be made the next Chief Minister.

There has also been growing demand within sections of the party for a "Dalit CM", with Parameshwara being viewed as a leading contender. Speculation surrounding a possible leadership change and Cabinet reshuffle in Karnataka gained further momentum following the formation of the new

News box

Biryani vendor killed in Farukhnagar hit-and-run

GURGAON.(Agency)

A 28-year-old biryani vendor was killed in a hit-and-run accident near Bittu Dhaba in Farukhnagar late Saturday night. Police have registered an FIR against an unidentified driver under relevant sections of the BNS.

The victim, Govind, was a native of Dhar Nihawa village in Uttar Pradesh's Siddharth Nagar district. He had been living in Sultanpur village in Gurgaon, where he operated a biryani cart. According to the complaint filed by his elder brother, Deepak Chauhan, the accident took place around 11pm on May 17. Deepak, who runs a food cart in Palwal, alleged that an unidentified vehicle hit Govind while being driven rashly and at high speed near Bittu Dhaba. Govind was rushed to Government Hospital in Sector 10, where doctors declared him dead. After receiving information about the incident, Deepak reached the hospital and identified the body. Based on the complaint, Farukhnagar police registered a case under Sections 106 (causing death by negligence) and 281 (rash driving) of the BNS. Police said they received information about the death from the hospital on Sunday, following which investigating officer SI Hawa Singh and his team visited the hospital and collected medico-legal documents.

Investigators later inspected the accident site and gathered evidence. Police said efforts are underway to identify the offending vehicle and trace the driver. Further investigation is in progress.

FIRs against 36 officials as census faces delay in Haryana

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

With Haryana's ongoing census exercise suffering significant disruption across six districts, authorities have initiated action against employees who failed to report for duty. Over a hundred govt employees — total 116 — are likely to face criminal action. A majority of these officials are govt school teachers. The administration has already filed FIRs against 36 govt employees, while notices have been issued to 80 more, against whom FIRs are also being prepared. In Gurgaon, cases were filed against 10 officials on Monday. The govt has clarified that FIRs will be followed by suspension proceedings. Officials said that despite being assigned enumeration work, many employees did not turn up, leading to delays and obstacles in the census process. Lists have already been handed over to the police for FIR registration — 19 employees in Gurgaon, 22 in Faridabad and 18 in Sonapat. In Panchkula, 21 employees have been issued notices. Employees, however, say they have been overburdened with multiple responsibilities. Many are required to manage voter list revision (SIR), census duties and school work simultaneously. Census teams also face resistance in the field, with residents frequently asking suspicious questions or refusing to provide information. Several videos circulating online show workers being turned away by locals citing fears of "data leaks."

With over 15,000 teaching posts vacant in Haryana's schools, the burden on existing staff has increased sharply. In multiple schools, only one teacher is posted — and even that teacher has been assigned to census duty. In Panipat, the entire staff of several schools has been deputed as enumerators, raising concerns about normal academic functioning.

"We are struggling with the load of three parallel duties — voter list revision, census work and school responsibilities — without additional allowance or compensation," said a school teacher engaged in census work. Some have submitted medical reasons: one 55-year-old teacher wrote that due to arthritis, climbing stairs causes severe swelling in her legs. Others cited allergy to heat. The officials also alleged the location assigned to them is far away from their home and school and they have not been provided with any logistical support.

Enumerators also claim that locals often refuse to share information. A video from Julana shows residents declining to provide household details and alleging risk of data leakage.

Forum asks Dell to refund laptop cost to man who bought it 9 years ago

Noida.(Agency)

With the monsoon less than two months away, residents after pursuing a complaint for nine years, a Delhi resident has finally secured relief from the district consumer commission in Noida. The commission asked Dell Technologies and the online platform that sold the laptop to refund the cost of the device with interest and also pay litigation costs after it developed defects within the claimed warranty period.

Rachit Gupta had purchased a Dell Inspiron laptop online for Rs 57,079 through the Android app of Paytm Mobile Solutions on March 14, 2016. Within a few months, the laptop stopped getting charged and the display also conked off, prompting Gupta to visit the Dell service centre. He got to know from the service centre that the laptop was a refurbished one. Gupta filed an application with the district consumer commission on April 26, 2017. He alleged the manufacturer, the online e-commerce platform and other parties were involved in the sale of refurbished laptops as first-hand material. He filed a case of cheating and forgery. The district commission rejected his application on June 2, 2022. Gupta then challenged the order at the state consumer commission in Lucknow. Ruling in his favour, the state commission set aside the judgment and remanded the case to the district commission, asking it to restore the complaint to its original number and decide the complaint afresh. While revisiting the case, the president of the district commission, Anil Kumar Pundir, and member Anju Sharma noted that the seller had contested the complaint mainly on the ground that it is merely an online marketplace and provides a platform for third-party sellers. The manufacturer, on the other hand, contended that the laptop in question was originally sold in Thailand, was brought to India through parallel grey market import and was tampered with by a third party, replacing original components with non-genuine parts. Therefore, Dell India is not liable to provide warranty support. The commission noted that these defence arguments do not take away the essential nature of the dispute that Gupta had paid for a branded laptop and was supplied a product which, according to the material on record, was defective and contained duplicate parts.

BJP Leader Bhanwar Singh Palada Meets Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

Mahanagar Metro

New Delhi. Senior BJP leader and social worker Shri Bhanwar Singh Palada met Defence Minister and Lok Sabha Speaker during his visit to Delhi. Various issues related to national interest, organizational activities, youth power, and the current political scenario were discussed during the meeting. During the interaction, Bhanwar Singh Palada said that under the leadership of Prime Minister, the country is continuously moving towards development and self-reliance. He stated that Prime Minister Modi's nationalist vision, public welfare schemes, and development-oriented ideology are reaching every section of society, strengthening people's trust and support for the BJP across the



nation. Bhanwar Singh Palada further said that BJP workers are dedicatedly serving the nation and society, while continuously working to spread the organization's ideology among the masses. He described the guidance of senior leaders as inspirational and emphasized that national interest and organizational



strength remain the top priority. Political circles are considering this meeting significant. Supporters believe that Bhanwar Singh Palada has been consistently playing an active role between the organization and society, and his public outreach and political influence are steadily growing stronger.

Banaskantha Police or Partners of Bootleggers? Allegations Explode Over Border Corruption Network Run by 'Shoorveer'

Mahanagar Metro

Amirgadh / Panthawada / Ambaji / Dhanera | Gujarat. Serious allegations of corruption and organized illegal liquor smuggling have surfaced from Gujarat's Banaskantha border region, where locals and internal sources claim that bootlegging networks are allegedly operating under the protection of influential middlemen and corrupt officials. According to explosive claims highlighted in an investigative report by Meghnagar Metro News, a powerful intermediary known locally as "Shoorveer" is allegedly controlling illegal activities across the Amirgadh, Panthawada, Ambaji, and Dhanera border belts. The report alleges that large-scale liquor trafficking, drug movement, and illegal financial collections are taking place openly despite Gujarat's prohibition laws. Borders Turned Into "Entry Gates" for Illegal Trade? Sources quoted in the report allege that schedules for liquor-loaded trucks and containers entering Gujarat are allegedly being coordinated through a well-organized network operating along the border. The allegations suggest that massive consignments of alcohol and narcotics are moving through the region while law enforcement agencies remain silent. Questions are now being raised by local residents regarding: Why repeated complaints have allegedly produced no visible action. Whether powerful protection networks exist within the system. How illegal liquor and narcotics continue crossing heavily monitored borders. The

report further claims that substances including charas, ganja, and chemical drugs are also being trafficked through these routes, raising concerns about the safety of Gujarat's youth. Allegations Against Police Links and Middlemen One of the most controversial claims in the report revolves around alleged links between the intermediary "Shoorveer" and certain officials connected to the Local Crime Branch (LCB). Though no official confirmation has been issued by authorities, the report alleges that monthly illegal collections worth crores are distributed through a chain extending from local police units to senior administrative offices. Anonymous sources quoted in the report claim that: Illegal weekly collections are allegedly routed through multiple layers. Border checkpoints have become "toll collection points" for smugglers. Powerful protection allegedly prevents action against the network. These claims remain allegations at this stage and have not yet been independently verified by authorities or a court of law. Public Anger Growing Across Banaskantha The controversy has triggered anger among sections of the local population, who are now demanding intervention from Gujarat's State Monitoring Cell (SMC) and higher authorities in Gandhinagar. Citizens are questioning why strict enforcement is applied against ordinary violations, while alleged large-scale smuggling networks continue functioning openly. Key Highlights from the Investigation Allegations of organized



liquor smuggling through Banaskantha borders. "Shoorveer" named as a key alleged intermediary operating the network. Claims of protection from influential officials and administrative links. Demands for immediate SMC and Home Department intervention. Public calls for strict investigation into corruption and border security failures. Pressure Mounts on State Agencies With public scrutiny intensifying, all eyes are now on Gujarat's enforcement agencies and the State Monitoring Cell. The coming days may determine whether these allegations lead to a high-level crackdown or become another controversial chapter in Gujarat's ongoing battle against organized bootlegging and narcotics trafficking. The report also claims that further exposés, including alleged links between bootleggers, middlemen, and hotel-based financial dealings, may emerge in upcoming investigations.

Haryana makes Rs 5L accident insurance must for cab passengers

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Haryana govt has tightened the rules for cab aggregators, making it compulsory for them to provide passengers an insurance cover of at least Rs 5 lakh — a significant financial safeguard in case of an accident or any untoward incident such as robbery during a ride.

The decision was taken on Monday at a cabinet meeting on a wider overhaul of aggregator licence rules in the state. The policy also mandated a minimum health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh and term insurance of Rs 10 lakh for onboarded drivers. The same insurance protection will apply to delivery partners as well.

While the state govt approved the rules with immediate effect, it is still not clear whether passengers will be charged for this cover or they will have the choice to opt out — as is common in flights and trains. A senior functionary at a leading cab aggregator said the company would first study the govt order before deciding on how the insurance would be built into operations. "We will go through the notification in detail and then decide the scheme of things," the official added.

For commuters, however, the move offered some reassurance. "At least there will now be some financial support if something goes wrong during a ride. That is a relief," said a city resident who



frequently uses app-based cabs in the absence of a robust public transport network. The new rules — approved under the Haryana Motor Vehicles Rules, 1993, in line with Union road transport ministry's guidelines and directions of the Commission for Air Quality Management — apply to both aggregators providing passenger services as well as vehicles used by delivery service providers and e-commerce companies. Though the policy mentions "Jan 1, 2026" as the cutoff date, officials clarified that it would come into effect from Tuesday. The policy also does not clarify what will happen to vehicles

that joined platforms between Jan and May. A major environmental condition has also been built into the policy.

From now on, only vehicles running on clean fuel — CNG, electric, battery-operated or any other approved source — can be added to the fleets of cab and transport aggregators, delivery service providers and e-commerce companies in NCR. In the case of three-wheelers and auto-rickshaws, only CNG or electric vehicles will be allowed to join existing fleets. This means anyone wanting to join an e-delivery platform will have to use an electric bike. However, those already

enrolled with such aggregators can continue. This effectively shuts the door on adding new petrol and diesel-run vehicles to such fleets in NCR. A senior govt official clarified that the restriction applies only to aggregators and delivery platforms, not to private vehicle buyers.

Another official pointed out that most existing cab and auto fleets are already compliant in this regard. "Most cabs and autos in NCR are already running on CNG and electric. Only some two-wheelers are still on petrol. That transition is also underway," the official said.

The framework also makes licensing mandatory for aggregators and delivery service providers, and lays down onboarding norms for drivers and vehicles, passenger safety measures, grievance redressal systems, refresher training, cybersecurity compliance for apps and fire regulation.

Vehicles under these platforms must also carry location tracking devices, panic buttons, first-aid kits and fire extinguishers. Aggregators will have to run 24x7 control rooms and call centres, digitally verify drivers and vehicles through the Vahan and Sarathi portals, and maintain detailed digital records. The licensing process will be handled through cleanmobility.haryanatransport.gov.in.

'I could not call myself an engineer': How Maharashtra's aborted Muslim quota left a Beed man without his degree for nine years

Farukh Ilahi Sayyad completed his engineering course in 2017. It took a Bombay High Court order in 2025 for the University of Mumbai to hand him his degree, trapped as he was between a lapsed Muslim quota, a change in government and a caste validity certificate no one would issue.

Sasaram. (Agency)

For nine years, Farukh Ilahi Sayyad carried the qualifications of an engineer without the degree certificate to prove it.

A beneficiary and later a casualty of Maharashtra's brief and controversial 5 per cent Muslim reservation policy, the 33-year-old from Beed spent nearly a decade caught between changing governments, a lapsed ordinance and bureaucratic deadlock before the Bombay High Court finally directed the University of Mumbai to release his engineering degree earlier this month.

Sayyad's ordeal traces back to 2014, when the then Congress-NCP government announced 16 per cent reservation for Marathas and 5 per cent reservation for Muslims in government jobs and educational institutions ahead of the

Assembly elections. To navigate constitutional restrictions against religion-based reservation, the quota was structured under a Special Backward Category-A (SBC-A), covering around 50 socially and educationally backward Muslim communities.

It was under this category that Sayyad, then 21 years old and a resident of Jawalben village in Beed district, secured admission to Finolex Academy of Management and Technology in Ratnagiri for a degree course in electrical engineering.

The youngest son of a daily wage worker in a family with little formal education, Sayyad completed Diploma in Electrical



Engineering with 72.71 per cent marks, making him eligible for direct second-year admission to an engineering course. "With the reservations announced, I was initially allotted a Pune-based college based on the marks. However, I opted out as the fees of Rs 1.13 lakh was too high. In the second round of selection, I was

allotted a seat in the Finolex Academy of Management and Technology in Ratnagiri under the SBCA category and I accepted as the fee was Rs 63,000 per year and affordable," Farukh Ilahi Sayyad told The Indian Express from Dubai.

In July 2014, he obtained a caste certificate confirming his SBC-A status. But when he applied for a caste validity certificate in February 2015, the political and legal landscape had changed. The BJP-led government had come to power in Maharashtra in October 2014, and the reservation policy was challenged before the Bombay High Court. In November that year, the High Court struck down Maratha reservation but permitted 5 per cent reservation for Muslims in educational institutions,

observing that denying such reservation would impede efforts to bring Muslim youth into the mainstream of secular education.

However, the ordinance was never converted into a permanent law and lapsed in December 2014 after the new government chose not to preserve the Muslim quota framework.

Soon after, Sayyad said the state scrutiny committee informed him that it could not issue a caste validity certificate because the reservation itself was no longer in force.

"I made various representations to authorities but to no avail. I was told that I would be able to continue my studies if I paid the fees that was being charged for open category students. I agreed, hoping that the issue would get resolved," he said.

Short news

Eight families face social boycott over inter-caste marriages

BERHAMPUR. (Agency)

In a disturbing case of alleged caste-based discrimination, eight families in Padmapur area of Rayagada district have reportedly been socially boycotted after their children married outside their caste even as government has mounted efforts to promote social integration.

The Odisha government has come up with a new scheme under which a financial assistance of Rs 2.5 lakh is extended to eligible newlywed couples who break the caste barriers.

However, in Padampur, affected families allege that sections of the local Tailika community declared them outcasts for allowing inter-caste marriages within their households. According to the families, they have been barred from participating in social gatherings, village feasts and family ceremonies for the past several days.

