



M for Melody, not mehngai: Congress jabs PM for gifting toffees to Italy's Meloni

New Delhi.(Agency)

►The party targeted PM Modi over the gesture, suggesting he appeared more focused on optics and public relations abroad while people back home were struggling with soaring prices of essential commodities and fuel.

A day after a video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifting a packet of the popular Indian candy Melody to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during his visit to Rome went viral, the Congress on Thursday launched a sharp attack on the Prime Minister, accusing him of being insensitive to the hardships faced by people in India amid rising inflation and the ongoing oil and gas crisis triggered by the Middle East conflict.



handle, the Congress mocked the Prime Minister with the slogan "M for Melody", saying the "M" did not stand for "Mehngai" (inflation), despite the growing burden on ordinary citizens.

"The people of the country are spending their lives in poverty. Modi is distributing 'Melody' in Italy," the Congress captioned the post. The remarks came against the backdrop of concerns over global energy supplies following tensions in the Middle East and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route through which nearly 20 per cent of the world's oil supply

passes. In the video, the party alleged that the country was facing a severe economic crisis while the Prime Minister was busy handing out candies overseas. It accused him of ignoring pressing domestic concerns such as inflation, unemployment and rising living costs. "The nation is grappling with a severe economic crisis.

The chief Opposition party targeted PM Modi over the gesture, saying the Prime Minister appeared more focused on optics and public relations abroad while people back home were struggling with soaring prices of essential commodities and fuel. Sharing a video on its X

US team may visit India next month for BTA talks: Commerce Minister Goyal

New Delhi.(Agency)

A US team is likely to visit India next month for talks on the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA), Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday. Goyal's comments come after the Indian side had visited Washington in April for in-person meetings with US counterparts to finalise details of the interim pact and advance negotiations under the broader BTA. When asked if the US chief negotiator for the BTA will accompany US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Goyal said "he's not coming with him, but there is some plan for them to come next month".

Rubio will undertake a four-day visit to India beginning May 23 to further cooperation in the fields of trade, defence and energy. This will be his first visit to India.

India and the US issued a joint statement on February 7 finalising a framework for an interim trade agreement. However, a US Supreme Court ruling struck down all reciprocal tariffs, which had served as the Trump administration's main instrument for negotiating trade deals with partner countries.

Following that, the US imposed 10 per cent additional duties on all imports under Section 122 of the Trade Act for 150 days from February 24 this year. It also opened two probes under Section 301 of the Act against key exporters for their excess production capacities and labour standards. Under Section 122, tariffs of up to 15 per cent can be imposed for a maximum period of 150 days. However, under Section 301, there is no cap on the duties that can be levied by the US if investigations conclude that measures adopted by trading partners are harming US interests.



Can't curb political criticism: Court on Raghav Chadha's personality rights plea

The Delhi High Court observed that criticism, satire and political cartoons targeting politicians cannot be curbed merely because they may be unpalatable to political leaders.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Thursday declined to grant interim relief to BJP MP Raghav Chadha in his personality rights case, orally observing that criticism, satire and cartoons targeting political figures cannot be curbed merely because they are unpalatable. Hearing Chadha's plea against alleged misuse of his image and persona on social media platforms, Justice Subramonium Prasad remarked that there appeared to be no prima facie case of violation of personality rights, noting that the posts in question related to criticism of decisions taken in the political arena.

Chadha, who was an AAP Rajya Sabha MP, had recently switched to the BJP following differences with the party leadership. Subsequently, he faced intense online criticism over the move.

"There is a thin line between defamation and criticism. The first impression in my mind. Prima facie, there is no personality rights violation. A decision taken by you in the political arena is being criticised," the court noted.



The court underscored that political cartoons and satire have long been part of democratic discourse, referring to legendary cartoonist RK Laxman and his iconic political commentary.

"Undoubtedly, from Independence we are seeing RK Laxman's cartoons. At that point of time probably social media had not gone to that extent today it has," the bench said during the hearing.

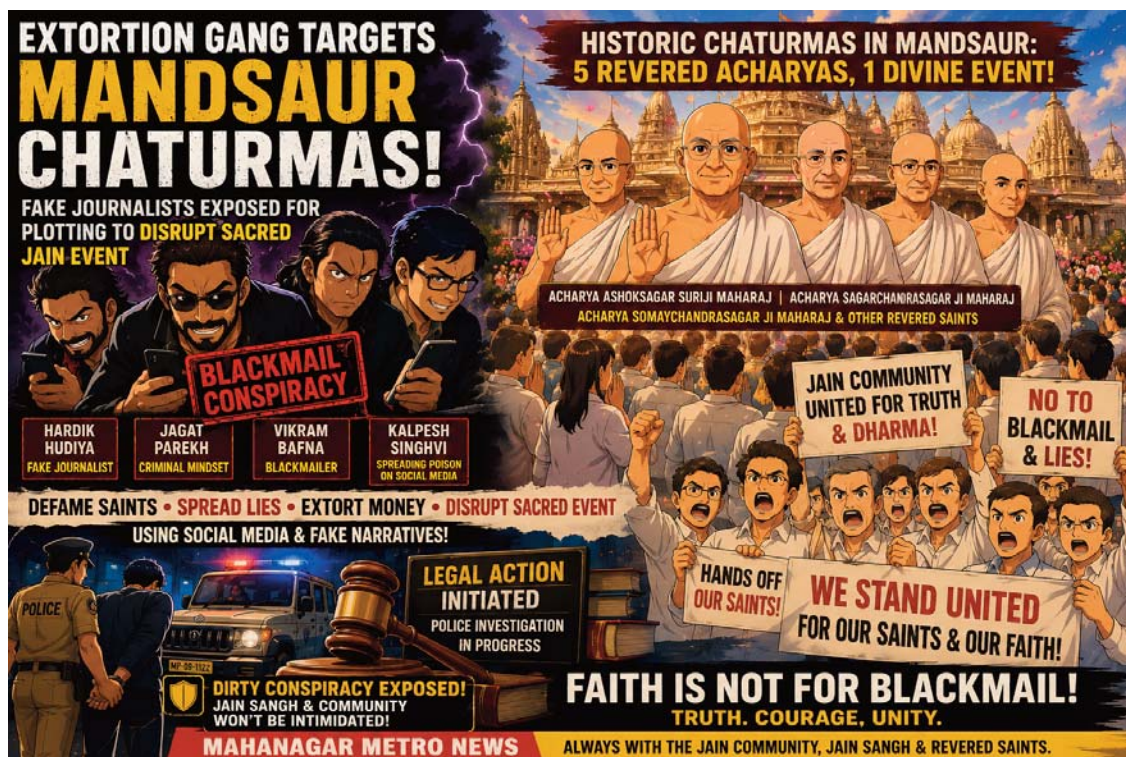
The High Court also indicated that the grievance raised by Chadha may fall more appropriately within the realm of defamation law rather than personality rights. "You can file a defamation case if you want," the court orally told the petitioner's side.