Community members were also allegedly warned against maintaining any form of relationship or communication with them. The victims claimed that the social, mental and economic harassment has created fear and insecurity.

While several families reportedly remained silent fearing further restrictions, eight families have now approached the administration seeking justice. On Monday, members of the affected families submitted a memorandum to additional district magistrate Naveen Chandra Nayak during the grievance cell meeting at Gudari block. They sought protection and demanded action to ensure they could live with dignity.

Parliamentary panel exposes 'laxity' in filling SC, ST posts at Hyderabad University

HYDERABAD. (Agency)

A Parliamentary panel has flagged delays in filling existing vacant SC/ST-reserved faculty posts in University of Hyderabad (UoH). A report on the implementation of reservation policy in HCU submitted to Parliament by the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of SCs and STs stated that currently SCs account for 14 per cent and STs for six per cent of total teaching staff, which is below the constitutionally mandated 15 per cent for SCs and 7.5 per cent for STs. The committee, in its report, recommended that no faculty seat reserved for SCs and STs should remain vacant for more than six months under any circumstances.

There are a total of 419 teaching staff, including professors, associate professors and assistant professors, in the UoH, which is also known as the Hyderabad Central University (HCU). Of this, 59 faculty members (14 per cent) and 25 staff (6 per cent) belong to SC and ST communities respectively.

The committee said that "inadequate representation of SCs and STs in teaching faculty in such a premier educational institution points to a failure somewhere down the line in the educational system whereby students from the reserved categories are not able to come up to such educational standards required to be selected for the posts of professors, associate professors and assistant professors". The Parliamentary panel also expressed serious concern over the university using "candidates not found suitable" for filling the posts reserved for SCs and STs. It indicates a lax attitude in faculty recruitment of SC and ST candidates, the committee said, while disapproving.

ASI escapes bullet as suspected members of Bambiha gang open fire at police team

Chandigarh. (Agency)

A Chandigarh Police Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) escaped a bullet injury late Monday night after suspected members of the Bambiha gang allegedly opened fire at an Operations Cell team near ISBT-43, police sources said.

According to sources, the Operations Cell of Chandigarh Police had received information that three suspected members of the Bambiha gang were moving near ISBT-43 with weapons. Acting on the input, a team of the Operations Cell reached the area around 10.30 pm.

The suspects were traced on the Sector 43 road behind ISBT-43. Sources said that when the police team tried to apprehend them, the suspects allegedly opened fire.



One of the bullets was fired at ASI Keshav, who was part of the Operations cell team. He escaped injury as he was wearing a bulletproof jacket, sources said. Following this, the Operations Cell team also opened fire in retaliation and later overpowered the suspects. No police personnel was reported injured till the filing of this report.

Sources said weapons were recovered from the accused after they were apprehended. Police teams remained present at the spot late into the night and further verification of the accused and recoveries was underway.

An FIR for attempt to murder and under relevant provisions of the Arms Act was being registered till the filing of this report, sources said. According to police, the accused are likely to be produced before a Chandigarh court on Tuesday, where their remand will be sought for further interrogation. The incident comes hours after the Chandigarh Police claimed to have busted an illegal weapons network allegedly linked to the Lucky Patial-Bambiha gang, arresting three persons and recovering country-made firearms and live cartridges in separate cases.

Haryana lodges FIRs against 22 employees for skipping census duty

Chandigarh. (Agency)

With census operations gathering pace in Haryana, authorities have lodged FIRs against 22 employees and recommended FIRs against 40 others for failing to participate in the exercise. A few employees have also been suspended.

The move has drawn sharp criticism from employees' bodies, which argued that registering FIRs or suspending staff without an inquiry was harsh and unjustified. Employee leaders said the reasons behind the absences should have been examined first, as some employees may have had genuine or unavoidable circumstances.

Two FIRs were lodged in Gurgaon against 10 employees, including teachers and Anganwadi workers, while another FIR



was registered against nine employees in Faridabad. In Kurukshetra, two clerks faced FIRs, and a teacher in Bhiwani district was also booked. Additional recommendations for FIRs against 22 employees have been sent to Faridabad police, while Sonapat police received recommendations against 18 more employees. Gurgaon Municipal Corporation

Commissioner Pradeep Dahiya confirmed that two FIRs had been lodged against 10 employees for remaining absent from census duty without citing any reasons. The FIRs were filed under Section 11 of the Census Act, 1948.

According to the FIR, the employees failed to discharge their duties with due diligence, thereby obstructing smooth census operations. One FIR registered at Gurgaon City Police Station on May 18 stated: "Their absence from the mandatory training demonstrates negligence and dereliction of duty in relation to an important national assignment... the enumerator failed to attend the mandatory census training and also refused to comply with repeated official instructions issued from time to time."

Mumbai's Khar tree collapse: Survivor had topped her class with perfect CGPA just days before accident

Harshita Kumar, 21, who received a perfect CGPA of 10 just days before a falling tree left her in the ICU, is showing signs of recovery after cervical spine surgery, though doctors say progress will be slow due to head injuries.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Days before a falling tree on Khar's Linking Road left her unconscious in the ICU, Harshita Kumar had just received the best news of her academic life. The 21-year-old BSc Finance student had topped her class with a perfect CGPA of 10. Now, a day after her friend Aarika Srivastava died from injuries sustained in the same accident, Harshita is showing signs of recovery after undergoing cervical spine surgery over the weekend. Harshita, who remains in the ICU at Hinduja Hospital, is still unconscious. Her family says doctors have indicated she is responding positively after the surgery. "We are in a lot of pain and praying to God for strength and for her speedy recovery. Her surgery was successful and doctors have told us that

Harshita is showing positive signs. She is still unconscious. We have a long journey ahead and doctors have told us that the recovery will be slow as she has sustained head injuries," said Harshita's father, Harish Kumar. A student pursuing a BSc in Finance at the BSE Institute, Harshita topped her class in results announced just days before the accident. "She is pursuing a very unique course and is extremely intelligent," her father added. Harshita and Aarika suffered critical injuries, including skull fractures, after a tree inside the compound of an under-construction site collapsed onto the autorickshaw they were travelling in. The accident occurred on May 10 when Harshita, Aarika and Aarika's

sister, Manasvi Srivastava, were heading out for lunch in Khar after spending time together at Harshita's home. Manasvi



escaped with a fractured leg. Harshita and Aarika lost consciousness and were rushed to hospital by their autorickshaw driver.

The three were close family friends. The Kumar and Srivastava families have known each other for 30 years and regularly met on weekends. The Srivastavas are from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, the Kumars from Patna. Her relatives say the family is still struggling to cope with the loss. Aarika's father, Sumit Srivastava, was visiting a relative at Tata Memorial Hospital when he got a call from Manasvi about the accident. "When Manasvi called my brother, she said there had been a major accident. Aarika remained in the ICU for a week and even marked her fifteenth birthday on May 13 while admitted there. She passed away on Sunday morning," said Aarika's uncle, S K Srivastava.

Reinterpretation of the String Theory

I've been a writer for most of my life—and not just my adult life. In the small North Indian town where I once lived, I started working for the local paper in my summer holidays when I was 15 (they allowed you to do things like that back then). I was supposed to stay on the News Desk and learn how to edit copy, and that's what I did mainly. But every now and then, a reporter would be MIA and there would be a story to cover. It was a small set up, and the Desk Head was also the allotter of assignments. He knew I was chomping at the bit, dying to get out and interview people and tell their stories, so he'd turn to me and say: "Shampa, would you like to...?" I'd be at the door before he'd finished his sentence. After a while, he stopped saying even those few words. Instead, he'd just hand me a paper with the details and indicate the door. I couldn't get out fast enough.

Nobody minded. Actually, let me rephrase that. The reporters were relieved. They got to save their fuel money and have someone else trudge to godforsaken places and cover what they considered highly boring subjects such as ICSE toppers, new departments in the university and the safety of swimming pools. My boss was happy the reports were being filed. As for me, I was in seventh heaven, especially when I saw my byline in the paper the next day. I was much more excited about that than about my first pay check which, if memory serves me right, was for the princely sum of Rs 350. But why am I talking about this now? Because, suddenly, so many decades later, I've become a reluctant writer. I put off my assignments every chance I get. I sit down at my laptop to write, but instead scroll through the news, play a few games of Mahjong, read my old stories and then get up and go to where my current passion is playing out—jewellery making. Instead of words, I've taken to stringing together stones and beads. This new love came out of the blue. Or maybe not quite. I've always liked accessories and have often designed my own. But I always got someone else to make them for me. A few months ago, I decided to change that. I invited the karigars home and sat down with them in my living room, mixing and matching stones, trying out new designs, learning knotting and threading techniques.

Before I knew it, we'd created 55 neck pieces, and I was hooked. Of course, there were ups and downs. Not every piece worked out how I'd envisaged it. But the items got sold at a pop-up, and now I'm working on Round 2. I don't know how that will go. What I do know is that diving into unfamiliar territory, propelled by curiosity and enthusiasm, and learning a new skill—at this late stage in my life—is truly joyous.

Especially since this time round, I'm not learning because someone has decided that I must. I'm learning because I want to. And that adds a triple shot of motivation to the whole experience.

Yes, I've read about cognitive stimulation and the other psychological advantages of learning new skills late in life. I know that neuroplasticity, which is the ability to create and reorganise neural pathways in response to new experiences, can be exercised like a muscle at all ages. I hope my pathways are getting stimulated and will keep me sharp and resilient in my dotage. For now, I'm just enjoying the ride. Maybe one day, I'll even write about it.

Ethnic fault lines deepen across Manipur

Privileging indigeneity may be a convenient political tool to otherise the Kukis

Manipur continues to defy the logic of an effective double engine sarkar three years after the outbreak of violence on 3 May 2023. The latest killing of four individuals in two separate ambushes on the same day, that is 13 May 2026, reinforces the state of lawlessness in the state. While the first ambush, allegedly made by the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF)-Kamson faction at Zero point between Kotlen and Kotzim village in Kangpokpi district claimed the lives of three Kuki pastors and four critically injured, the second allegedly by an armed Kuki group at Joujangtek in Noney district claimed the life of a Chiru Naga and two critically injured. Seen against its immediate context, these killings stem from an unabated spiral of violence triggered by a drunken brawl at Litan Sareikhong village between a Kuki and a Tangkhul Naga three months ago. The stalemated suspense created by the capture and continuing detention of several individuals by rival parties following these ambushes, fourteen each of whom were released by both parties after two days, risks the danger of reviving the antagonistic Proustian memory of the two communities. Not surprisingly, the Litan violence and this dastardly murder is seen by Kuki groups and some security experts as a proxy war launched by the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (IM) through its proxy, the ZUF, in cahoots with armed Meitei groups to bring to fruition the overarching political project to ethnically cleanse the Kukis from the foothills of the State. This position was unequivocally refuted by the Arambai Tenggol and the ZUF.

The subsequent violence and series of retaliatory attacks by rival armed groups since the Litan incident is seen by the United Naga Council (UNC) in early May 2026 as an 'undeclared war' and 'targeted offensive' launched by 'Kuki militants' operating under the shadow of 'Suspension of Operation'. UNC contended that the 'continued threats and attacks' on Sakarphung, Litan, Thoyee, Sinakeithe and Ringui villages—all Tangkhul dominated villages—constituted a 'challenge to Naga historical identity and territorial rights'. Taking this into account UNC, which is largely seen as a frontal NSCN-IM organisation, made a frantic appeal to Naga tribal hohos in Nagaland for 'unity beyond tribal or geographical divisions'. The ambush at Zero point and Joujangtek, and the suspense created by the capture and continued detention of several individuals by rival parties must be seen as a calculated attempt by vested interests to broaden the theatre of violence beyond the Kuki-Meitei violence by transforming the Kuki-Tangkhul violent conflict into a fully-fledged Kuki-Naga war.

Advertisement

At the heart of this complex and multidimensional nature of the violence in Manipur lies a competing politics of labensraum—an idea developed by Friedrich Ratzel to imply an expansive Nazi territorial project—and the politics of indigeneity engaged by the three parties—Meiteis, Kukis and Nagas. Even though the Nagalim political project (of establishing a greater sovereign Naga state) runs counter to the Meitei labensraum politics, majoritarian minded Meiteis and powerful Naga nationalist groups seek to politically harness this cycle of violence to bolster their labensraum politics by forging an overlapping consensus on the question of indigeneity in Manipur. This consensus is



built upon the premise that only the Meiteis and Nagas are indigenous to Manipur, and that everyone else including the Kukis are seen as the unwanted migrant 'others' or as 'foreign occupiers'—to wit the latest press release of NSCN-IM on the violence.

By arbitrarily invoking a specific historical moment of migration of the Khongsai (Khongjais in colonial records), a segment of the Kukis, who were recruited by William McCulloch, the British political agent, in the 1850s to establish sepoy villages in the foothills of Manipur to secure the valley from ravaging head-hunting raids of the northern Angami Naga group, the Kukis are sought to be permanently denied of indigeneity. Such an arbitrary narrative is deeply problematic as it conveniently ignores the presence of the Kukis in the valley areas of Manipur before 1485, the year the Cheitharol Kumpaba (also Kumbaba), the Meitei Royal Chronicle, began its written official records. Local historians have attested to this incontrovertible historical fact, a point acknowledged by both Cheitharol and Sri Rajmala (the royal chronicle of

Tripura). In its selective appropriation of history, this narrative seeks to permanently 'settle' the Kukis in ways which powerfully resonate what Mahmood Mamdani, the influential US-based Ugandan political theorist, considers drives nativist politics in large part of the world. Three policy instrumentalities are being invoked to aggressively push and institutionalise this narrative overtime, namely, the inner line permit system, Schedule Tribe (ST) Status for the Meiteis, and the National Registrar of Citizens (NRC). While the Inner Line Permit system was restored to the State in December 2019 and marks the first step to institutionally flatten the hills-valley binary, the attempt to push ST status for the Meiteis is seen as a similar institutional ploy to grant the Meiteis unhindered access to, and control over land, resources and jobs/employment opportunities in the state. Faced with an institutional gridlock and backlash from the tribal groups including the Nagas, this attempt has triggered the outbreak of an institutionalised violence in Manipur from 3 May 2023. This has since descended into a semblance of stalemated ethnic turf war between the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar and Meiteis.

While the internal tension in the narrative on indigeneity becomes increasingly apparent, its long-term and adverse potential to invert the group-differentiated citizenship rights ordained by the Indian constitution becomes unmistakable. Privileging 'indigeneity' may be a convenient political tool to 'otherise' the Kukis as the unwanted, 'illegal' (im)migrant, settler 'others' or 'foreign occupiers'. Yet it runs the risk of going against the grain of existing international covenants and practise where 'indigeneity' is universally accepted as a bulwark against domination. The increasing intellectual focus on 'relative indigeneity' which is sensitive to relative power—social, economic, cultural and political—dynamics of communities with competing indigenous claims in deeply divided place like Manipur may be more in line with the constitutionally ordained citizenship rights regime across India. While the NRC is yet in sight, the imminent implementation of the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in the state may culminate in massive disenfranchisement of Internally Displaced Persons across the divide. The writing on the wall is already apparent.

The jury is out if the saner voices cutting across the divides, who had been rendered voiceless in the wake of over three years of violence in Manipur, could reclaim their agency and voice to address the structural source of this complex and multidimensional violence before all communities in the state are consumed by mutual hatred and violence.