Senior Advocate Rajeev Nayar, appearing for Chadha, argued that the content circulated online falsely portrayed the AAP leader as someone seeking monetary gains and crossed the line of fair criticism. "They are saying I have gone for money.

Extortion Gang Targets Mandsaur Chaturmas Fake Activists Exposed for Attempting to Disrupt Sacred Jain Event

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Makan

Mandsaur. A major controversy has erupted ahead of the grand Jain Chaturmas event scheduled in, where members of the Jain community have alleged that a group of self-proclaimed journalists and social media operators attempted to malign revered Jain saints and disturb the religious atmosphere through misinformation and blackmail tactics. This year's Chaturmas is being described as one of the most historic spiritual gatherings in the region's Jain history. For the first time, five highly respected Jain Acharyas are expected to reside together in Mandsaur during the holy period. Among them are, and, whose arrival has generated immense devotion and enthusiasm among Jain followers across Madhya Pradesh. However, according to allegations raised by members of the Jain community, certain individuals identified as Hardik Hudiya, Jagat Parekh, Vikram Bafna and Kalpesh Singhvi allegedly began circulating provocative and misleading content on social media soon after the Chaturmas announcement. Community members claim the campaign was aimed at creating confusion, damag-



ing the image of Jain saints and mentally harassing the Jain Sangh. Sources associated with the Jain community further allege that attempts were made to pressure organizers by threatening to create controversies around the Chaturmas event. The alleged motive, according to these claims, was to extort money and disrupt the religious gathering. The controversy has now united several Jain organizations across Madhya Pradesh, with community

leaders openly condemning what they describe as an organized attempt to attack faith and disturb a peaceful religious event. The matter has reportedly reached local law enforcement authorities, and police action has allegedly begun against those accused of spreading defamatory and inflammatory material. Members of the Jain Sangh say such individuals are tarnishing the image of society and exploiting religion for personal gains. They have demanded

strict legal action against anyone found involved in blackmail, defamation or attempts to disturb communal harmony during the sacred Chaturmas period. Religious leaders and community representatives have appealed to devotees to remain united and avoid falling prey to misinformation campaigns circulating online. For continuous updates on major social, religious and investigative developments, stay connected with Mahanagar Metro News.

Congress's 59-year exile in Tamil Nadu ends, two MLAs join Vijay Cabinet

Raipur.(Agency)

Ending the exile of 59 years, the Congress party on Thursday joined the Tamil Nadu Cabinet as two of its MLAs - Rajesh Kumar and P Vishwanathan - took oath as ministers in the CM Vijay-led government. The historic moment coincided with the 35th death anniversary of former PM Rajiv Gandhi, who was assassinated in Tamil Nadu's Sriperumbudur in 1991. Earlier, AICC General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal announced that Congress President Mallikarjun



Kumar and Vishwanathan into the Tamil Nadu Cabinet. "I convey my best wishes to them. We are confident that they will deliver on the hopes and aspirations of the

realise the bold vision of welfare and pro-people governance laid down by LoP Rahul Gandhi ji," he said.

From 1952 to 1967, the Congress ruled Tamil Nadu, then known as Madras state, under chief ministers C Rajagopalachari, K Kamaraj and M Bhaktavatsalam. The first provincial election after Independence took place in 1952. However, after the DMK came to power in 1967, the Congress remained out of the Tamil Nadu government despite aligning at different times with both the DMK and the AIADMK.

Between 1967 and 2026, the party never

government. During the 2006-11 DMK regime, the Congress unsuccessfully sought a share in power.

The Congress currently has five MLAs in the Tamil Nadu Assembly after contesting the recently concluded Assembly elections in alliance with the DMK.

However, the Congress walked out of the DMK-led alliance following the election results declared on May 4 and extended support to actor-turned-politician C Joseph Vijay's TVK government. Vijay's TVK fell short of a majority in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly, following which the Congress backed the party in

►Congress MLAs Rajesh Kumar and P Vishwanathan joined Chief Minister Vijay's cabinet on Thursday. Their induction brings the party into the Tamil Nadu government for the first time in 59



News box

Noida dowry death case: Deepika Nagar's mother-in-law among 2 arrested; autopsy reveals multiple grievous injuries

NOIDA.(Agency)

The mother-in-law of Deepika Nagar, an alleged victim of dowry harassment who died at her in-laws' house in Greater Noida's Jalpura village on May 17, was among two persons arrested on Wednesday. So far, police have arrested her husband Ritik and father-in-law Manoj.

While her in-laws claimed the 24-year-old fell from the third-floor terrace following an argument, Deepika's family alleged she was murdered following months of harassment over dowry since their marriage in Dec 2024. Police, however, have not yet filed murder charges.

The FIR, lodged at Ecotech-3 police station under BNS sections 85 (husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty) and 80(2) (dowry death) and Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, sections 3 and 4, names seven persons. On Wednesday, Deepika's mother-in-law Poonam and uncle-in-law Vinod were arrested in the case. Three other accused remain absconding.

The autopsy found multiple grievous external and internal injuries, including a ruptured spleen, brain haematoma, and internal bleeding across several sites. The autopsy also documented a large swelling of approximately 12 cm x 9 cm on the right side of her face, bleeding from the left ear, a massive contusion measuring roughly 38 cm x 14 cm on her right thigh, injuries.

City's first dog shelter to come up at Kadarpur

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city's first dog shelter is set to come up in Kadarpur village, where the MCG has identified 3 acres of land for the project. The facility will be designed to accommodate up to 5,000 stray dogs and is expected to strengthen the city's stray dog management infrastructure alongside 4 new animal birth control (ABC) centres recently established by the civic body.

Officials said the shelter will aid the MCG in complying with recent Supreme Court directions calling for the removal and relocation of stray dogs from public institutions and spaces, including hospitals, schools, colleges and playgrounds.

"We have identified 3 acres of land to establish the city's first dog shelter. We have already sought the preliminary administrative approvals, and the engineering wing is preparing the design and will subsequently float a tender," Dr Ashish Singla, MCG chief medical officer, said.

He added that the civic body has also achieved 100% sterilisation and vaccination in several parts of the city, including sectors 31, 44, 45, 46, 5, Kanhai etc.

"A consultant will soon be hired to design the project proposal and make an estimate of the project. The shelter is likely to be set up within 18 months. However, we will get more clarity once the consultant makes the proposal," said MCG executive engineer Sandeep Sihag.

According to municipal corporation officials, ABC centres have been established and made operational in Begampur Khatola, Baliawas, Sector 99 and Basai. The corporation claims that from January of this year till now, anti-rabies vaccination and sterilisation of nearly 2,500 dogs have been successfully completed.