Narco-terror: Captagon seizure shows enormity of the menace

India is increasingly confronting sophisticated international syndicates attempting to exploit its territory as a transit corridor

INDIA's first-ever seizure of Captagon — the notorious synthetic stimulant widely dubbed the "jihadi drug" — is both a major law enforcement success and a stark warning about the audacity of transnational narcotics networks. The Narcotics Control Bureau's seizure of 227.7-kg Captagon worth Rs 182 crore under Operation RAGEPILL shows that India is no longer merely battling domestic drug abuse; it is increasingly confronting sophisticated international syndicates attempting to exploit its territory as a transit corridor. The involvement of an overstaying Syrian national and the intended movement of the consignment to Gulf markets provide a glimpse of the modus operandi employed by global trafficking cartels. Captagon trafficking is deeply intertwined with organised crime, hawala networks, forged trade documentation and terror financing. Also, there is growing evidence of narco-trafficking from Myanmar to the North East and cocaine consignments entering Indian shores through maritime trade routes. India



cannot afford to be complacent. However, seizures alone will not resolve the crisis. The experience of states such as Himachal Pradesh and

Punjab suggests that anti-drug campaigns succeed when policing is combined with rehabilitation, community participation and a financial crackdown on criminal enterprises. Property confiscation, preventive detention, awareness drives and local-level monitoring must become integral parts of a nationwide strategy. Global cooperation is a must. Home Minister Amit Shah has called for uniform international laws, intelligence-sharing and extradition mechanisms. Drug cartels thrive on legal loopholes, fragmented enforcement and geopolitical divisions. No nation can combat narco-terror in isolation. India's zero-tolerance approach against narcotics sends a strong message, but sustaining it will require relentless vigilance, technological surveillance, stronger port security and coordinated diplomacy. The Captagon haul is a grim reminder that the battle against drugs is inseparable from the challenge of ensuring national security.

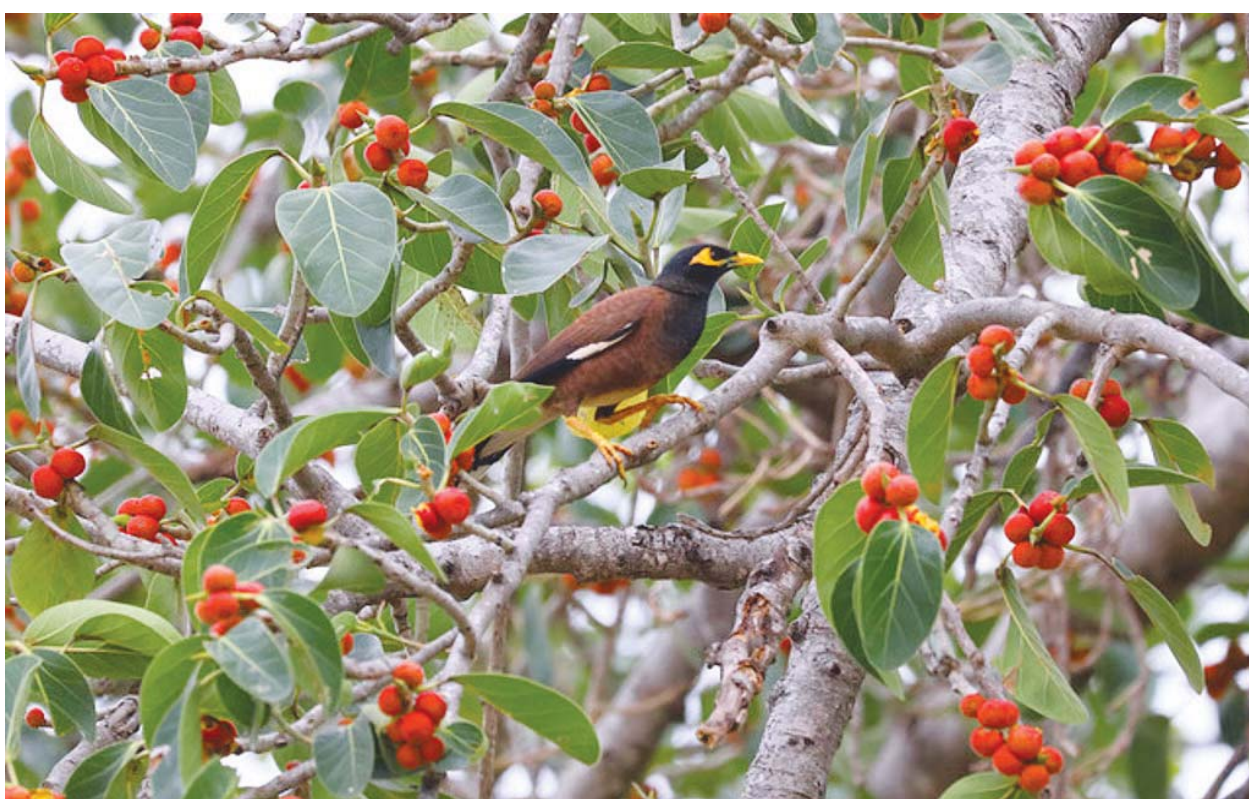
The art of love without performance

I am often asked why I enjoy looking at nature. One reason is the contradictions in it—nature is brutal and calming, all at once

In the mid-morning light, a Common myna flew above my head, shrieking. Its beak was bright yellow and angled like a spear, intending to attack its cousin, a Brahminy myna. The reason for the avian commotion was an old, rusted pipe that stuck out from my building like a forgotten periscope.

Each year, around Mother's Day, a Common myna pair claimed the pipe. A little later, as summer rose, they raised their brood. Each time they sensed their parents, the chicks would shriek with the abandon of a once-in-a-lifetime bounty—the rest of their lives would be spent with a quieter profile that didn't attract attention. As chicks though, their ravenous hunger was their parent's problem. And ours. Their calls punctured mornings, noons and evenings.

This year, the less common Brahminy myna had taken the pipe. The other mynas would watch, squabble, and retreat. A precious nesting 'hole' had been taken, and another would need to be found. Then, would follow the task of nest-building, finding food, and feeding impatient chicks. Occasionally, there would be recesses done by House crows and Rufous tree pies, who would be delighted to snap up the chicks as a snack. As I observed the new occupants of the rusted pipe, my phone pinged. It was the time of the year for Mother's Day commerce—websites with 20 per cent off, showing your mother you cared for her only if you bought her expensive (but marked down) stuff. There were spa days, discounted



bags and shoes, holiday packages. There were discounts for daughters too, so both women could match, if they didn't already have matching faces and hair. Then there

were the other kind of messages, showing moms in halos, with AI poetry (to be clear: everyone should write poetry, even if it's bad, but bad AI poetry is a little

much). It's a May march we are familiar with. But one thing continues to stick out every year: the idea of the mother rather than the mother herself. People who bickered with their moms, smothered more than mothered, made peace for a day. Mothers hinted heavily that they are better than the average human.

It was, as always, sanctimonious at worst, and funny at best. Meanwhile, nature continued her dance. A Yellow-footed green pigeon came to a False Arjuna tree, again and again, to break off twigs for her nest. Another bird in an office I visited laid eggs and began incubating them, doing her best to ignore masses of people below the boughs. In the heat of June, at the hottest time of the year, birds search for soft insects to feed their young.

There would be no appreciation, no posts and certainly no discounts. Everything would be true, absolute, and hard won. I am often asked why I enjoy looking at nature. One reason is the contradictions in it—nature is brutal and calming, all at once. Another is that the materiality in nature is non-commercial: a rusted pipe, a cardboard box, and leaf litter are all important for wildlife. Nature teaches us values beyond the marketplace and conjoins us with the ordinary, lived-in object. In his lovely book, An Immense World, author Ed Yong writes how wild animals cherish dark skies and chemical-free areas; their senses attuned to natural rather than chemically modified states. And then there is my favourite reason: the fact that nature carries on, with no bells and whistles. There is no time or predication for woe or sanctimony, only the act of doing. And so, I vow to love my mother as an act of doing, rather than positioning.

Two quick ways to cook corn



Hot corn tastes great in the monsoon. Here's how to cook with it in these two easy ways...

CORN SALAD

Yield:

Ingredients: Corn kernels - 1 cup Red bell peppers - 1 tbsp Onions and spring onions chopped - 1 tsp each Chopped Kairi- ¼ tsp Celery stalk, diced - 1 tsp Cherry tomatoes - 5 Pineapple diced - 1 tsp Parsley - 1 tsp Cilantro leaves - 1 tsp Basil - 3 leaves Avocado, diced - ½ each Olive oil - 1 tsp Lemon juice - 2 tsp Black salt - to taste Tacos - 3 shells

Method: Blanch the corn in hot water with salt. Do not overcook it. Drain and set aside. Now, cut the onions, peppers, pineapple, kairi (raw mango), celery and avocado. Also dice the cherry tomatoes and add the herbs like basil, parsley and cilantro basil to the vegetables. Season this. Add the lemon juice and olive oil. Toss it well and serve it in the shells with herb buttered rice on the side.

Corn broth

Yield:

Ingredients: Onions, chopped - 1 Leeks, chopped - ½ cup Celery, chopped - ½ cup Potatoes, diced - 1 cup Corn kernels - 2 cups Yellow peppers, chopped - ½ cup Garlic, chopped - 1 tsp Vegetable stock - 1 litre Milk - a cup Parsley - 1 tsp Chives - 1 tsp Cream - ¼ cup Olive oil - 1 tsp Butter - to taste

Method: Heat a pan and drizzle the butter into it. When it melts add some of the oil and the onions, chopped potatoes, leeks, celery plus the yellow bell peppers and corn kernels, taking care not to over cook it. Add the garlic and saute too. Add the milk and vegetable stock. Cook till the vegetables turn soft. Blend this and add cream plus the seasoning, as well as the chopped herbs. Serve hot with garlic bread.

Gourmet products you must use in your kitchen

Don't be scared by the word Gourmet.

Here we list some fancy ingredients along with easy ways to use them at your next party at home.

Vanilla Beans

The sweet aroma of vanilla can live up to the most bland dish and that hold true even more for toothy desserts. You might have tasted vanilla in the form of artificial essences and now its turn to upgrade and treat yourself to the real deal. Even though a bit expensive vanilla beans can be used in desserts such as ice cream or waffle syrup and they will make you feel like you've seen heaven! Look for whole vanilla beans that are about 6 to 8 inches in length for best results. Glossy dark brown in colour and ever so slightly moist are the best ones.

Fish Sauce

Just the mention of fish sauce makes people rethink altogether. They probably imagine their dish soaked in fish liquid. The truth being much different, first fish sauce should be used in mild quantities. It is tangy in nature that adds zest to the preparations. Here are a few ways to include fish sauce in your food:

You can use a spoon of fish sauce in the marinade of a



large chicken waiting to be grilled. Use a drop or two in pastas and salads. Be careful not to use more than required as it may ruin your dish. For all Thai food lovers, a pinch of fish sauce can add a punch to your gravy.

Exotic Salts

You cannot even imagine any dish without salt. If normal salt can add such value to your food imagine what different gourmet salt can take the level of your food onto. Gourmet salt is mostly used to finish the dish and therefore sprinkled just before serving the dish. Some of the top gourmet salts are Black salt, Himalayan Pink salt, Sea Salt, Kosher Salt and Fleur de sel. Here are a few useful tips:

Flake salts do wonders to salads.

Japanese salts are ideal for fish preparations. Hawaiian Black Salt makes meat even more delectable.

Flavored Vinegars

Well, this ingredient may not be considered as gourmet but can definitely add X factor that will turn an ordinary dish to extraordinary.

Balsamic Vinegar is best for Italian preparations. You can also whip it along with salad dressings and you're good to go.

Wine Vinegar is also a result of fermented wine and does wonders to prep up a dish. Use it in sweet and sour dishes, pickles and even chutneys.

There might be a surfeit of food shows on TV but they will never replace the good old cookbooks, says chef Milind Sovani, who has, in his three-decade-long career, served Bollywood stars like Amitabh Bachchan, Madhuri Dixit and Sanjay Dutt - and created awareness about Indian cuisine in Singapore where he worked for 13 years.

"In the time of internet and TV, printed cookery books are facing a challenge of existence...but, no, things are not all that bad yet. We have to accept the forces of change, but still there are many positives in owning and using cookery books - and of course writing them too," Sovani told us in an e-mail interview.

"Cooking with the help of a cookery book in the kitchen is always the best help around. You can keep it on your table, you do not require electric connections, or WiFi and the like. You can always mark some points on them, make earfolds for important pages, make small notes on them for your future reference and pass them down to the next

TV shows will never replace Cookbooks

generation or even share them easily with friends," added Sovani, who has worked with establishments like New Delhi's Hotel Samrat and Hotel Jaipur Ashok.

Then, books are always handy to keep, loan and borrow and have good mobility.

This apart, "in a country like India, where internet or TV signals are not widely or easily available, books can be of great help in any place and location. The visual charm of using a cookery book, which is attractively and artistically printed with appetizing photos, is always a delight. Coffee table books also look good on your book shelves," Sovani maintained.

Elaborating on the theme, Sovani said: "While cooking using a cookery book, your imagination is also at work and you tend to draw from the experience and skill of the writer. Books can be handed over from one generation to another, especially books rich in traditional and regional cooking for newly-wed brides. Books are a rich source of history tradition and culture too.

"Lastly, but most importantly, I feel cookery books are more trusted than the cookery shows on TV or internet recipes. As these books are written by experts or chefs, they are also considered more authentic and accurate too,"



Sovani explained.

Now, he is penning an autobiography to inspire others with his journey. Writing a book on his life has been on the mind of the 52-year-old for the last five years, but it was in 2012 when he returned to India from Singapore that he gave it a serious thought.

"I have been working on it for a year and half now. I want to share with readers, especially youngsters, about the journey of a chef, the hardships faced and the sweet success moments. I wish to do this to inspire people and also spread awareness among the masses. Recipes... anyone can write, but the experiences I have and can share are unique," Sovani said.

To be available on stands after six months, the book "will be a very good read for everyone".

"It covers stories of my celebrity interactions, glorious moments, mega banquets, international experiences, my cookery tips, guidance to aspiring chefs and more," he said.

The chef often travels to Singapore as he has his own consultancy firm, Hospitality Innovations Pvt Ltd, which works for innovations in restaurants and cuisines. He was even honored with the 'Culinary Trail Blazer of Singapore' award by 'Michelin Star Guide' for his work of transforming the image of Indian cuisine from a mundane, ordinary five-to-seven-dollar-cuisine to a modern high-end one.

Asked how one can popularize Indian food in other countries, he said: "Firstly, you need to be honest with your roots and have in-depth knowledge of Indian cuisine.

"Secondly, understand the market need of that country, the current perceived image of Indian cuisine and how you can develop the taste buds of the local population towards Indian cuisine. Open Indian restaurants which can offer good, healthy and modern food."

But, as of now, he has plans of increasing the number of branches of his restaurant April Rain, which has two outlets in Pune. "I plan to take this brand pan-India and the next outlet would surely be in Mumbai," said the Mumbai-based chef.

The many delectable avatars of

Momos

The history of dumplings, it is said, dates back to the 16th century during the time of the Ming Dynasty. Today, dumplings can be found in dozens of versions, from the street food variety to the more nuanced, fine dining ones.

We take a look at some of the avatars.