Gurgaon has not done a dog census and works with a ballpark estimate of 50,000 community dogs.

It was in October last year that the MCG signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the CSR arm of a private firm to launch a comprehensive animal welfare programme in the city with an initial investment of Rs 10 crore. Under the MoU, the foundation undertakes the sterilisation and vaccination of stray dogs, and operates the existing ABC centres in Begampur Khatola and Basai. This MoU has been made for 15 years and can be extended for an additional 15 years.

Three four-wheelers gutted in workshop fire

Noida.(Agency)

The autopsy report of 24-year-old Deepika Nagar, whose family has accused her in-laws of killing her after months of dowry harassment, has found multiple grievous external and internal injuries. The examination found severe contusions on her face, thigh, forearm, chest, abdomen and arms, along with bone-deep wounds on the knee and injuries near the waist.

Deepika, according to her in-laws, jumped from the third floor of their house in Greater Noida's Jalpura village. Her family, however, alleged she was tortured and thrown from the terrace to make her death appear as a suicide. Following a complaint, her husband Ritik Nagaar Gupta said the investigation team was working with doctors to establish the cause of death.

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65-Year-Old Government Land File Missing, Farmers Still Await Justice

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Tonk. A shocking case from the Deoli region of has raised serious concerns over the state's revenue administration system. A farmer family from Chandli village alleges that the original government allotment file (Misal No. 475/1961) related to nearly 8 bighas of land has gone missing from both the tehsil office and district record room, despite the family cultivating the land for the past 65 years. The family claims to possess official documents including allotment records, Girdawari entries, Section 91 notices, and mutation papers proving continuous cultivation. However, when the original file was requested, authorities reportedly stated that the records were "not available." In 2013, the administration allegedly admitted in writing that the allotment



file could not be traced. A complaint was later filed on the Rajasthan Sampark Portal, but no meaningful action followed, and the case was

eventually closed in 2022. The family also alleges that even during district public hearings, their plea was not properly heard and they were repeatedly sent back to the tehsil office without any resolution. Now, the affected family has appealed to the Chief Minister, Revenue Minister, and District Collector for reconstruction of the missing file, a high-level investigation, and action against responsible

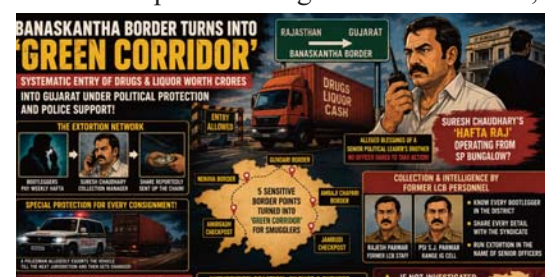
officials. The case raises a critical question: if government land records themselves are not secure, how can ordinary farmers feel safe about their land rights?

Banaskantha Border Turns Into 'Green Corridor': Massive Drug & Liquor Smuggling Network Allegedly Running Under Political Protection

Mahanagar Metro

Banaskantha. A shocking expose from has raised serious questions over the state's law-and-order machinery, as explosive allegations suggest that liquor and drug-loaded containers are entering Gujarat through the border under the alleged protection of politically connected operatives and corrupt elements within the police system. According to highly placed sources, a powerful network allegedly linked to the brother of a senior North Gujarat political leader has transformed the Banaskantha border into what insiders are calling a "Green Corridor" for bootleggers and narcotics traffickers. The alleged operations are said to be supervised by Suresh Chaudhary, described by sources as a key "collection manager" and middleman who reportedly controls an extensive illegal extortion and protection racket across the district. 'Hafta Raj' Operating Under Official Shelter? Sources claim that Suresh Chaudhary, allegedly considered the main "fixer" connected to Banaskantha Superintendent of Police, has established a multi-crore illegal collection system involving bootleggers operating across the region. The allegations go even further. Insiders claim Chaudhary enjoys such extraordinary political protection that he allegedly operates freely without fear of administrative action. Discussions within local circles reportedly suggest that he has been provided unofficial shelter and logistical support from influential quarters, allowing the il-

legal network to function openly. Sources also allege that portions of the illegal collections are routed upward through various channels,



though no official confirmation has yet emerged regarding these claims. Former LCB Personnel Allegedly Running Collection Operations The expose further claims that former LCB personnel Rajesh Parmar and PSI S.J. Parmar, who allegedly possess deep knowledge of the district's bootlegging network due to previous postings, are actively involved in intelligence sharing and illegal recovery operations in the name of senior police officials. According to sources, the duo allegedly tracks every movement of small and large bootleggers and relays operational details to the larger syndicate, ensuring smooth movement of illegal consignments across multiple checkpoints. Five Sensitive Border Points Allegedly Open for Smuggling The report identifies five highly sensitive border zones that are allegedly being used as protected transit routes for liquor and narcotics trafficking: Gundari Border, Nenava Border, Amirgadh Checkpost, Ambaji Chapari Border, Jambudi Checkpost. Sources claim that

container movement timings are allegedly pre-decided and coordinated. In one of the most explosive allegations, insiders suggest that certain consignments are even provided "special protection," where policemen allegedly accompany shipments until jurisdictional boundaries change. Major Questions Raised by the Expose The investigation raises several serious questions: Why are small bootleggers being targeted while large trafficking networks allegedly continue operating freely? Which powerful political figures are allegedly shielding the syndicate? Are senior police officials genuinely unaware of these operations, or is the system deliberately looking the other way? Silence From Authorities Attempts to contact senior police officials reportedly received no clear response. While one officer allegedly stated that "action is underway," other officials either declined to comment or denied knowledge of the matter. Meanwhile, fear and silence reportedly dominate administrative circles in Banaskantha, with many officials unwilling to speak openly due to the alleged political influence surrounding the network. Observers warn that if an independent, high-level investigation is not initiated directly from Gandhinagar, Banaskantha could emerge as one of the largest transit hubs for drugs and illegal liquor entering Gujarat — posing a serious threat to the state's youth and public safety. For more investigative reports and ground-level exposes, stay connected with Mahanagar Metro News.

Black window films to road stunts: Cops penalise 22k vehicles in 3 days

Noida.(Agency)

A three-day traffic enforcement drive across Noida, Central Noida and Greater Noida resulted in action against more than 22,000 vehicles between May 15 and 17. Conducted under police commissioner (CP) Laxmi Singh and supervised by additional CP (law and order) Rajeev Narayan Mishra, the campaign targeted pressure horns, defective or missing number plates, black window films, road stunts and speeding under a stated zero-tolerance policy.

Police said the primary objective of the drive was to improve road safety, ensure disciplined traffic movement and curb dangerous driving practices that often lead to accidents. During the operation, traffic personnel used decibel metres to measure sound levels of pressure horns and other illegal sound devices fitted in vehicles.

The police also intensified checks against overspeeding and stunt biking, particularly on major roads and highways across the district.

In the Noida zone, police teams conducted checks at 70 locations and inspected 12,882 vehicles. Action was taken against



3,481 vehicles for various traffic violations. This included 80 vehicles fitted with pressure horns, 205 vehicles without number plates or with defective number plates, 105 vehicles with black films, three involved in stunt driving and 121 overspeeding vehicles. Police also

registered four FIRs and seized 14 vehicles during the drive. Checks were carried out at 73 locations in the Central Noida zone. A total of 5,379 vehicles were inspected and action was taken against 1,617 vehicles, including 55 pressure horn cases, 156 vehicles without

proper number plates, 51 vehicles with black films, 30 stunt driving cases and 170 overspeeding violations. One FIR was registered, five vehicles were seized and one abandoned vehicle was impounded.

Similarly, in the Greater Noida zone, police checked 7,277 vehicles at 91 locations and initiated action against 1,414 violators. The violations included 68 pressure horn cases, 204 defective number plates, 85 black film violations, 14 stunt driving cases and 259 overspeeding vehicles.

Apart from zonal police teams, the traffic police also carried out extensive checks at 39 locations and inspected 46,614 vehicles. A total of 15,785 vehicles were penalised for various violations, including 463 pressure horn cases, 781 defective number plates, 511 black film violations, 31 stunt driving cases and 1,676 overspeeding violations.

The commissioner appealed to residents to follow traffic regulations and cooperate with the police in maintaining road safety and smooth traffic management across the district.

Second day of drive: Clashes break out at Bandra demolition drive as two mosques razed

Trouble began when residents gathered to oppose the demolition of the first mosque in the area.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Clashes broke out at Garib Nagar in Bandra East on Wednesday during the second day of Western Railway's anti-encroachment drive, after authorities demolished two mosques in the area along with other structures including houses that have been termed as encroachment. Police resorted to a lathi charge after protests escalated into stone pelting, leaving several residents and police personnel injured. Trouble began when residents gathered to oppose the demolition of the first mosque in the area. Protestors allegedly hurled water and pillows at officials before the confrontation intensified into stone pelting. Police then carried out a lathi charge to disperse the crowd and clear the way for demolition teams. A total of 10 persons including six

police officers and four protesters were injured in the stone-pelting incident. Of these, six were admitted to the KB Bhabha General Hospital, where five people were discharged after treatment, while 49-year-old protestor Ansar Ali Baig remains in the hospital in stable condition. The remaining four police officers were treated at the V.N. Desai Hospital, with all but one being discharged.

"My 65-year-old mother suffered a cut below her eye after being attacked by the police," alleged a resident, who was hurriedly shifting his belongings away from the demolition site as bulldozers continued operations nearby. Termed as Western Railway's biggest eviction drive



so far, the demolition began on May 19 and aims to clear 5,200 square metres of encroached railway land near Bandra East railway station.

More than 1,200 personnel including 500 Mumbai Police officers, 200 Government Railway Police officials and 250 Railway Protection Force personnel along with technical staff and heavy machinery have

been deployed for the operation. Western Railway officials said nearly 60 per cent of around 500 illegal huts had been demolished as of Wednesday. Following the clashes, police cordoned off the station road adjoining the demolition site, forcing passengers travelling to Bandra Terminus to walk with their luggage after being dropped at a distance by auto-rickshaws. Traffic congestion was also reported in the area. Later in the day, authorities moved towards the Sunni Faizane Garib Nawaz Masjid, where residents again resisted demolition efforts. As bulldozers began razing portions of the structure, protestors raised slogans and allegedly hurled stones at officials and security personnel. Police initially attempted to disperse the crowd, but the confrontation escalated

further, with officials and protestors both reporting injuries. Ten police personnel reportedly sustained injuries, while several residents were hurt as well. Today some anti-social elements tried to indulge in stone pelting at the Garib Nagar demolition drive, prompting the police to use appropriate force to disperse them from the area. Accordingly, seven suspects have been taken into custody for fronting this violence and FIRs are being registered against them" said Abhinav Deshmukh, Additional Commissioner of Police (South region). The unrest spilled over into adjoining Behrampada, where several Garib Nagar residents had temporarily shifted. Protestors, commuters and bystanders were caught in the chaos as police attempted to clear the streets.

Short news

300 workers of Nellore rescued from bonded labour in Telangana

NELLORE. (Agency)

More than 300 migrant labourers from Nellore district returned home on Wednesday after being freed from alleged bonded labour at brick kilns in Nizamabad district, Telangana.

The large-scale rescue was coordinated by district authorities in Telangana, led by Principal District Judge Bharath Laxmi, following a complaint to the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) by an escaped worker from Nellore.

Families, including women, children, and elderly persons, were rescued from four kilns in Siddapur village, Nandipet mandal. Many had migrated from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu after being promised wages and advances.

Preliminary testimonies revealed workers faced debt bondage, restricted movement, denial of wages, intimidation, and physical abuse. Survivors said they were forced to work long hours daily and confined to the kiln premises for months or even years. Officials reported that several women and children were visibly malnourished, living in cramped tarpaulin shelters under extreme heat. Children were allegedly engaged in brick-loading instead of attending school. One worker, Thupakula Babu of Nellore, lodged the complaint that triggered the operation, alleging illegal confinement and exploitation of multiple families. Survivors said kiln operators issued grocery vouchers worth Rs 200-Rs 400 weekly. Many were forced to sign blank bond papers and threatened with violence if they tried to leave.

Madras HC summons ex-cop for invoking Goondas Act in asset dispute

CHENNAI. (Agency)

Expressing shock over the invocation of the Goondas Act against a realtor involving sale of housing apartments and money transaction disputes between individuals, the Madras High Court on Wednesday ordered senior police officer and ex-commissioner of Greater Chennai Police A Arun to appear in the court after a week. The order to summon the officer was issued by a vacation bench of justices G R Swaminathan and V Lakshminarayanan when the petitions, including a habeas corpus petition, seeking to quash the detention order against Santhosh Sharma, director of Lokaa Developer Private Limited, came up for hearing. "The Commissioner of Police has passed the impugned (detention) order. He shall appear (before the court in person) next week," the bench said.

The petitions were filed by Varsha Sharma, daughter of Santhosh Sharma, praying for emergency leave for four weeks for her father and the quashing of the detention order.

Goondas Act was invoked with gross non-application of mind: Petitioner

The GCP registered the FIRs initially in 2023 against Santhosh Sharma, his wife Kalpana Sharma and others based on the complaints of DMDK leader and Rajya Sabha member L K Sudhish and his wife Poornajothi. They were arrested in 2024 and later released on bail.

The complaint accused the realtor of fraudulently selling 48 flats out of 78 allotted to Sudhish and his wife in a housing complex of 234 apartments raised on 2.10 acres of land at Kolathur owned by them. In 2025, two more cases were registered against him and based on such cases.