From classic Chinese dim sum to Italian ravioli, Japanese Gyoza and Tibetan momos, these little pockets of heaven have seen many transformations. Filled with meat, veggies and adequately flavoured with aromatics, the succulent wraps are everyone's comfort food. From crab fillings to spinach dumpling skins, you'd be surprised that the city has an array of

dumplings to offer. We scoured around looking for the most unique options available. Siu Mai Siu mai originated in China. Unlike wontons, these deceptively simple dumplings are wrapped but left open-faced and served as dim sum. Traditionally filled with pork and shrimp, dim sums are styled like a flower and served as appetizers. If you do not eat pork, choose from chicken

or fish filling.

Har gow Essentially prepared with minced shrimp meat stuffed inside almost-transparent dumpling skin with multiple pleats. The lump of shrimp mixed with scallions and water chestnuts is sauteed and flavoured with salt, pepper, garlic and sauces of your choice and steamed in a bamboo steamer. Juicy prawns wrapped in succulent wheat wrap — what's not to love?

Momos

These originated in Tibet and migrated to Nepal. Filled with veggies, meat (chicken, mutton, pork) and flavoured with spices, the dumplings are snugly folded and served steamed, fried or pan-fried. Momos are typically served with a red chilli and garlic sauce known as sepen and



chicken or vegetable stock.

Gyoza Dim sum's Japanese counterpart, the gyoza, is a delectable dumpling wrapped in a thin wonton wrapper, filled with finely minced meat, veggies, scallions, celery and served with a dipping sauce. The wrapper of a gyoza is thicker and chewier than other dumplings. Served as steamed fried, deep fried or pan grilled, a platter of gyoza is typically served with a gyoza sauce (made with soya sauce and chilli oil) and salad.

Wontons Some 2000 odd years back, wontons were simply known as dumplings. It was only during 618-912 that it got its name and has been on everyone's mouth ever since. A staple in China, wontons are dumplings filled with meat, fish or shrimp. Here is a variety of wontons available in and around the city — Chinese cabbage and pork wonton, chicken wonton dumped in clear soup, fried wontons served as appetizers with a puddle of zesty sauce and the classic steamed wontons served alongside. chicken broth or stock.

Recipe: Tandoori pomfret

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



Ingredients:

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

Directions:

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

Recipe: Stuffed tomatoes

A low-cal vegan option that pleases the palate as well

Preparation time: 15mins

Cooking time: 15 mins

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

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

Recipe Method:

Cut off the top of the tomatoes and scoop out the seeds and pulp to get a cavity. Set aside.

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



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

Cook broccoli the right way

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

Undercooking is Wrong

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

Don't Cut off the Stalks

Peel the stalks and cut them into to boil them with the florets. In case you have not tried this before you will love the stalk's sweet meat.

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

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



3. In half a cup of water at room temperature, sprinkle 1 tbsp of gelatin and let soak for 1/2 an hour. Pour 1 1/2 cups of boiling water over and mix well to dissolve. Leave to cool. When cool and beginning to set, mix in the broccoli, walnuts, salt, pepper and corn.

Transfer into the mould and leave to chill and set in the refrigerator. When ready to serve, pass a knife around to loosen edges, place an inverted plate over the mould and turn upside down. Your Broccoli and Walnut Mould Salad is ready.



'Malay cuisine perfect for Indian market'

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

"Malaysia's population is divided amongst three major ethnic groups -- Malays, Chinese and Indians. The taste of Malaysian food is subtle and unique as it is the fusion of Chinese vegetables blended with Indian spice, which makes our food rich and fresh. "But since we use the same spices like coriander powder, turmeric, green chilli, red chilli powder, palm sugar (jaggery) and ginger, it suits the Indian palate to perfection and should be an instant success in the Indian market," Lisarni told IANS in an interview here. The Kuala Lumpur-based chef is on his debut visit to the country to



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

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

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

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

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

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

Why Amit Shah chose a conflict zone to announce Naxal-free India

Bastar, one of India's most backward regions, had become synonymous with Naxalism. By choosing to declare India 'Naxal-free' from Bastar, Amit Shah attempted to signal that the region, once seen as a symbol of fear, was now a place of stability.

New Delhi.(Agency)

It was April 6, 2010 - the day India witnessed its deadliest Maoist ambushes. A CRPF team on a routine patrol in Chhattisgarh's Bastar was ambushed by heavily armed Naxals, leaving 76 personnel dead. The incident only reinforced Bastar's image as the heartland of Maoist insurgency. For decades, Bastar has remained associated with violence and underdevelopment. On Monday, it was a momentous occasion for Bastar's residents as Union Home Minister Amit Shah asserted that India was now "Naxal-free". The Modi government knew the road to weed out Naxals went through Bastar, which has been witness to decades-

long conflict between security forces and rebels. It is exactly why Shah chose Bastar to make the announcement. "I am declaring with pride, India is now Naxal-free," the Home Minister said. The government had set March 31 as the deadline to eliminate Left-wing extremism from India.

WHY AMIT SHAH CHOSE BASTAR?

Reflecting on Bastar's long history of insurgency, the Home Minister underlined that while the rest of India got independence in 1947, Bastar experienced "true freedom" only after March 31, 2026. "For over six decades, the region has endured severe economic, social and cultural setbacks," Shah said. It was a

historic moment for the 1.41 million residents of Bastar who were consigned to live in the shadow of Red Terror for decades. In fact, Bastar had become synonymous with Naxalism. Thus, by choosing to declare India "Naxal-free" from Bastar, Shah attempted to signal that the region, once seen as a symbol of fear, was now one of the government's success stories. It did not happen overnight, nor in a year. Since 2019, the Modi government has had its sights on a Naxal-mukt Bharat. The efforts intensified after the BJP came to power in Chhattisgarh in



2023. The next year, 224 Naxals were killed, as per government data. In 2025, the number rose to around 400. Over 10,000 Naxals have surrendered in the past 10

years. Thickly forested by sal, teak and bamboo, Bastar has always been a difficult terrain for security forces for anti-Naxal operations. Ambushes were hard to detect, and escape routes were difficult to find.

Here's the data:

Over the past two decades, nearly 1,300 security personnel have been killed. Civilians who stood against the rebels or secretly worked as police informers were murdered mercilessly. Between 2001-2024, over 1,800 people were killed by Naxals. For most of this period, venturing out after sunset.

"She Said Dad If Things Don't Work Out...": Twisha Sharma's Parents Break Down

New Delhi.(Agency)

Five months into the marriage, Twisha Sharma had been pleading with her mother that she wanted to leave her husband's home in Bhopal and come back to her maternal home in Noida. By the time her tickets were booked, she was dead. "Galat ho gaya (It went wrong)," Twisha Sharma's father Navnidhi Sharma told NDTV, adding, "she was being tortured continuously".

Twisha Sharma met Samarth Singh on a dating app in 2024. Married a year later, in December 2025. Earlier this month, on May 12, Twisha was found dead at her in-laws' home in Bhopal. She was set to return home on May 15. The father claimed that her 33-year-old daughter was being subjected to various forms of abuse, including physical abuse.

WhatsApp chats between Twisha and her mother have revealed that she felt "trapped" in an unhappy marriage and faced mental torture and dowry harassment by her in-laws. "I deeply regret not having come sooner," Rekha Sharma, Twisha's mother, said, fighting back tears.

"We should have pulled her out of that place. We shouldn't have left her in that house," the father echoed the sentiment. The father blamed the middle-class mentality and the social pressure to conform and try and save the marriage at all costs.

"One of the greatest misfortunes of our tradition is that every middle-class family wants a marriage to succeed. The pressure - the social pressure - is so immense: People say it has only been five months; what could possibly have gone wrong? What was the issue? It is a new marriage - never mind, let's find a solution. Let's focus on the positive side. No one ever entertains the thought that the marriage should simply fall apart," the father said when asked if the family pushed Twisha to make adjustments in the marriage.

Delhi Taxi Unions' 3-Day Strike From Thursday Over Fuel Price Hike

New Delhi.(Agency)

A three-day strike has been announced by commercial vehicle drivers' unions in Delhi from May 21 to 23, demanding a hike in taxi and auto fares as fuel prices continue on an upward trend. The unions have alleged economic exploitation by app-based cab aggregators.

"Due to the continuously increasing prices of CNG, petrol and diesel, middle-class drivers are struggling to support their families. Therefore, in coordination with other organisations of Delhi, the 'Chaalak Shakti Union' has called for a Chakka Jam (strike) and appealed not to operate vehicles on May 21, 22 and 23," said Anuj Kumar Rathore, vice-president of the Chaalak Shakti Union.

The union stated that despite a steep rise in fuel prices, taxi fares in Delhi-NCR remain unchanged since almost 15 years. Increased costs of vehicle maintenance, insurance, fitness certificates, permits and other daily essentials further cut into taxi drivers' earnings. "Taxi fares are still being charged at old rates despite rising inflation, which has severely affected the livelihood of drivers," the letter said.

The letter by the union further stated, "App-based companies like Ola, Uber and Rapido are operating arbitrarily, and drivers in Delhi-NCR are becoming victims of serious economic exploitation."

The union has demanded a meeting with the government to discuss their issues and formulate policies to prevent exploitation of drivers.

The All India Motor Transport Congress on Monday wrote to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. It added, "If the government does not immediately increase taxi fares and issue a notification within one or two weeks, this movement will be intensified into a large-scale protest, for which the Delhi government solely would be responsible." The strike will come at the heels of petrol and diesel prices being hiked by an average of 90 paise per litre. In Delhi, petrol prices rose by 87 paise, climbing from Rs 97.77 to Rs 98.64 per litre, while diesel prices increased by 91 paise, moving from Rs 90.67 to Rs 91.58 per litre.

No decision for 3 years, anti-defection pleas against 2 MPs lapse, reveals RTI

New Delhi.(Agency)

Disqualification petitions under the anti-defection law remained pending for nearly three years during the previous Lok Sabha and eventually lapsed without any final decision after the House was dissolved, an RTI response accessed by India Today has revealed. The reply from the Lok Sabha Secretariat showed that only one disqualification petition has been received in the ongoing 18th Lok Sabha so far. The plea, filed in March 2026 by JD(U) MP Dileshwar Kamait against MP Giridhari Yadav, is currently pending before Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

The RTI response also shed light on how anti-defection proceedings in

the previous Lok Sabha remained unresolved for years before becoming infructuous upon dissolution of the House. According to the Secretariat, a



disqualification petition against Trinamool Congress MP Sisir Kumar Adhikari was filed in May 2021 by TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay. Sisir Kumar

Adhikari is the father of BJP leader and current West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari.

Another petition was filed in July 2021 against YSRCP MP K Raghu Rama Krishna Raju by YSRCP Chief Whip Margani Bharat.

Both petitions were referred to the Committee of Privileges in January 2022 for preliminary inquiry. However, no report was submitted by the committee and no final decision was taken by the Speaker before the 17th Lok Sabha was dissolved on June 5, 2024. The Lok Sabha Secretariat clarified in its response that both petitions effectively lapsed after dissolution of the House.

It's judges vs lawyers after Delhi HC move, judicial officers' association weighs in

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi Judicial Service Association (DJSA) has condemned the recording and circulation of a video showing a heated exchange between a district judge and a lawyer at Rohini Courts, calling it a serious threat to judicial independence and institutional dignity. In a statement issued, the association said the courtroom proceedings were recorded and circulated online without authorisation. It termed the act a "direct assault on the dignity, independence and majesty of the judicial institution".

The controversy erupted after a video showing an argument between Rohini Court Bar Association president and district judge Rakesh Kumar went viral on social media. The altercation



reportedly began after the judge denied the lawyer's request for a passover. The Delhi High Court on Sunday transferred the judge to the Delhi Judicial Academy in a "diverted capacity" with immediate effect.

The DJSA expressed solidarity with the judge and the wider judicial fraternity, asserting that judicial independence was "non-negotiable" and must be protected from any form

of pressure or interference.

The association also voiced concern over alleged intimidation and coercion by some lawyers towards judicial officers. It said such conduct undermines the rule of law and prevents judges from functioning fearlessly and independently.

Calling the conduct of certain lawyers "deeply disturbing" and "completely unacceptable", the association said attempts to browbeat judicial officers damaged public confidence in the justice delivery system.

Meanwhile, district court bar associations across Delhi abstained from work on Monday. The DJSA criticised the strike, saying such actions disrupted court functioning and adversely affected litigants.

Delhi HC grants interim bail to Engineer Rashid for father's funeral

The bench permitted Rashid to visit the burial ground and places of worship, but restrained him from travelling anywhere beyond his residences in Srinagar and Langate.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Monday granted interim bail till June 2 to Baramulla MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid, who is lodged in jail in a terror-funding case, following the death of his father.

A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Madhu Jain allowed the interim relief subject to strict conditions, directing that Rashid be accompanied at all times by at least two police personnel in plainclothes during the period of bail.

The court said the police officials would remain with Rashid from the start of his journey from Tihar Jail until his return from Srinagar. The bench further permitted Rashid to visit the burial ground and places of worship, but



restrained him from travelling anywhere beyond his residences in Srinagar and Langate.

Rashid sought interim bail on the grounds that his father, who was undergoing treatment at AIIMS, passed away on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday. Rashid's counsel, advocate Vikhyat Oberoi, said interim bail was needed to conduct the burial, carry out the customary rites and perform various other ceremonies. "Accordingly, due to the demise of the appellant's father, interim bail is granted to the appellant until 2nd June, 2026," the court ordered.

"Immediately, upon expiry of the bail period, the appellant shall surrender before the concerned Jail Superintendent and shall be brought back to Tihar Jail, Delhi," it added.

The court further ordered that any meeting between Rashid and persons other than his immediate family members shall take place only in the presence of the police officials and that he could use only one mobile number, which would be given to the investigating officer and kept "switched on" at all times.

Supreme Court says order to remove street dogs stands, flags biting incidents

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to modify its November 2025 order directing the removal of stray dogs from public institutions and spaces such as hospitals, schools, colleges, bus stations and railway stations, saying it could not remain "blind to harsh realities". Defending its earlier direction, the top court observed that incidents involving stray dog attacks had become a serious public safety concern, particularly for children and senior citizens. The bench noted that young children had been mauled, elderly people attacked, and even foreign tourists affected in several incidents reported across the country.

In its landmark November 7, 2025 order, the Supreme Court directed local authorities to remove stray dogs from institutional areas such as schools, hospitals, educational campuses, sports

complexes, railway stations and bus stands. The court also warned against releasing the dogs back into these areas after vaccinating and sterilising them, directing instead that they be relocated to designated shelters.

With regard to the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, the court suspended the "Capture-Sterilise-Vaccinate-Release" (CSV) model for high-footfall areas such as schools, hospitals and transit hubs, among others.

PLEAS TO MODIFY 2025 ORDER DISMISSED

On Tuesday, the court dismissed a batch of applications seeking modification of its earlier order, reiterating its direction that stray dogs taken from public places cannot be released back and must be confined to shelters. The bench also remarked that a

"Darwinian principle of survival of the fittest" appeared to be operating on the ground, with vulnerable sections of society left to fend for themselves in the absence of effective state action.



It stressed that children and the elderly could not be left to deal with such threats alone and said governments were duty-bound to ensure the protection of life

and public safety. The bench refused to recall or dilute its earlier order on shifting stray dogs from public places to shelters.

STATE CAN'T REMAIN A PUBLIC SPECTATOR: SC

Most importantly, the Supreme Court also pointed out that the right to life and liberty under Article 21 encompasses "the right of every citizen to move freely and access public spaces without living under a constant apprehension of physical attack or exposure to life-threatening events such as dog bites in public areas." "The state cannot remain a passive spectator where preventable threats to human life continue to proliferate in the face of statutory mechanism specifically designed.