Maharashtra: Fuel supply delay hits rural areas, CM says state has enough stock

Mumbai. (Agency)

From tractors idling in Vidarbha's farms to kilometre-long queues outside pumps across Nashik, Sangli and Buldhana, Maharashtra's fuel shortage is beginning to hit both rural life and urban mobility, with the estimates that nearly 20-25 per cent petrol pumps especially in rural pockets are facing supply disruptions. The crisis has been most acute in rural pockets, where diesel rationing and refusal to sell fuel in cans have slowed pre-monsoon agricultural work, forcing farmers to leave tractors idle for hours. Even as reports of fights at pumps and panic buying surfaced from several districts, the state government insisted there was "no shortage" and blamed global supply disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict, while Chief Minister Devendra



Fadnavis appealed to citizens against hoarding fuel.

"State has adequate stock of petrol, diesel and other petroleum products. People have started panic buying and refilling additional fuel than regular practice. This panic buying has created supply chain problem and affected the supply to pumps. I urge people not to start panic buying," said Fadnavis.

Farmers have sounded an alarm that diesel shortage has already halted tilling of farms that annually takes place before the onset of monsoon. "The tilling work is largely affected in Vidarbha where the land holding is large. The shortage of diesel in tractors is a major concern in rural parts," said Ravikant Tupkar, a farmer leader and founder of Krantikari Shekati Sanghantana from west Vidarbha's Buldhana district. According to Tupkar, tractor owners usually carry large cans to buy diesel as taking tractors to pumps from farms is not economical. "Pump owners have stopped giving diesel in cans, virtually bringing the pre-monsoon agriculture works to a halt," said Tupkar. He added that the practice of using bullocks is declining due to the expenses involved in maintaining them.

BJP worker 'denies' Valsad families access to govt borewell over poll loss

Surat. (Agency)

Weeks after a father and son were arrested for cutting off the drinking water supply to a Bharuch village after the son lost an election, a similar case has surfaced in Valsad district. There, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker allegedly refused people access to a gram panchayat borewell, reportedly because the party lost one seat in the recent taluka panchayat elections. Residents of Tabadmal Faliya (Street) in Valsad's Gadhvi village faced drinking water woes for at least two days after BJP worker Amresh Budher denied them access to the borewell, which was sunk by the state government on gram panchayat land, since the Congress won this particular seat in the Kaprada taluka

panchayat elections that were held on April 26. The taluka panchayat in question has a total of 22 seats, out of which 18 were won by the BJP's candidates and the remaining



four by Congress's Gadhvi village sarpanch Babu Kharprade, who is from the BJP, said, "Our village falls under the

Suliya seat of the Kaprada taluka panchayat. In the recent election, Congress candidate Manisha Gond won the Suliya seat, beating my daughter-in-law, Yashi Mukesh Kharprade, who was the BJP candidate."

Kharprade added, "On Tuesday, I learnt about Amreshbhai Budher denying villagers water from the borewell, and I warned him. I was the sarpanch in 2012 when this borewell was sunk with state government funds. Amreshbhai is a hot-headed person. I and village talati (revenue official) Chetan Bhoje met him on Tuesday evening and threatened him with a police complaint, after which he apologised. Today, the people started getting water from the borewell."

To ease traffic congestion, Ahmedabad civic body turns to Google Maps for live data

Ahmedabad is set to use Google Maps' traffic intelligence product — Road Management Insights (RMI).

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

REPLACING HUNDREDS of sensors, manual surveys or delayed complaints by citizens, roads in Ahmedabad city will soon be monitored live, using Google Maps. From the number of vehicles using each road hourly, speed and travel-time data updated every two minutes, showing the location of traffic flow and congestion, hard braking instances and live disruption reports on accidents, waterlogging, potholes and debris on the road and other incidents reported in real time by road users, Ahmedabad is set to use Google Maps' traffic intelligence product — Road Management Insights (RMI). Together, these four streams would provide a comprehensive and live picture of the city's roads, senior civic officials said on Wednesday. "The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation

(AMC) has partnered with Google Maps for a pilot project that will introduce Road Management Insights (RMI) on selected roads in the city. This project addresses the root causes of traffic congestion, rather than merely treating the symptoms. This will make Ahmedabad one of the first cities in India to utilise this type of live on-ground traffic data for daily traffic management and long-term road planning," Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner Banchhanidhi Pani told.

Road Management Insights is part of Google Maps Platform's data offering for governments and infrastructure operators. "Road Management Insights is a new data product from Google Maps that enables city authorities to understand the performance of their roads in real time without installing new cameras, sensors

or hardware. RMI uses the same anonymous traffic data that powers Google Maps for millions of users daily. This data is cleaned, packaged and made



available to cities in a format they can directly utilise," Pani added.

TrafficCure is a platform through which RMI data is delivered to cities. It converts Google's traffic data into live dashboards, alerts, planning tools and AI-based

simulation environments, specifically designed for traffic and city authorities.

The Ahmedabad pilot

As part of the pilot, RMI data will be put to use on SG Highway, Tapovan Circle to RTO circle, Sardar Patel Ring Road, Parimal Underpass to Golden Triangle, Golden Triangle to Sastrinagar, Damaru Circle to Gujarat High Court, 132 Ft. Ring Road Pakwan Cross Road to Keshav Baug, Dadhichi Bridge to Delhi Darwaja, Kalupur — Amdupura to Naroda, Airport to Indira Bridge Circle, ST Bus stand (Gita Mandir to Isanpur, Isanpur to Godhasar Canal Road, Narol — Naroda Highway (BRTS Route) covering some of the busiest corridors in Ahmedabad. The data will be made available to the city through the TrafficCure platform, which presents RMI data in the form.

Mourning the decline of Election Commission

THE people of Bengal, those who were permitted to vote, recently discarded that old warhorse, Mamata Banerjee, and introduced Prime Minister Modi's "double engine" to its revered soil. How will that change affect the Bengalis? And how will it affect their fellow Indians living in the other states of the union?

First, let us consider the danger to democracy by the decline of an essential institution that is germane to the concept of democracy — the Election Commission of India. The ECI was a much-respected entity, not only in India but also admired by other great countries of the world. Observers from those countries used to wonder at the virtual miracle performed by the ECI which took immense pride in ensuring that even a remote hamlet in the mountains with a tiny population of less than a hundred souls was enabled to vote and that too, fearlessly.

All this clan has, alas vanished with the conduct of the Assembly elections in West Bengal! A comment I heard from a concerned citizen residing in my city of Mumbai said it all: "Two revered politicians — then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and then Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel -- laid a solid foundation for democracy in our land. Now, the structures built by Nehru and Patel are being destroyed."