Standard Chartered plans 7,000 job cuts amid AI push and higher profit targets

New Delhi..(Agency)

Standard Chartered plans to cut more than 7,000 jobs globally by 2030 as the bank looks to improve profits, increase automation and expand its wealth management business. The London-headquartered bank announced the move on Tuesday as part of a new long-term strategy shared with investors.

Standard Chartered said it now expects to deliver a return on tangible equity (ROTE) of more than 15% by 2028 and around 18% by 2030. The figure is more than three percentage points higher than the level expected in 2025. The bank said the job cuts would mainly come from corporate and support functions, often referred to as back-office roles.

As of June 2025, Standard Chartered had around 51,000 employees working in support services. The bank said it plans to reduce more than 15% of these corporate function roles by 2030.

This would amount to more than 7,000 job cuts from the bank's global workforce of around 80,000 employees.

AI AND AUTOMATION TO DRIVE JOB CUTS

Standard Chartered CEO Bill Winters said the reduction in jobs would be driven by automation and the growing use of artificial intelligence in banking operations. According to Winters, some employees will be reskilled as the bank changes the way it operates. "It's not cost-cutting. It's replacing in some cases lower-value human capital with the financial capital and the investment capital we're putting in," Winters said during a press conference.

Banks across the world have increasingly started using AI and automation to handle routine tasks, customer support, compliance checks and internal operations. This has raised concerns globally over the future of back-office banking jobs.

BANK FOCUSING ON WEALTH BUSINESS

Standard Chartered said it wants to focus more on higher-margin businesses to improve profits over the coming years. The bank plans to continue expanding its wealth management business, especially among affluent retail customers. It is also focusing on financial institutions within its corporate and investment banking division.

Rupee slips 18 paise to 96.38 against US dollar in early trade

Kolkata .(Agency)

The rupee opened with a negative bias amid a strong dollar and rising US treasury yields and depreciated 18 paise to 96.38 against the US dollar as market sentiments continue to dampen amid simmering tensions between the US and Iran. Forex traders said rupee remains vulnerable to the rise in crude oil prices as also the closure of the Strait of Hormuz hampering its exports and imports to the Gulf countries. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.38 against the US dollar, registering a fall of 18 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the Indian rupee weakened further and closed at a record low of 96.20 against the US dollar. "The market's biggest challenge right now is not just direction — it's confidence.

Until there is visible cooling in global tensions and stability in foreign flows, the rupee may continue trading under pressure with volatility staying elevated," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said. Pabari further added that technically, 94.80-95.10 is expected to act as an important support zone for USDINR. However, with no meaningful signs of easing in global risk factors, the pair now appears to be gradually shifting its focus toward the 97 mark.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 99.10, lower by 0.09 per cent due to simmering Iran tensions. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading down 1.91 per cent at USD 109.96 per barrel in futures trade.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex climbed 366.71 points to 75,706.88 in early trade, while the Nifty advanced 107.45 points to 23,760. Foreign Institutional Investors remained net buyers for the third straight session, purchasing equities worth Rs 2,813.69 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

India exporting only food and essential items to West Asia via Oman, Dubai

New Delhi.(Agency)

India is rerouting its exports to the countries of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) through Oman, Hatta Border, Dubai and Khor Fakkan port, according to the sources from the Ministry of Commerce. Due to the closure of Strait of Hormuz and other disruptions arising from Iran war, the exports to West Asia from India have been severely impacted. The officials confirmed that India is only exporting essential goods which also include perishable food items to the Middle East countries. "Food is being mainly exported through Dubai and other essential items are being sent through Dubai and Hatta Border. Nearly 14-15% of the exports from India to the GCC have been impacted," said an official aware of the matter. India's exports and imports with West Asian region has gone down by more than 28% in April. This is the second month in a row that the trade with West Asia has fallen as the geopolitical crisis has caused severe disruptions in ship movements and surge in freight rates. In one of the recent media briefings, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that the country's merchandise exports to the West Asian region has come down to \$4.16 billion in April this year as against \$5.78 billion in April last year. "Exports of most of the perishable items are being sent through Khor Fakkan port," said another official. As per the recent details shared by the Ministry of Commerce, imports from this region has also gone down by 31.64% to \$10.

As milk, fuel and gold get costlier, here are 7 everyday expenses families may cut

The grocery bill feels heavier. Filling the petrol tank costs more. Even an occasional gold purchase suddenly seems expensive. Across India, rising prices are pinching household budgets, leaving many families asking: What everyday expenses can we cut without making life harder? Let's have a look.

New Delhi..(Agency)

Inflation does not always arrive with a dramatic warning. Sometimes, it quietly slips into everyday life — a pricier litre of milk, a fuel refill that suddenly costs more, a grocery basket that feels heavier on the wallet, or gold jewellery that now seems a little farther out of reach. That is exactly what many Indians are experiencing right now. Over the last few days, several essentials have become more expensive. Milk prices have risen,

petrol and diesel prices have gone up again, CNG has become costlier in several places, and increased import duty on gold and silver has pushed up prices further. The pinch is showing up everywhere, i.e., from the kitchen to the commute. The bigger worry? Salaries have not grown at the same pace. At a time when families are already managing school fees, EMIs, electricity bills and household expenses, even small price increases are beginning to feel uncomfortable. Add to this Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent call for austerity and mindful spending, and many households are quietly asking themselves an important question: What can we cut back on without making life feel difficult? According to Aswini Bajaj, CEO of Leveraged Growth, a niche finance-based consultancy firm, austerity does not necessarily mean giving up comfort. "Austerity at home does not always mean sacrifice. Sometimes, it simply means becoming more intentional," he says. In other words, the



idea is not to stop enjoying life, but to spend more thoughtfully. Here are some everyday expenses families may want to reconsider during financially uncertain times. ORDERING FOOD: IS CONVENIENCE QUIETLY EMPTING YOUR WALLET? After a long day at work, ordering dinner can feel like a small reward. But when takeaways become routine, they can quietly eat into monthly savings. Food delivery apps often come with hidden extras, i.e., delivery fees, platform charges, packaging costs and restaurant

mark-ups. A meal that appears affordable can end up costing far more than

"Home food is healthier, calmer, and usually far more economical," Bajaj points out. For families trying to cut costs, even reducing food deliveries from several times a week to once or twice can free up meaningful savings over time. QUICK COMMERCE: ARE SMALL ORDERS BECOMING BIG EXPENSES?

Forgot onions? Need bread? Running low on shampoo? Ten-minute delivery apps have made shopping incredibly convenient. But convenience, experts say, often comes at a hidden cost. Many households now place several small orders throughout the week instead of planning larger grocery purchases. Individually, the spending may feel insignificant. Together, however, it can quietly inflate the monthly budget.

Bajaj refers to the concept of Economic Order Quantity (EOQ), arguing that planned buying often works out cheaper.

How the West Asia war triggered a global fight for India's oil market

New Delhi.(Agency)

The war in West Asia has triggered a global scramble for India's oil market. Russia wants to keep discounted crude flowing into Indian refineries to protect the revenues funding its wartime economy. Saudi Arabia is trying to recover market share lost to Moscow. The UAE wants to pump more oil and expand aggressively after breaking away from the OPEC+ alliance.

And the United States wants a larger strategic foothold in India's energy basket as it pushes back against Russian influence in Asia. As geopolitical tensions redraw global energy routes and long-term demand growth becomes harder to find, producers are competing for one of the few major markets where oil consumption is still rising rapidly. That market is India.

For years, exporters dictated terms while importers worried about securing supply. Now the equation is beginning to shift. In a world where China's demand growth is slowing, Europe is

transitioning away from fossil fuels and future consumption forecasts are becoming increasingly uncertain, India has emerged as perhaps the most important growth market left in the global oil economy. That is why everybody — from Moscow to Abu



Dhabi to Washington — now wants a bigger piece of India's oil market.

For most of the past two decades, global oil markets revolved around China's industrial rise. But that equation is beginning to change. China's economic slowdown, weakening industrial demand and the rapid rise of electric vehicles have made future consumption

growth far less predictable. Europe, meanwhile, is accelerating its transition away from fossil fuels. Even in the United States, long-term oil demand forecasts are becoming more cautious.

Oil producers are now confronting a difficult reality: the era of endlessly rising global demand may be nearing its peak. Which is exactly why India matters so much. India currently consumes nearly 5.8 million barrels of oil a day and imports close to 90% of its crude requirements, according to data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell and the International Energy Agency (IEA). The IEA has projected that India will account for one of the largest shares of global oil demand growth through the next decade, making it one of the few remaining large growth markets for exporters facing slowing demand elsewhere. For producers staring at a more uncertain future elsewhere, India increasingly looks like the last giant growth market standing. And everybody wants in before somebody else captures it first.

8th Pay Commission: The food-cost formula behind salary revision demands

New Delhi..(Agency)

Why are government employee unions suddenly talking about calories, milk, vegetables and food baskets while negotiating salaries under the 8th Pay Commission? Because the next salary revision for lakhs of central government employees may partly depend on how much food a family is expected to consume every month.

At the centre of the debate is a little-known figure: 3490 calories. Employee unions have argued before the 8th Pay Commission that this updated nutrition benchmark should now become one of the foundations for calculating minimum salaries, saying older formulas no longer reflect present-day living costs. The issue has emerged as one of the most detailed and closely watched aspects of the ongoing 8th Pay Commission consultations, where employee bodies are trying to show that rising food prices and household



expenses have fundamentally changed how government salaries should be calculated.

HOW FOOD COST IS LINKED TO 8TH PAY COMMISSION SALARY CALCULATIONS

Every Pay Commission first tries to estimate the minimum amount of money required for a government employee's family to maintain a basic standard of living. To calculate this, expenses related to food, housing, healthcare, fuel, clothing, education and transportation are taken into

account. Food expenditure becomes one of the most important parts of the calculation because it forms the base of the minimum wage formula.

The underlying logic used by Pay Commissions is simple: if the cost of maintaining proper nutrition rises, the salary needed to maintain that standard of living must also rise. This is why employee unions are now pushing the 8th Pay Commission to use updated nutritional standards and current food prices while calculating minimum salaries.

WHY 3490 CALORIES HAS BECOME KEY NUMBER IN 8TH PAY COMMISSION TALKS

The Staff Side of the National Council-Joint Consultative Machinery (NC-JCM), in its memorandum submitted to the 8th Pay Commission, argued that earlier salary calculations were based on outdated nutritional assumptions of around 2700 calories.

Before you file your ITR this year, don't miss these details in AIS and Form 26AS

Are you about to file your income tax return without checking AIS and Form 26AS? Before you hit submit, it may be worth taking a closer look, as even small mismatches in income or tax details can create problems later.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Filing your income tax return may seem like a routine task, especially for salaried employees who rely on salary slips and Form 16. But experts say there is one mistake taxpayers should avoid this year — submitting returns without checking details in the Annual Information Statement (AIS) and Form 26AS

A small mismatch between your return and the information already available with the Income Tax Department could trigger trouble later, from delayed refunds to tax notices. With the ITR filing season for

assessment year 2026-27 now underway, salaried taxpayers are being advised to double-check these documents carefully before pressing the submit button.

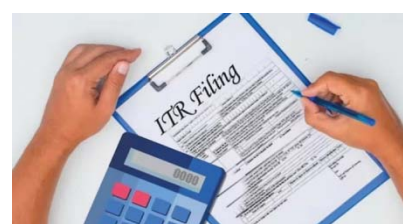
WHY AIS AND FORM 26AS MATTER Many salaried employees assume that Form 16 alone is enough to file income tax returns. While it remains an important document, tax experts say it gives only part of the picture.

AIS and Form 26AS contain details of your income, taxes deducted, investments and financial activities reported to the Income Tax Department by employers, banks, brokers and other institutions. If these details do not match what you mention in your ITR, it may raise red flags. For salaried individuals and non-audit taxpayers for FY 2025-26, the last date to file income tax returns is 31 July 2026, unless the government extends it. Those who miss the deadline can still submit a belated return by 31 December 2026 after paying a late fee.

FORM 130 REPLACES FORM 16

For many salaried taxpayers, Form 16 has long been the go-to document during the

income tax filing season. Issued by employers, it acts as proof that tax deducted at source (TDS) on salary has been deposited with the government. But a key change has come into effect from 1



April 2026. Under the new Income-tax Rules, 2026, Form 16 has been replaced by Form 130. The newly introduced Form 130 is designed to offer a more detailed picture of an employee's income and taxes. It is expected to include employer and employee details, a summary of salary and tax deducted, along with a detailed breakdown of how taxable income has been calculated. Even so, experts advise taxpayers not to rely only on employer-issued records. Cross-checking details

with AIS and Form 26AS remains important to avoid errors or mismatches while filing returns.

WHAT EXACTLY IS AIS?

The Annual Information Statement, or AIS, is a detailed record of your financial information available on the income tax portal. It provides a wider picture than Form 26AS and includes information reported by different institutions. For salaried taxpayers, AIS can include salary details, pension income, bank interest, dividend income, capital market transactions, rental income, foreign remittances and tax refunds. It may also show high-value financial transactions, tax payments made through challans, GST-related details and specified financial transactions reported by banks, brokers and registrars. One important feature of AIS is that taxpayers can flag errors. If there are duplicate entries, wrong figures or incorrect information, feedback can be submitted through the income tax portal. After verification, the corrected details are reflected in the Taxpayer Information Summary (TIS).

Short news

Avian flu: Eight human samples from Maharashtra's Nandurbar to be sent to NIV

Mumbai.(Agency)

Eight poultry workers in Maharashtra's bird flu-hit Nandurbar district will have their samples sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune for avian influenza testing, a health official said on Monday. The workers, who had either come into contact with poultry birds or participated in culling operations, have not shown any symptoms of human avian flu so far.



However, authorities are administering preventive medication as a precaution. Nandurbar district in northwestern Maharashtra has been affected by an avian flu outbreak.

"Samples of eight persons have been taken because they were in contact with the birds or were involved in the culling process. They have not shown any symptoms of human avian flu. The samples, including nasal swabs, will be sent to NIV, Pune, on Tuesday," district health officer Ravindra Sonawane said.

The workers were being given Tamiflu tablets as a precautionary measure, he informed. No government employee was among those being tested, the official added.

Papa, save me: Gwalior woman dies 20 minutes after call, family alleges dowry death

Gwalior.(Agency)

A newlywed woman died under suspicious circumstances at her home in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior, barely a year after her marriage, with her family alleging dowry harassment and murder. The woman's in-laws, however, claimed she died by suicide.

The deceased, identified as Palak Rajak, had reportedly called her father around 20 minutes before her death, pleading to be taken away from her in-laws' house. Family members alleged she had been subjected to continuous mental and physical harassment over dowry demands.

According to police and family members, Palak was married to Amit Rajak, an outsourced employee with the Air Force, on April 14, 2025. Her family alleged that despite giving gold, silver, a motorcycle and other items during the wedding, the husband, mother-in-law and brother-in-law continued demanding a car and a gold chain. They also claimed that fixed deposit receipts given during the marriage were encashed by the in-laws. Palak's relatives alleged she was repeatedly harassed after marriage, isolated inside the house and even denied food.

According to her father, Palak called him on the night of May 12 and said nobody in the house spoke to her and that she had not eaten properly for three days.

"Papa, take me away from here. They keep demanding a car and a gold chain. They are harassing me continuously. These people will kill me," she allegedly told her father over the phone.