The alacrity with which the current government appointed the election commissioners attracted an adverse comment even from the Supreme Court. Tongue-in-cheek, the Bench remarked that the government should show similar haste and enthusiasm in the appointment of Supreme Court and high court judges! The Supreme Court had advised the government to expedite the passage of a law to replace the makeshift arrangement, wherein the Prime Minister, assisted by the LOP and the CJ, chose the election commissioners. The senior member of the chosen three was then designated CEC.

When the government enacted The CEC and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, it left out the Chief Justice of India from the appointments committee and substituted the CJ with a minister chosen by the Prime Minister from his own Cabinet, thus ensuring 2-1 majority for the candidates of their choice. Prime Minister Modi chose his right-hand man, Amit Shah, to join him and the LOP, Rahul Gandhi, in the selection process. Thus was the outcome of the process predetermined. Rahul objected to the choices made by the duo from Gujarat but was overruled by the two BJP heavyweights. The ground was set for the Bengal SIR with that one stroke of arrogant superiority. Lakhs of "infiltrators", overwhelmingly Muslim, were disenfranchised! This was a complete travesty of justice which our courts of law were reluctant to correct! A farce was enacted when 19 judges of some high courts were inducted to decide the validity of the exclusions ordered by the Election Commission with less than a month to dispose of lakhs of appeals.

One retired Chief Justice of the Kolkata High Court, Justice Sivagnanam decided 1,717 appeals against exclusion in the 20 days available to him. Every appeal heard by him resulted in the voting right being restored, testifying to the bias and partiality displayed in deciding the citizenship of those termed as 'ghuspathias' (infiltrators) who he says are infiltrators from Bangladesh.

THERE is an ancient and reassuring saying that when God closes a door, He opens a window. Dattatreya Hosabale, a senior functionary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), has opened that proverbial window for a dialogue between India and Pakistan. All doors in this relationship between neighbours have remained shut since the Pulwama terror attack in 2019. Hosabale has now said that India should keep a window open for dialogue with Pakistan while firmly tackling cross-border terrorism. There is nothing new about this formulation. This has been said before by many. What is new is that this time the call has come from a member of the so-called 'Sangh Parivar'.

When Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sought to engage President Pervez Musharraf in a composite dialogue seeking resolution of several outstanding issues that bedevilled the bilateral relationship, the mantra chanted by the RSS, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), several retired diplomats, police officers and armed forces' brass used to be that "talks and terrorism cannot go hand in hand". Hosabale's observation, since endorsed by the Narendra Modi government, amounts to an acknowledgment of Manmohan Singh's view that even while Indian security forces deal with cross-border terrorism, the two governments should remain in diplomatic contact and facilitate civil society interaction. After the November 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai, the Manmohan Singh government succeeded in establishing Pakistan's direct involvement by capturing a terrorist alive, subjecting him to a fair trial and then sentencing him to death. Many in the present RSS-BJP dispensation have repeatedly mocked Dr Singh for his handling of the Mumbai attacks. The fact is neither in Pulwama nor in Pahalgam has the Modi government convincingly established Pakistan's official culpability. The party's support base may have been convinced but not the international community. Yet, there has been much grandstanding after 2019. The Modi government imagined that the termination of Article 370 of the Constitution, an altered status for Jammu and Kashmir and a 'muscular response' to Pakistani perfidy was all that was needed. The Union Home Minister and the External Affairs Minister declared that the only remaining item on India's agenda was to reclaim Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Talk is easy.

From Pulwama in 2019 till after Pahalgam in 2025, there was virtually no contact at any level between the two governments and the people. It was left to the Americans and Europeans to fund what are termed 'Track-2' dialogues. However, till recently, Indian participation in these Track-2 dialogues was neither officially authorised nor welcomed.

In 2019, I was invited to an India-Pakistan Track-2 that met in Bangkok and was funded by a Canadian outfit. When I discovered that the Indian participants included the late SK Lambah, a retired diplomat and Manmohan Singh's 'back channel' to Musharraf, the Congressman Mani Shankar Aiyar and the academic Happymon Jacob, I suggested to the hosts that they should have



someone from the Sangh Parivar to make any such dialogue meaningful. At our host's request, I reached out to a senior RSS functionary. The Modi government did not encourage his participation. That dialogue achieved nothing. Last year, after the Pahalgam attack and US President Donald Trump's activism in South Asia, there was a sudden revival of India-Pakistan Track-2 in which retired diplomats and others known to be close to the BJP participated. These were funded by US and British organisations. This was the first signal of a change in approach. Clearly, Prime Minister Modi has been under

considerable pressure to change the Indian approach to Pakistan after the sensational diplomatic goals that the latter scored in the United States and around the world.

Once referred to as a 'failed state', a 'pariah', a 'dalal' and so on, Pakistan has to be acknowledged as a neighbour that one should have a means to deal with. Hit them hard when necessary but keep a range of channels open to facilitate not just a dialogue but a change in behaviour.

It is against this background that one must view Hosabale's intervention suggesting resumption of people-to-people contact. The hope clearly is that they can help reduce tensions and improve relations. Interestingly, his remarks were soon echoed by the former Chief of the Army Staff, Gen MM Naravane, a distinguished and wise soldier, suggesting that even the armed forces would like to see that diplomacy and civil society play their part in maintaining balance in the bilateral relationship.

The Indian armed forces view kinetic action as the last resort. They are not trigger-happy adventurers. It is only when diplomatic and other forms of contact fail that military solutions should be resorted to. A very different approach from the one that Prime Minister Modi has followed since 2019. To be fair to Mr Modi, he did try his hand at diplomacy with Pakistan but was unable to establish trust with his interlocutors.

What are the compulsions — diplomatic, economic and political — that have now forced the RSS and BJP to retreat from their earlier stand and advocate restoration of people-to-people contact, signalling a willingness to move to diplomatic contact? Various theories are being aired in the media, ranging from India's need to seek restoration of overflight rights for Indian airlines that are losing business to foreign competitors, to a recognition that if the world and India's neighbours are doing business with Pakistan how can India shut its doors?

Hosabale's remarks are wide-ranging and define a new approach to Pakistan from a government that has not only claimed to have made Pakistan a marginal player in world affairs, but also bad-mouthed its diplomacy and promoted movies that demonise the neighbour and promote malicious lies about the Manmohan Singh government, its senior ministers and security administrators. Political grandstanding at home will never deliver the results India needs from its relations with Pakistan. Civilised people-to-people contact and mature diplomacy have a better chance.