22-year-old beaten to death in Amritsar, CCTV shows body hauled away on scooty

Amritsar.(Agency)

A 22-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death in Punjab's Amritsar, with CCTV footage of the incident surfacing online and triggering fear among local residents. The killing took place late night on May 14, in a residential area of the city, where residents alleged that a violent clash involving dozens of youngsters created an atmosphere of fear.

The deceased, identified as Kunal, was the only son of his family and worked at a salon. CCTV visuals purportedly show several young men assaulting and dragging him on the street on a scooty before fleeing the scene.

According to his father, Pawan Kumar, Kunal had left home around 9.30 pm to buy momos from a nearby shop. The family last spoke to him around 10.30 pm, when he reportedly said he would return within five to seven minutes. However, he never came back home.

The family searched for him through the night and alerted the police after failing to trace him. The next morning, police contacted them regarding an unidentified body recovered from the area. Upon reaching the spot, the family identified the deceased as Kunal.

Pawan Kumar said the family was still unaware of the exact reason behind the murder. However, police sources said preliminary investigation suggested tensions had been brewing for several days between Kunal and another group over a dispute allegedly linked to a photoshoot and social media activity.

Lucknow Metro's East-West corridor: MoU gets UP Cabinet nod, a look at the project

Lucknow.(Agency)

The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Monday approved a series of proposals, including execution of a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the Lucknow Metro's Phase-1B project, setting up Sardar Patel Apex University in Mirzapur, and a Rs 855-crore 1,010-bed multi-specialty emergency centre at the Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences in the state capital.

The Metro project

The proposed East-West corridor is aimed at expanding Lucknow's urban transport network and improving connectivity across the city. Planned under Phase 1B of the Lucknow Metro project, it will run from Charbagh to Vasant Kunj. The 11.165-kilometre corridor will include 7 underground and 5 elevated stations and will improve connectivity through densely populated areas of old Lucknow. The corridor will also integrate with the existing North-South Corridor at Charbagh, enabling smooth



interchange for commuters.

The tripartite MoU was between the Centre, state government and the Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited (UPMRC). Finance Minister Suresh Khanna said the project cost has already been approved at Rs 5,801.05 crore, with the Centre and the state government sharing the cost in a 50:50 ratio.

The detailed project report (DPR) for the project had received the Cabinet nod in March 2024, while the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs approved the project cost in September 2025. Following this, the

Centre required a formal tripartite agreement with the state government and UPMRC for implementation of the project.

Upgrades for Ram Manohar Lohia hospital

The Cabinet okayed the construction of a 1,010-bed multi-specialty emergency centre, a new OPD block and a teaching block on the new campus of the Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences.

According to government officials, the upcoming emergency centre will be equipped with advanced medical facilities and specialised treatment infrastructure aimed at handling critically ill patients and emergency cases from across the state. The new OPD block will be developed to deal with the increasing patient load and improve healthcare services. The teaching block with a capacity of 200 seats will be established to strengthen medical education and provide students with advanced.

Severe heatwave scorches Telangana, mercury crosses 45°C

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

Five districts in Telangana recorded severe heatwave conditions on Monday, with temperatures crossing 45°C, even as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast light to moderate rainfall in parts of the state over the next three days.

The highest temperature was recorded at Kotgiri in Nizamabad district at 45.6°C, followed by Bhichkunda in Kamareddy district at 45.5°C, Pochara in Adilabad district at 45.4°C, Narsapur in Nirmal district at 45.2°C and Mallapur in Jagtial district at 45°C.

The IMD said heatwave conditions are likely to continue in some northern districts for the next two days. It also forecast isolated light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph over the next three days.

Meteorological officials said the southwest monsoon advanced further on Monday into parts of the southeast Arabian Sea, Comorin



region, southwest and southeast Bay of Bengal, most parts of the Andaman Sea, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and some parts of the central Bay of Bengal.

Conditions remain favourable for further advancement into more parts of the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal over the next three to four days.

A trough extending from west Madhya Pradesh to south interior Karnataka through Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada and north interior Karnataka has formed at an altitude of 1.5 km above mean sea level. In addition, a cyclonic circulation developed over the south coastal Andhra Pradesh region between 3.1 km and 5.8 km above mean sea level, influencing weather conditions in the region.

Despite the possibility of scattered rainfall, the IMD warned that maximum temperatures in Telangana are likely to rise gradually by another 2-3°C over the next three days, increasing heat stress in several areas.

SC orders halt to tree felling around KBR Park

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed tree felling within the eco-sensitive zone surrounding the Kasu Brahmananda Reddy (KBR) National Park and issued notice on a petition challenging the reduction of the buffer area around the protected urban forest.

A bench of Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan directed that no tree felling should take place within the 25-35 metre eco-sensitive zone around KBR National Park until further orders. The interim direction came while hearing a special leave petition filed by environmental activist Kaajal Maheshwari against a Telangana High Court order declining interim relief.

The petition challenges the reduction of the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around the park to a width ranging from 3 metres to 29.8 metres, arguing that such a narrow buffer defeats the purpose of an ESZ, which is meant to function as an ecological "shock absorber" for protected areas. KBR National Park, notified under

Section 35 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, is regarded as one of Hyderabad's key green lungs and an ecologically sensitive urban forest. The petition stated that the original proposal between 2012 and 2015 envisaged a 25-35-metre eco-



sensitive buffer around the park, including the green belt developed by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA).

However, the plea alleged that the proposal was diluted over time at the instance of the state government to accommodate infrastructure projects, particularly those under the Strategic

Road Development Plan (SRDP). The final notification issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) on October 27, 2020, fixed the ESZ at varying widths ranging from 3 metres to 29.8 metres along the park boundary.

The petitioner contended that the reduction was arbitrary, irrational and contrary to the purpose of eco-sensitive zones, alleging that it lacked scientific ecological assessment and was instead guided by infrastructure considerations, including avoiding land acquisition costs.

Activists welcome top court's interim relief; matter adjourned to July 27

The special leave petition also challenged an interim order passed by the Telangana High Court on March 31, 2026, in a pending public interest litigation. According to the plea, the high court was informed that unregulated construction activity was continuing in and around KBR National Park and that urgent intervention was required to prevent irreversible ecological damage.

UP civic body chief seen offering Rs 1 crore bounty for TMC MP, calls clip fake

Bulandshahar.(Agency)

A purported video of a BJP municipal chairman from Sikandrabad in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district is going viral, in which he is allegedly seen announcing a reward of Rs 1 crore for beheading Trinamool Congress MP Saayoni Ghosh. However, in a statement issued later, the civic body chief, Pradeep Dixit, claimed the video had been manipulated to malign his image. In the viral video, the Sikandrabad Nagar Palika chairman is allegedly seen announcing a reward of Rs 1 crore during a protest organised by Hindu groups for anyone who beheads Trinamool Congress MP Saayoni Ghosh. Hindu organisations alleged that Saayoni Ghosh had shared an objectionable social media post related to Lord Shiva and the Shivling, hurting the sentiments of the Hindu community.

A protest over the issue was organised in Sikandrabad on Sunday, attended by several people.

During the protest, a video was recorded in which Pradeep Dixit was allegedly heard saying, "Whoever brings Saayoni Ghosh's severed head will be given a cash reward of Rs 1 crore from my side." The video and related social media posts have since gone viral.

When contacted over the viral video, Pradeep Dixit denied making any such statement. He claimed the footage was from a procession held on Sunday and alleged that miscreants had tampered with the video using AI technology to spread it online.

A 'forgotten' steel trunk, grisly discovery: Inside the Lucknow train murder mystery

Lucknow.(Agency)

In a chilling discovery, railway staff at Gomtinagar station in Lucknow have found a woman's headless torso and limbs in a sleeper coach on a train that arrived at the station after originating at Chhapra in Bihar. The body parts, police have said, appear to be of a woman in the 25-30 year age group. Police have registered a case and are trying to identify her.

The shocking discovery was made on the Chhapra-Gomti Nagar Express that travels from Bihar to Lucknow via Gorakhpur. Once passengers had deboarded the train, the railway staff started a routine check of the compartments. They found a trunk and a bag near a washroom in one of the sleeper coaches. Railways SP Rohit Mishra said,

"The railway staff informed the stationmaster, and the railway police were also alerted. We reached the spot. When the box and the bag were opened, a woman's headless torso was found. It had been packed in a polythene bag and put into the box."

"In the bag, we found the arms and legs of the woman, also packed in polythene. The woman's age is estimated to be between 25 and 30 years. We have not been able to identify her yet because the head is missing. An FIR has been registered, and we are trying to get to the bottom of this," he said. Police said clothes were recovered from the trunk and the bag, but they have not provided any clues about the woman's identity. "We have formed three teams and



one of them has gone to Bihar to investigate this case," said Mishra.

The body has been sent for autopsy. Police suspect that the woman's body parts were put aboard the train at one of the stations where it halted during its journey to Lucknow. The train takes nearly 12 hours

23-year-old stabbed to death on Surat road, search on for 3 accused: Police

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

A 23-YEAR-OLD restaurateur, who was also a ward leader in the BJP's Surat city unit, was allegedly stabbed to death in a public place "after an altercation with friends" on Sunday night, police said on Monday. The reason behind the brawl is yet to be ascertained, police said. Police identified the victim as Jay Dalal, who was vice president of the BJP's youth wing in Dindoli ward. His mother, Jayshree Dalal, is a member of the party's Mahila Morcha. She is also the complainant in the case at Udhna police station and the FIR has named three accused: Milan Koli, Pankaj Patel and Kishan Parmar, all residents of the Dindoli area in Surat, who are now facing murder charges under the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita.

Kishan Parmar, the police said, has multiple cases pending against him. He was recently released from PASA (Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act) detention, officers said.

The incident took place in the Udhna area on road number 6, where Dalal was in a group of around five-six youths, of whom the three accused got into an altercation with him, the reason for which is under investigation, police said.

The men then took out knives and allegedly stabbed him repeatedly. After Dalal fell on the ground, the trio fled and the two remaining persons took Jay Dalal to Apple Hospital at Udhna Darwaja, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

The hospital authorities informed the police about the incident, while Dalal's parents were informed by two of his friends who were present at the spot around 12:30 am on Monday. Udhna police inspector R M Thakore told The Indian Express, "Dalal ran a restaurant and hotel business in Dindoli and Vesu area, and he left home around 8:30 pm on Sunday, after he received a call from a friend.

NEWS BOX

Smriti Mandhana keeps India's T20 World Cup preparation plans under wraps

CHENNAI. (Agency)

India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday kept the details of the women's team's T20 World Cup preparations under wraps, saying only that the squad is in good shape ahead of next month's 12-team tournament in England and Wales.

India will open their campaign against Pakistan on June 14, two days after the tournament begins on June 12. Before that, the 15-member squad, which recently trained at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, will leave for England on May 22 for a three-match T20I series against the hosts. Mandhana said the team had no interest in revealing too much about its preparations this close to a World Cup. "The camp has gone well and I would like to keep it at that. I would not like to say any specifics of what we have worked on because we are heading to a World Cup," she said at a press conference organised by feminine care brand Pee Safe. What she did make clear, however, was that the squad had put in the hard yards. "All the girls are looking in good shape, they have been practising really well and a lot of hard work



has gone behind it," she said. "We are prepping for the World Cup and we will leave for a series before it. The preparations have been going well and I hope that we keep working hard, make India proud and bring the cup back home." Mandhana also interacted with school-going children during the event and said such engagements matter because youngsters should know that sport can offer a career path. "The questions they ask at that age, I would not have known what they are asking. They really want to know what we go through, which is extremely nice," she said.

She added that the message she tries to give children is simple: cricket and sport can become a profession, but the process has to be enjoyed. "For me, it's very important to give them a message, firstly, that sports and cricket have a career and you can actually make a career out of it. The other important thing for me, which I try and tell, is to enjoy the process and what they do. I just really want all the kids to enjoy and follow their passion," she added.

RR vs LSG Preview: Can rattled Royals settle down and push for playoffs?



NEW DELHI. (Agency)

"If we keep playing like that, we shouldn't be in contention for the top four," an angry Riyan Parag said after Rajasthan Royals' last match against Delhi Capitals. Multiple mistakes on the field cost the team a crucial game, forcing them into two must-win matches in the race for the playoffs.

Rajasthan Royals will play one of those two games when they take on Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday, May 19, at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur. It is going to be a tricky contest, considering LSG have looked really dangerous since getting knocked out of the tournament. Mitchell Marsh, in particular, has been in riveting form of late is expected to pose a major challenge to Parag's side. The Royals are coming into the game on the back of three consecutive losses. They looked visibly rattled after the defeat against Delhi Capitals. The captain lost his cool at the team, and the coach lost his cool at the captain. In cricket, players often talk about professionalism, and it is perhaps time for RR to show that on the field. Their professionalism now lies in forgetting the previous defeat and starting afresh, because the next two games could decide the fate of their season.

RAJASTHAN NEED ALL-ROUND IMPROVEMENT

Rajasthan's dominance in the first half of the season was built around their imperious fast-bowling attack in the powerplay. Jofra Archer steaming in with raw pace put genuine fear into opposition batters. But as the wickets have slowed down in the second half of the season, that fear factor has reduced as well. In his last four matches, Archer has conceded 40 or more runs three times, marking a noticeable shift in mood within the RR camp. Rajasthan will need Archer at his absolute best if they are to get the better of Mitchell Marsh and Josh Inglis on Tuesday. Yashasvi Jaiswal's form is another major concern. He has scored just one fifty in his last nine games and will need to pull up his socks to provide some cushion for the middle order.

Arsenal on the verge of Premier League title after beating Burnley

The result means second-placed Manchester City must end Bournemouth's 16-game unbeaten run on Tuesday to take the title fight into the final weekend.

LONDON. (Agency)

Arsenal closed in on a first Premier League title in 22 years by seeing out a tense 1-0 win over Burnley on Monday in its penultimate game of the campaign, thanks to Kai Havertz's first-half goal. The result means second-placed Manchester City must end Bournemouth's 16-game unbeaten run on Tuesday to take the title fight into the final weekend. Even so, Arsenal will be crowned champion if it beats Crystal Palace away on Sunday. It would be Arsenal's first league title since 2004, when the "Invincibles" went unbeaten under Arsene Wenger. Current manager Mikel Arteta is two wins away from



delivering the club's greatest ever season as Arsenal also plays Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final on May 30. "It's been an amazing season so far. We've got one big one left here (in the league) and then the Champions League final," Arsenal captain

Martin Odegaard told the Emirates crowd in an on-field interview. "Just a little bit to go now and we're going to give it all. We have to keep going." Fittingly, the goal against already relegated Burnley came from a corner — the source of so many crucial

Arsenal goals this season — as Havertz rose highest to head in a delivery from Bukayo Saka in the 37th. It was only Havertz's second league goal of an injury-ravaged season, but he was given the start up front ahead of Viktor Gyökeres by Arteta. "I had a feeling that he had to start," Arteta said. "The way they set up, I think he could be really difficult to handle. And he's shown that." Havertz was fortunate not to be sent off when he received only a yellow card in the 67th for a lunging studs-up tackle from behind on Lesley Ugochukwu, a decision that was upheld after a VAR review.

While Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya never had a save to make against a toothless Burnley side, the lead never felt completely comfortable as a second goal never came for the host. But Arsenal held on through nearly 10 minutes of added time to take another step toward ending its decades-long title drought. "There is one to go unless something beautiful happens tomorrow night," Arteta said, adding he will be "the biggest ever" Bournemouth fan during the game against Man City.

Harbouring Olympic dreams, Puja Tomar eyes impact beyond UFC octagon for India

New Delhi. (Agency)

"India definitely has a huge pool of talent, and I truly believe we're just at the beginning of something special." As Puja Tomar made this statement, she stands as the current flag bearer for India in the world of MMA. A five-time Wushu national champion with a backstory built on grit, resilience and sacrifice, she created history as the first Indian fighter to secure a win in the UFC. She almost made it 2-0 before a small error in judgment ended in defeat in her second fight for the promotion. When we first caught up with her after that historic moment, the story was all about the journey that took her to the UFC. But now, as she prepares for her third fight in the promotion at UFC Macau on May 29 against Shi Ming, the narrative has shifted towards consolidation, growth and building something bigger beyond the octagon. Speaking to India Today exclusively, Puja said she focusses on growth rather than just results. More than a victory, she wants to show the world how much she is evolving every single time she

steps into the cage.

"For me, it's always about growth, not just the result. Becoming the first Indian fighter to win in the UFC was a proud moment, but every fight teaches you something new. The last one didn't go my way, but it gave me clarity on where I need to improve. Heading



into this third fight, my focus is on delivering a complete performance, being sharper, more composed, and showing how much I've evolved as a fighter. I want to represent my country with pride, inspire others back home, and prove that I belong at this level. A win is important, of course, but

more than that, I want to make a statement about my resilience, mindset and continuous progress," said Puja.

IMPACT BEYOND THE CAGE

Despite the growing interest and the increasing presence of fighters like Puja, India still remains a sleeping giant in MMA. The 32-year-old, who went through the grind in ONE Championship and Matrix Fight Night, believes there is no shortage of talent in the country. Instead, the real challenge lies in the lack of a proper ecosystem.

The challenge isn't the lack of fighters; it's more about the surrounding ecosystem. We still need stronger grassroots development, better access to world-class coaching, more exposure to international competition, and consistent support systems. When it comes to the UFC, it's the highest level of the sport and the competition there is incredibly intense. Fighters are not only skilled but also have years of structured training, international experience, and strong backing from teams and promotions," said Puja.

Ruturaj will be a fine captain: Fleming backs CSK skipper amid tough transition period



New Delhi. (Agency)

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming threw his weight behind skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad despite another disappointing IPL campaign, saying the young captain is still evolving and will eventually become "a fine captain" for the franchise during a difficult transition period after the leadership era of MS Dhoni. CSK's playoff hopes were left hanging by a threat after a five-wicket loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday. The defeat means Chennai must beat Gujarat Titans in their final league game and rely on other results to go their way to stay alive in the tournament. Backing the 29-year-old Gaikwad, Fleming said the opener was handling a difficult transition after taking over from one of the game's greatest leaders. "Ruturaj will be going through that as part of his development. It's a big transition from having one of the best captains at the cricket scene running the franchise for such a long time to a new captain," Fleming said.

"So it's going to take a little bit of time. And he's doing a good job. He has a massive amount of respect within this group of players. And he's learning all the time and putting that into play."

"So going forward, I have no doubt he'll be a fine captain for this franchise," he added.

Gaikwad has endured a mixed season with the bat, scoring at an average of 29 with only two half-centuries in 13 matches. CSK, too, have struggled for consistency despite overhauling their squad following a disappointing 2025 season. The franchise parted ways with several established names including Matheesha Pathirana, Rachin Ravindra and Devon Conway, while bringing in younger attacking players such as Dewald Brevis, Ayush Mhatre and Urvil Patel. CSK also strengthened their top order by signing Sanju Samson, a move that saw veterans Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran leave the side. Fleming admitted the large-scale changes disrupted the team's rhythm and left CSK trailing behind other franchises at the start of the season.

MS Dhoni might not have played in IPL 2026, but he's still important for CSK: Fleming

Kolkata. (Agency)

MS Dhoni may not have faced a single ball or donned the wicketkeeping gloves in Indian Premier League 2026, but his influence from the dugout remained the bedrock of Chennai Super Kings' transitional season.

Following CSK's final home game at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Monday, head coach Stephen Fleming mounted a strong defence of Dhoni's non-playing role. Despite intense speculation and fan disappointment over the 44-year-old missing his final potential home fixture, Fleming emphasised that the former captain's off-field presence was vital for a squad in flux. "MS has been around a lot this year, which has been really important for the team, for a lot of the young players, and for continuity," Fleming said during the post-match press conference. "So, he's been a big part of it. He hasn't played, but he's still had a big influence on the team."

Addressing the inevitable scrutiny over Dhoni occupying a squad spot without

taking the field, Fleming conceded that professional sport offers no hiding place.

"There are a lot of good things we've done. We've introduced some new players who will hopefully be generation players for



CSK. But I know we're judged on results, and that's fair. So, yep, that's a management call, not mine." When pressed on whether Dhoni was ever in contention to play this season, Fleming clarified: "No, he was

working through this one. There's been a lot of change, so this year, at least, he was here the whole time. Last year, he wasn't here at all, so it would be unfair to judge that." THE MISSED CALL IN IPL 2026

While management remains tight-lipped about the future, former CSK stalwart Suresh Raina is already launching a public campaign to lure the talismanic finisher back for the 2027 season. Speaking after Dhoni participated in CSK's traditional lap of honour to thank the Chepauk faithful on Monday night, Raina revealed a candid exchange between the two long-time teammates. "I told him you have given IPL 2026 a missed call. It won't count. You have to come back next year," Raina said.

According to Raina, Dhoni's initial response was cautious, citing the physical toll of elite cricket. "He said, 'Nahi yaar, body thoda waisa hai' (No man, the body is a bit like that). I said we are not believing anything. You have to play next year."

Pep Guardiola to leave Manchester City, ex-Chelsea boss expected to take over

Pep Guardiola is reportedly set to leave Manchester City, ending a trophy-laden era at the Etihad, with former assistant Enzo Maresca emerging as the leading candidate to replace him.

Dharamsala. (Agency)

Pep Guardiola is reportedly set to leave Manchester City, with the Spaniard expected to announce his departure during the club's final Premier League game of the season against Aston Villa at the Etihad Stadium.

According to The Athletic, Guardiola's current contract runs until 2027 after he signed an extension in November 2024. However,

speculation over his long-term future at the club has continued in recent months, despite the renewal appearing to signal stability. If confirmed, Guardiola's departure would bring an end to one of the most successful managerial eras in English football history. Guardiola joined Manchester City in February 2016, signing an initial three-year deal to replace Manuel Pellegrini ahead of the 2016-17 season. While his debut campaign ended without silverware, the first trophyless season of his managerial career, it proved to be an exception rather than the norm. Under Guardiola, City redefined domestic dominance. The club became the first side in Premier League history to reach the 100-point mark during the 2017-18 campaign, finishing with a record-breaking 106 goals. His side continued to break milestones in the years that followed. In the 2022-23 season, Manchester City became only the second English club after Manchester United's



1998-99 side to complete the historic Treble, winning the Premier League, FA Cup and UEFA Champions League in the same campaign. City then added another remarkable achievement by becoming the first team in English top-flight history to win four consecutive league titles, securing that feat in the 2023-24 season. The reported exit also comes amid uncertainty surrounding the

Premier League's investigation into more than 115 alleged breaches of financial regulations by Manchester City. The club has strongly denied any wrongdoing, with the case still unresolved.

Maresca emerges as frontrunner

Former Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca has reportedly emerged as the leading candidate to succeed Guardiola. Maresca, who left Chelsea four months ago, is no stranger to the Etihad setup. The Italian managed Manchester City's Under-21 side during the 2020-21 season before returning in 2022 as part of Guardiola's first-team coaching staff. His understanding of City's footballing structure, along with his familiarity with Guardiola's tactical methods, makes him a natural contender for the role. Should the reports prove accurate, Manchester City may be preparing for a major transition, marking the end of a transformative chapter under one of football's most influential managers.

Tridha Choudhury

Says Newcomers No Longer Sign Contracts Blindly Out Of Excitement

Actress Tridha Choudhury opened up about the practise in the industry of newcomers signing contracts without fully comprehending the long-term implications it might have on their career. During an exclusive conversation with IANS, Tridhi said that it does not happen in the industry as much as it used to. The 'Aashram' actress was asked, "Do you think newcomers often sign contracts out of excitement without understanding the long-term impact on their careers?" Sharing her viewpoint on the subject, Tridha said, "I do not think that happens as much



anymore. I have personally experienced situations where I worked with big production houses and compromised on my fees or gave extra time simply out of respect for their experience and stature." Tridha said that while it can be a form of exploitation for the newcomers, the banners also put in a lot of effort and money to support and promote the actor. "You could even call it borderline exploitation at times, but the positive side is that they also market, support, and promote you in return," she added.

On the professional front, Tridha was recently seen in Sanjay Dutt-fronted "Aakhri Sawal".

During the interaction, she revealed what made her say yes to the drama. She shared that "Aakhri Sawal" is deeply rooted in patriotism. Tridha explained, "I genuinely feel every Indian citizen should watch it because Aakhri Sawal is a content-driven project. The film touches upon several historical events, whether it is the demolition of Babri Masjid or the period of the Emergency. The story revolves around a student-mentor dynamic. The mentor is played by Sanjay Dutt, while the student is portrayed by Namoshi Chakraborty. I also play a student in the same institution. Through the debates between the mentor and students, the film explores many important social and historical issues." As a citizen of this country, I felt emotionally connected to the subject. Being a patriot myself, I believed this film was meant for me", she concluded.



Jawan Director Atlee And Priya Atlee Name Their Baby Girl Miyou, Couple Shares Cute Announcement



Filmmaker Atlee and his wife Priya Atlee have finally revealed the name of their baby girl with a sweet Instagram post. The couple, who were blessed with a baby girl last month, finally took to social media and announced that they have named their little princess "Miyou." The couple shared a soft pastel visual featuring the baby's tiny hand. The image also carried the text, "A tiny person with the biggest place in our hearts." Sharing the post, the couple wrote, "Our art of love now has a name MIYOU, beauty, gentleness & love. With luv, MEER, PRIYA & ATLEE." The post highlighted the meaning behind the name, describing Miyou as symbolising beauty, gentleness and love.

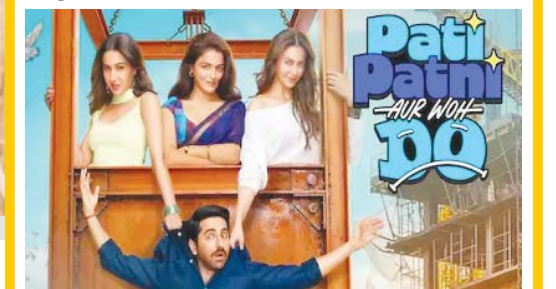
Soon after the reveal, fans and members of the film industry flooded social media with congratulatory wishes for the family. The post quickly gained attention online, with many appreciating the emotional yet minimal style of the announcement. "Many many congratulations for your little princess Miyou," one wrote. Another user commented, "Love Blessings & Abundance to lil Miyou"

About Atlee and his wife Priya Atlee

In January 2026, the couple took to Instagram to reveal that they were expecting a second baby, and the announcement was filled with love, family and plenty of furry friends. In a beautifully styled announcement post, Priya shared a series of photos that radiated their joy. Later, in April 2026, Atlee and Priya dropped another announcement post. It read, "YAY! I'VE GOT A BABY SISTER!" The couple had first announced Priya's pregnancy in December 2022, eight years after their marriage, and welcomed their son Meer on January 31, 2023.

Atlee married Priya in 2014 after dating for several years. Their wedding was an intimate ceremony attended by close friends and family from the film industry. Since then, Priya has remained closely involved in Atlee's journey, supporting his work and standing by him as he rose to become one of the most successful directors in South cinema.

Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Box Office Day 2: Ayushmann Khurrana's Comedy Inches Closer To Double Digits



Weekend releases usually come with big expectations, packed theatres and loud social media buzz. But sometimes, even a film with a popular cast and catchy songs needs a little more time to truly click with audiences. That currently seems to be the situation for Pati Patni Aur Woh Do, which is still trying to find its footing at the box office. Starring Ayushmann Khurrana alongside Sara Ali Khan, Rakul Preet Singh and Wamiqa Gabbi, the comedy entertainer witnessed a slight jump in collections on Saturday after a modest opening day. However, the film still could not enter the Rs 10 crore club within its first two days in theatres.

Here's a quick look at the box office report card so far: Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Box Office Collection Day 1 — Rs 4 Crore

Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Box Office Collection Day 2 — Rs 5.7 Crore Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Total Box Office Collection — Rs 9.75 Crore While the second-day numbers showed some improvement thanks to weekend footfalls, the film now depends heavily on Sunday collections to build momentum. Trade observers believe the real test will begin from Monday, when weekday drops often decide how long a film can survive in theatres.

The comedy drama also faces strong competition at the box office from several releases currently playing in cinemas.

Among them is Karuppu starring Suriya and Trisha Krishnan. Other releases in theatres this week include Raja Shivaji featuring Riteish Deshmukh, mythological drama Krishnavataram Part 1: The Heart, Hollywood release Michael and Bhooth Bangla starring Akshay Kumar.

Directed by Mudassar Aziz, Pati Patni Aur Woh Do is described as a spiritual sequel to the 2019 hit Pati Patni Aur Woh, which featured Kartik Aaryan, Bhumi Pednekar and Ananya Panday in lead roles. Despite online chatter around the storyline, the makers have maintained that the film does not promote infidelity. The supporting cast also includes Vijay Raaz, Tigrahanu Dhulia, Ayesha Raza and Vishal Vashishtha.

RJ Mahvash

REVEALS Why She Unfollowed Yuzvendra Chahal; Says, 'Friends With Whom You Have...'

After months of speculation, RJ Mahvash has finally opened up about why she unfollowed Yuzvendra Chahal on Instagram. She said that friends can have arguments, and that is also the case with her and the cricketer. However, she said that since they shared many memorable moments, she is not bitter about their fallout and will always wish him well. RJ Mahvash told Pinkvilla, "People tend to make a big deal out of small things. It's really not such a huge issue. Friends have arguments, they unfollow each other, what's so big about that? And the friends with whom you've laughed over the silliest things should never be held onto with bitterness. I will always wish him well."

The news of Chahal and Mahvash unfollowing each other was shared in January this year. It was first shared by paparazzo handle Varinder Chawla, who claimed that the two had previously followed each other on the social media platform but had severed their online connection.

All about Chahal and Mahvash

For the unversed, Chahal and Mahvash's relationship had always been a subject of speculation, particularly after the cricketer's divorce from Dhanashree Verma in 2025. Rumours had been circulating about a possible romance between Chahal and Mahvash, with many suspecting that they might be more than just friends. The two were often spotted together, which only intensified the buzz. However, Yuzvendra and Mahvash have always maintained that they are just good friends. Previously, Chahal appeared on Raj Shamani's podcast, where he addressed the dating.



NEWS BOX

Under Trump pressure, EU eyes deal to end trade standoff

STRASBOURG. (Agency)

The EU hopes Tuesday to strike a deal towards implementing its nearly year-old trade pact with the United States -- with an increasingly impatient Donald Trump threatening steep new tariffs unless it is done by July 4. The 27-nation bloc struck an accord with Washington last July setting levies on most European goods at 15 percent, but to the US president's frustration a final version of the text still needs nailing down on the EU side.