Hosabale opens a window

Pakistan has to be acknowledged as a neighbour that India should have a means to deal with

Primacy of bail: Supreme Court rightly questions its own verdict

The apex court's introspection and self-correction that serve the interests of justice are welcome

THE Supreme Court's reiteration that "bail is the rule and jail the exception" even in cases under UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act) has again turned the spotlight on the prolonged pre-trial detention of activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam. Granting bail to an accused in a narco-terror case, the Bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan has disapproved of the judgment delivered by another two-judge SC Bench in the Gulfisha Fatima case pertaining to the 2020 Delhi riots. In that case, several accused got bail in January this year, but Umar and Sharjeel were denied relief. The Court had made a distinction on the basis of a "hierarchy of participation," holding that the duo stood on a "qualitatively different footing" from the co-accused. It's not common for the apex court to question its own verdicts. Introspection and self-correction that serve the interests of justice are welcome. The landmark judgment in the KA Najeeb



case (2021), which recognised long delay in trial as a ground for bail in cases under UAPA, should be followed in letter and in spirit by Supreme Court and

high court judges across the board. The grant of bail to Syed Iftikhar Andrabi in the narco-terror case drives home the Court's point that national security concerns cannot eclipse the fundamental right to personal liberty. The judgment aims to restore the balance between state power and individual rights. Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution guarantee protection against arbitrary detention, and these safeguards remain valid even if the allegations are safe.

Thousands have been arrested under UAPA over the years, yet the conviction rate remains dismally low (around 5 per cent). Umar and Sharjeel are among those who have spent years behind bars before trial, effectively serving punishment without conviction. It's vital to ensure speedy trials and consistency in bail decisions under anti-terror laws. Failure to do so can undermine the presumption of innocence — the bedrock of any democratic legal system.

Hantavirus episode is a warning about future pandemics

Preparedness requires vigilance without panic, investment without delay and cooperation without reservation

Recent reports of a cruise ship carrying patients with the hantavirus pulmonary syndrome have sent ripples across global public health systems. With passengers dispersing to countries/regions across the world — from Australia to Europe and the US — the possibility of silent transmission has once again brought the world to a familiar edge of uncertainty. Contact tracing, isolation and surveillance efforts are underway, but the episode underscores a sobering truth: the next pandemic threat may already be in motion, quietly and unpredictably. Hantavirus is not new. It has long been known to circulate among rodents — creatures that live in close proximity to human settlements worldwide. What is new, and concerning, is the possibility — still under scientific scrutiny — that certain strains may be evolving towards limited human-to-human transmission. If such a shift becomes epidemiologically significant, what are today sporadic outbreaks could transform into tomorrow's global crisis.

Hantavirus is only one among several looming threats. The world has already witnessed Nipah and Ebola virus outbreaks, both with high fatality rates and limited therapeutic options. India, in particular, has experienced repeated Nipah outbreaks in states like Kerala and West Bengal, demonstrating how zoonotic viruses can emerge abruptly and challenge even well-prepared health systems. What is striking, in hindsight, is that the global scientific community had anticipated such threats. In 2018, the World Health Organisation (WHO) identified a list of pathogens with pandemic potential. Interestingly, it did not name the virus that would soon bring the world to a standstill — the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for Covid-19. Instead, it referred to a hypothetical "Disease X," representing an unknown pathogen capable of causing a serious international

epidemic. Covid-19 was, in essence, Disease X realised. The lesson is clear: the next pandemic may not come from a known virus but from one that currently exists in wildlife reservoirs, largely undetected. Thousands of coronaviruses, for example, circulate among bats and other species. Only a handful (only seven at the last count) have so far crossed the species barrier to infect humans. The rest remain latent threats, awaiting ecological or behavioural triggers — deforestation, climate change, urbanisation or intensification of livestock farming — to spill directly into human populations or through livestock and omnipresent bats.

This is where the concept of "One Health" becomes indispensable. The One Health approach recognises the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and the environment. It is not merely a theoretical framework but a practical necessity in a world where zoonotic spillovers are becoming more frequent. Surveillance systems must therefore extend beyond hospitals and laboratories into forests, farms and wildlife ecosystems. Veterinary sciences, environmental monitoring and human medicine must converge into a coordinated, real-time intelligence network.

Encouragingly, the global community has begun to respond. The WHO Pandemic Agreement, adopted in 2025, represents a landmark effort to institutionalise preparedness. Designed as a legally binding pandemic treaty, it seeks to strengthen global surveillance, ensure equitable access to vaccines and treatments, and improve coordinated responses during health emergencies. While negotiations on certain aspects — particularly pathogen-sharing mechanisms — are ongoing, the intent signals a shift toward collective

responsibility. However, global agreements alone cannot substitute for national readiness. India, with its vast population, ecological diversity, and varying health infrastructure across states, must prioritise pandemic preparedness as a continuous, not episodic, effort. The next pandemic will not announce itself politely; it will emerge unexpectedly, compressing response timelines



and testing systemic resilience. Covid-19 offered invaluable lessons, some of which remain insufficiently internalised. First, the pandemic response cannot focus solely on the disease at hand. Essential health services must continue. During the Covid pandemic, disruptions in maternal care, tuberculosis treatment, cancer management and immunisation programmes resulted in collateral damage that will take years to fully quantify. A resilient system must be able to "walk and chew gum at the same

time" — to fight the pandemic while sustaining routine healthcare. Second, infrastructure and capacity cannot be built overnight. Intensive care units, trained manpower, diagnostic networks and supply chains require sustained investment and periodic stress-testing. Simulation exercises, akin to military drills, should become standard practice for health systems. These drills not only identify gaps but also build institutional confidence. Third, mental health must be recognised as an integral component of pandemic response. The psychological toll of prolonged uncertainty, isolation and economic disruption is profound, particularly among vulnerable populations. Integrating mental health services into primary healthcare and emergency preparedness plans is no longer optional.

Finally, preparedness demands resources — and political will. In an era marked by geopolitical tensions and competing priorities, there is always a temptation to defer investments in public health infrastructure. Yet the cost of inaction far exceeds the cost of preparedness. The economic and social devastation wrought by the Covid pandemic stands as a stark reminder. Investing in pandemic readiness is not an expenditure; it is an insurance policy for national stability.

The world today stands better equipped than it did in 2019 — but not yet adequately prepared. Surveillance gaps persist. Health inequities remain stark. Coordination, both within and between countries, is still evolving. The next pandemic threat — whether from hantavirus, Nipah, an unknown coronavirus or an entirely new pathogen — will test not just our scientific capabilities but our collective resolve guided by One Health approach.



Female pet

owners may be less likely to die of stroke

Can pets be good for your health? Possibly yes, a study suggests. U.S. women over age 50 and generally healthy were less likely to die of cardiovascular events like stroke if they had a cat or dog, the researchers found. After accounting for the increase in physical activity required of dog owners, owning a cat

instead of a dog was still tied to a lower risk of death from stroke. The researchers studied almost 4,000 adults age 50 and older without major illnesses who

participated in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) in 1988 to 1994 and who reported their pet ownership. Participants also answered questions about physical activity, weight and height, cigarette smoking and other health risk factors. More than half were overweight or obese. About 35 percent of people owned a pet, most often a dog. Pet owners tended to be younger, more often were married, and more often were white. According to the National Death Index, as of 2006, 11 of every 1,000 non-pet owners had died of cardiovascular disease, compared to about 7 of every 1,000 pet owners. Specifically for stroke, male pet owners were just as likely to have died, but female pet owners were about 40 percent less likely to



blood pressure as well," said senior author Jian Zhang of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University in the U.S.