"A deal is a deal," the US mission to the EU posted on X Monday, saying the bloc "must live up" to the agreement sealed in Tumberry, Scotland, between Trump and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen.

Negotiators from the EU's parliament and capitals will meet Tuesday night in Strasbourg to push for a compromise that would allow the bloc to meet Trump's deadline and hopefully turn the page on more than a year of transatlantic trade battles.

Short of that, Trump has warned the EU should expect "much higher" tariffs -- and has already vowed to raise duties on European cars and trucks from 15 to 25 percent. The tariff blitz unleashed by Trump before the Tumberry accord, including hefty levies on steel, aluminium and car parts, jolted the bloc into cultivating trade ties around the world.

But the EU cannot afford to neglect the 1.6-trillion-euro (\$1.9-trillion) relationship with the United States, its largest trade partner. Cyprus, which holds the rotating presidency of the EU, said its goal "remains, the swift implementation of the EU-US joint statement". To reach a compromise with member states, parliament is under pressure to renege on several amendments it added to the text in March which the Americans consider unacceptable. The head of parliament's trade committee, Bernd Lange, struck an optimistic note, saying the sides had "already made a lot of progress".

Russia unleashes another aerial barrage on Ukraine as the war's long-range strikes escalate

KYIV. (Agency)

Russia targeted eight regions of Ukraine in its latest nighttime drone and missile barrage, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday, with local authorities reporting that the strikes wounded more than two dozen civilians, including three children. Russian forces fired 524 attack drones and 22 ballistic and cruise missiles, Zelenskyy said. The city of Dnipro and the surrounding central region of Ukraine bore the brunt of the attack, officials said.

The barrage continued a recent spiral of long-range strikes that have grown in scale following a May 9-11 ceasefire that US President Donald Trump said he asked Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin to observe but which had little impact. There is no sign a peace deal is taking shape despite U.S. diplomatic efforts to end Russia's invasion.

Russia hammered Ukraine over several days last week, flattening a Kyiv apartment building where 24 people died. One of Ukraine's largest drone strikes on Russia killed at least four people, including three near Moscow, and wounded a dozen others, authorities said Sunday.

Ukraine develops its own glide bombs

In more than four years of war, Ukraine has built up its own long-range capabilities. It has been hitting oil facilities that represent a vital part of the Russian economy, as well as other targets deep inside Russia, making the Russian public take notice. That has increased the pressure on Putin, whose army is struggling to make progress on the battlefield and who claimed earlier this month, without providing evidence, that the war is approaching its end.

On Sunday, the Russian Defense Ministry said that more than 1,000 Ukrainian drones had been shot down or jammed in the previous 24 hours, with around 80 on their way to Moscow.

Teenage gunmen open fire on San Diego mosque, killing three men; both suspects dead

SAN DIEGO. (Agency)

Two teenage shooters opened fire at a San Diego mosque on Monday and killed three men, then killed themselves a few blocks away, in an attack police are investigating as a hate crime.

There was no specific threat made against the Islamic Center of San Diego but authorities found evidence that the suspects engaged in "generalized hate rhetoric," San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said.

He declined to give more details, but said the "circumstances that led up to this" would come out in the days ahead. Before the attack, officers were already looking for one of the teenagers since his mother called police concerned that her son was suicidal and had run away, Wahl said. There were weapons missing from the home and the mother's vehicle was gone, he added. The search took on even more urgency as police learned that he was dressed in camouflage and with an acquaintance, details that were unexpected for someone about to die by suicide, he said. Police began using whatever technology they could to find the 17- and 18-year-old, including automated license plate readers. The department dispatched authorities to a mall near where the car had been tracked by police, and officers alerted a school where at least one of the suspects had been a student, Wahl said. As officers continued interviewing the mother about places the teens might be, they got reports of a shooting at the mosque. Among those killed was a mosque security guard, who police believe "played a pivotal role" in keeping the attack from being "much worse," Wahl said.

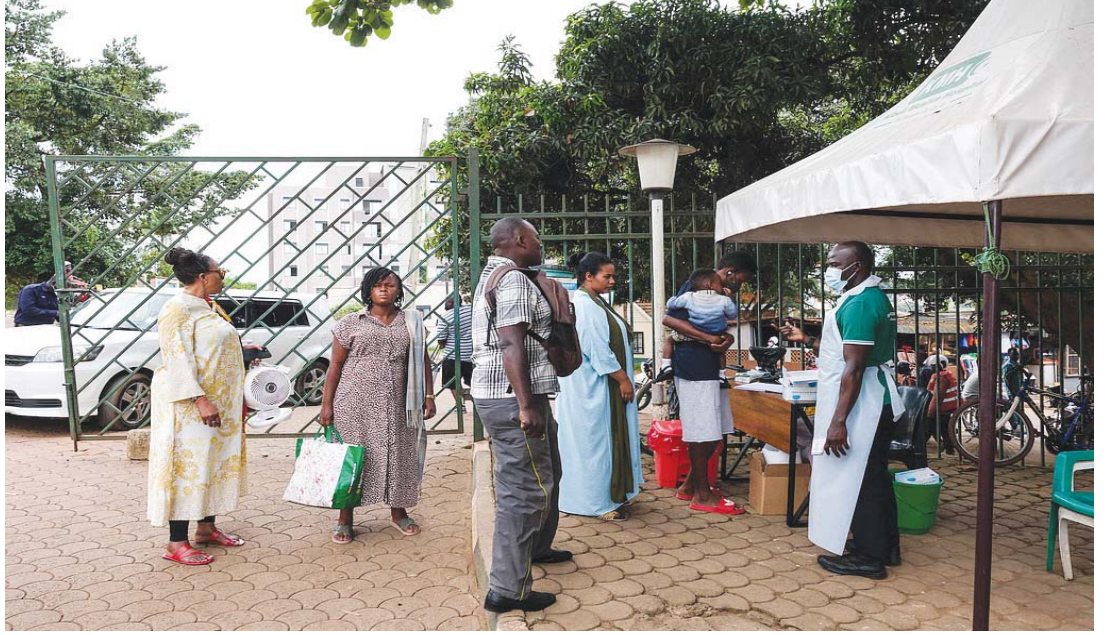
Congo health ministry reports 131 deaths, 513 suspected Ebola cases in eastern Congo

KINSHASA. (Agency)

At least 131 deaths and over 500 suspected cases have been reported in the ongoing Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo, the Congolese health ministry said Tuesday as details emerged about the government's delayed response. Samuel Roger Kamba, the minister of public health, said: "513 suspected cases and 131 deaths have been recorded in the affected areas."

"These are suspected deaths, and investigations are underway to determine which ones are actually linked to the disease." The WHO on Sunday declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern. Health authorities say the current outbreak, first confirmed on Friday, is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, a rare variant of the Ebola disease that has no approved therapeutics or vaccines. Although more than 20 Ebola outbreaks have taken place in Congo and Uganda, this is only the third time that the Bundibugyo virus has been detected.

Cases have now been confirmed in Bunia, North Kivu's rebel-held capital of Goma, Mongbwalu, Butembo, and Nyakunde. The World Health Organization's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said in Geneva on Tuesday that he is "deeply concerned about the scale and speed of the epidemic" and the U.N. health agency will convene its emergency committee Tuesday to advise on recommendations.



Finnish divers will try to recover 2 of the dead Italians from an underwater cave in the Maldives

MALE, Maldives. (Agency)

Three Finnish divers on Tuesday will attempt to recover the bodies of two of the four Italians who died deep inside an underwater cave in an atoll in the Maldives, five days after they were reported missing. The bodies were located on Monday, when searches resumed after being suspended following the death of a local military diver during a perilous mission to try to reach them. The Italian divers went missing on Thursday. Maldives government spokesman Ahmed Shaam said that the three divers will retrieve the bodies, which are lying at a depth of around 60 meters (200 feet), which is up to 30 meters (nearly 100 feet) from where the Maldives coast guard will eventually take over and hand them over to police closer to the surface. The legal depth for recreational diving in the Maldives is 30 meters (nearly 100 feet). The government of the Indian Ocean island nation on Monday said that the bodies were spotted in the innermost part of the cave by three Finnish diving

experts, supported by the Maldives police and the military. "As was previously thought, the four bodies were found inside the cave, not only inside the cave, but well inside the cave into the third segment of the cave, which is the largest part," Shaam said.



He said that the four bodies were found "pretty much together," and that the plan was to recover two bodies on Tuesday and the remaining two on Wednesday. The Divers' Alert Network

Europe, which deployed the three Finnish divers, said on its website that they are technical and cave divers with international experience in search and recovery missions, including operations in "deep overhead environments, confined spaces and high-risk scenarios." The team used advanced technical systems, including closed-circuit rebreathers, a system that recycles exhaled breathing gas and removes carbon dioxide through a chemical scrubber, allowing for "significantly longer dives," the organization said.

The body of a fifth Italian — a diving instructor — was found earlier outside the cave on the day they were reported missing. The five were exploring a cave at a depth of about 50 meters (160 feet) in Vaavu Atoll on Thursday, according to Italy's Foreign Ministry.

Initial teams had already dived to identify and mark the entrance to the cave system where the Italians disappeared.

Iran warns Trump against military action, says US will be forced to 'retreat and surrender'

World. (Agency)

Senior Advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, Mohsen Rezaee, has issued a stern warning to US President Donald Trump over repeated threats of military action, saying that the "iron fist of Iran's armed forces will force the US to retreat and surrender." Reacting to Trump's recent remarks about postponing a planned attack on Iran, Rezaee slammed the US President's approach, describing it as indecisive and driven by a misplaced expectation of forcing Iran into submission. "He sets a deadline for a military strike and then cancels it himself! With this vain hope of making the Iranian nation and officials surrender! The iron fist of the powerful armed forces and the great Iranian nation will force them to retreat and surrender," Rezaee said in a post on X. Trump on Monday said he had temporarily delayed a planned military strike on Iran amid what he described as "very big discussions" with Tehran over the ongoing West Asia crisis.

Speaking to reporters, Trump said Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and several other countries had urged Washington to hold off military action for a few days, citing optimism over diplomatic progress.

"I put it (attack on Iran) off for a little while, hopefully maybe forever, but possibly for a little while because we've had very big discussions with Iran, and we'll see what they amount to. I was asked by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE and some others if we could put it off for two or three days, a short period of time, because they think that they are getting very close to making a deal...It's a very positive development, but we'll see whether or not it amounts to anything," Trump said.

He added that multiple countries were actively engaging with both Washington and Tehran in an effort to de-escalate tensions through diplomacy.

"I was called by these three countries, plus others, and they're dealing directly with our people and right now, Iran. There seems to be a very good chance that they can work something out. If we can do that without bombing the hell out of them, I will be very happy," Trump said. The developments come amid heightened tensions over Iran's nuclear programme, with Washington continuing to weigh diplomatic and military options. While US officials maintain that Trump is pursuing a negotiated settlement, frustration has reportedly grown over Tehran's reluctance to agree to key US demands. Earlier, Trump rejected Iran's latest peace proposal aimed at resolving the West Asia crisis, saying it failed to meet expectations and offered little meaningful progress towards a deal, according to Axios, citing a senior US official and a source familiar with the matter.

Xi hosts Putin in Beijing days after Trump: What to know

BEIJING. (Agency)

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives in Beijing on Tuesday for a summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, looking to deepen a strategic partnership stretching from Scandinavia to Southeast Asia. Underpinning the two nuclear powers' relations is China's economic heft complemented by Russia's vast oil production, likely at the forefront of talks this week. Here's what to know ahead of the meeting:

Firm friends, frequent visits

Putin is a regular visitor to China and has met Xi dozens of times, with the two leaders often calling to extend messages, condolences and congratulations -- including birthday wishes. This week marks his 25th trip to China, Beijing's foreign ministry said Monday. The Russian leader last visited China in September as Xi's

guest of honour to a massive military parade. Putin said this week he was "confident" he and Xi would "do everything possible to deepen the Russia-China partnership." Beijing frames its relationship with Moscow as "ironclad" -- and after welcoming Trump with pomp and ceremony, Xi will be keen to show China-Russia ties remain strong as ever, experts said. It is a "reminder to Washington that this is a solid relationship of 30 years-plus standing," said Natasha Kuhrt of King's College London. That image is a priority for Putin, who calls Xi a "dear friend", added Zhao Long, from the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies.

"Moscow wants reassurance that Russia still occupies a privileged place in China's strategic calculus," he said. Unequal relationship, shared interests. The China-Russia relationship, however, is far from

equal. Bilateral trade has surged since Russia's invasion of Ukraine to more than double the level seen in 2020, according to data from the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS).

More than 70 percent of China's imports from Russia consisted of mineral fuel, it added, with Russian oil exports to China rising around 30 percent since 2022. However, imports from Russia accounted for only around 5 percent of China's imports in 2025, according to Chinese customs data. Conversely, China accounted for more than a third of Russia's imports and more than a quarter of its exports in 2025, according to the Russian news agency TASS. Nevertheless, the two countries, whose border spans 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles), share common opposition to a world order dominated by the United States and the West. They are also long-standing partners of Iran and North Korea.

New Zealand's government plans to cut 14% of public sector jobs to slash spending

Finance Minister Nicola Willis also announced three consecutive years of budget cuts for most public agencies, "significant reduction" in the number of departments, and plans for faster uptake of AI technology.

WELLINGTON. (Agency)

New Zealand's government will lay off nearly 9,000 workers, amounting to 14% of public sector jobs, by mid-2029 as part of a bid to slash billions in spending, Finance Minister Nicola Willis said Tuesday. Willis said her administration would also enact three consecutive years of budget cuts for most public agencies, "significantly

reduce" the number of departments, and demand faster uptake of AI technology across the sector. The cutbacks would save 2.4 billion New Zealand dollars (\$1.4 billion) during that period, the minister told a business audience in New Zealand's biggest city, Auckland. Many public servants live and work in the capital city, Wellington. Their numbers would be cut to 55,000, a drop of 8,700 from December 2025 figures, Willis said.

That would reduce the number of public servants to 1% of New Zealand's population of 5.3 million people, she added, down from 1.2%. "That's unsustainable, it's unaffordable and it's out of step with international trends," she said Tuesday. The military, teachers and doctors would be among those exempt from the job losses, Willis said.

The measures would also reduce the number of government departments and agencies from the current 39 to an unspecified figure. The layoffs won't happen right away, however, and Willis didn't detail a plan for deciding who would lose their

jobs. Her center-right government, which has been in power since 2023 and campaigned then on downsizing the public



sector, faces a fresh election in November. Unions and opposition political parties decried Tuesday's announcement. "There is no way you can reduce that many people working for our public service without reducing front-line services," said Labour Party and opposition leader Chris Hipkins. Duane Leo, spokesperson for the union representing thousands of public servants, said the measures were "an act of willful destruction." The government, led

by the National Party, blames what it says was fiscal recklessness by the previous center-left administration led by Labour for growing public servant numbers, which increased from 48,000 to 63,000 during Labour's time in office. In 2018, Labour had revoked a cap on public sector jobs imposed by the last National government, saying that had prompted ballooning spending on contractors and consultants by agencies avoiding new full-time hires. Most government agencies will have their funding trimmed by 2% in the government's budget at the end of May, Willis said. Cuts of 5% per year would follow for each of the next two years if the government was reelected. The public sector "hasn't been keeping pace" with advances in AI and digital technology and would be required to adopt them, Willis said. The pledge of public sector cutbacks comes as growth in New Zealand's economy remains sluggish and Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, who sold himself as a better fiscal manager than his opponents.