"I strongly believe that putative benefits of keeping a dog have not yet fully translated into reality, and we found that pet owners did not walk pets, certainly, dogs, more often than others," Zhang said. "This explains why owning a dog did not reduce CVD mortality among dog owners."

Cat owners may have a personality that protects their hearts, rather than cats actually having a concrete effect on heart health, he said.

"We are short of overall assessment of the associations of companion animals with human health, and our study should not be interpreted to encourage more people to own pets, either dog or cat," Zhang said. "Pets are good, but have to be kept responsibly."

"In my study, there was a tendency for pet owners to have a higher risk of dying," said Dr. Richard F. Gillum of Howard University College of Medicine in Washington D.C., who was not part of the new study but did study the same NHANES surveys.

Most findings show no association between pets and survival, he said.

"Data from NHANES are really inadequate to settle the question, since one can only determine there was a pet in the household, but not the number of pets or whether the study participant was the owner, cared for it or interacted with it," Gillum said. "So we need to wait for better studies before making any firm conclusions about pets and survival among their owners."

"Even if there were a reduction of death from stroke among women with cats, of what importance is that in public health terms if they are just as likely to die as other women, just from another cause," he said.

had died of stroke.

Most of this association was driven by cat ownership, according to results in High Blood Pressure and Cardiovascular Prevention.

"Anecdotally, we believe that walking a dog is good for heart, reducing life pressure and

Pamper your pets with these pro tips

Our pets are an integral part of our families and deserve all the special care that we can provide. And that is the primary reason why we need to take our pets for regular check-ups at veterinary clinics that are qualified and equipped to give them all that they need. We spoke to pet-care professionals in the city, to list out some special pro tips that can help your four-legged friends...

Ensure they stay well-hydrated
Pratapsinh Gaekwad, who is extremely passionate about animals and also owns a specialty pet-care clinic, says, "Ensure that your dog stays hydrated by adding extra water to some meals, in order to increase the



water content. Flavouring their water with some chicken broth may encourage them to drink more as well.

Give them ice-cubes to snack on
Ice cubes make tasty zero calorie snacks for dogs, and you can always jazz them up by making flavoured ones by freezing some chicken broth in an ice cube rack, suggests Gaekwad.

Deal with osteoarthritis
Hannah Victoria Myburgh, head nurse at a South Mumbai veterinary hospital says, "For the older patients who suffer from osteoarthritis and creaky joints, green lipp mussel extract is a fantastic natural analgesic. Adding glucosamine chondroitin supplements into the diet really helps with the maintenance of healthy joints and bones."

Be consistent with feeding regime
It is important to try and be consistent with your feeding regime — two meals a day, at the same time every day, with no snacks, should be sufficient.

Use palatable probiotics
Avoid curd as many patients can be slightly lactose intolerant and this can actually irritate the gut when had in large quantities, suggests Hannah. She adds, "A couple of teaspoons a day can be used as a probiotic but actually goat's yogurt or kefir are better and more palatable."

Get a dental check-up done
Opt for a full dental scale and polish to make gnashers sparkle. Gaekwad adds, "This is not just a cosmetic procedure, a full examination of all the teeth is undertaken, assessing all the gum margins. Removing plaque which is basically bacteria and sugar will help reduce systemic disease."

Give them supplements
"Supplements such as coconut oil are fantastic for your pet's coat and joints. They have a good ratio of omegas so really help nourish the skin, heart muscle and joints as well," says Hannah.

Dealing with heat stroke
Exercise is very important for pets but it is essential to not overdo it in the summer months. Heat strokes can be serious. Keep walks early in the morning before 8 am and late in the evening after 7 pm. Signs of heat stroke include lethargy, vomiting, disorientation and in extreme cases, collapse. The first thing to do is cool down with towels soaked in room temperature water. Immediately after, pay a visit to the vet.

Keep in mind
Take personal grooming seriously. Get a mani-pedi for your pets — get their nails clipped. Get a de-worming done prior to a vacation. Vaccinating against infectious diseases such as rabies, leptospirosis and canine distemper not only protects yourself but also your fellow canine companions.

A typical Indian wedding has day-long ceremonies and even longer guestlists running into hundreds

-Mind you, they are people who are close to the family and cannot be ignored. However, things are changing now as couples are choosing to have intimate celebrations with only a chosen few present on their special day. These millennials prefer to curb the unnecessary costs to avoid burdening their families. Instead, the money saved is spent on more constructive investments like a house or travelling together to their dream destination. If you are one of those planning to have a wedding celebration that is private, here are a few things to keep in mind...

BOOK A SMALL VENUE
When you have a small venue and people come to know about it, they will understand that you want to avoid a crowd. It is a subtle hint to those who expect to be invited for it, that you are not ready to host a big wedding. **KEEP THE RITUALS SIMPLE**
Most Indian weddings have elaborate rituals - sangeet, mehendi, haldi among other things. It is better to keep things simple by focusing only on the main wedding rituals or else design them as per the size of the venue as you don't want to make your guests feel uncomfortable.

HOME IS THE BEST
The most comfortable option is to get married in a cosy home. If your house is not big enough, you can always ask a friend who has a bigger house to help you out. An attached terrace always works best. This also makes sure that you're not in a situation where you have to explain about restricting the celebration to immediate family and close friends. After the wedding rituals, make sure to take everyone out for an elaborate lunch or dinner to avoid unnecessary speculation.

HAVE MULTIPLE CELEBRATIONS
Everyone expects a huge reception after the wedding, but if you don't want to have that either, opt for small multiple celebrations. You and your spouse can have separate office parties, while you can also plan one each with extended families from both the sides.



Millennials prefer intimate Weddings to grand bashes



Friends can be combined or given separate parties depending on how you both want it. However, ensure that both of you attend all these parties. **UNCONVENTIONAL**
However, if you cannot

see a large number attending it. Avoid that and half the crowd goes out of the list. Go for a destination wedding, which invariably means that the celebration is a small, intimate affair; it also limits the number of guests you want to invite. This kind of wedding allows you to give personal attention to all your guests, as well as provide you with enough me-time.

having a wedding in the same town, try to hire a stand-alone bungalow instead of the typical hall or hotel set-up. Look for a farmhouse located on the outskirts of the town you stay in. It will give you lots of space and at the same time be a close-knit affair. **PLAN AN OUT-OF-TOWN WEDDING**
Sometimes having a wedding at the place you reside in, will



Pros and cons of Working abroad

Working in a foreign country is a unique experience filled with new learnings, four professionals from diverse fields, who took up stints abroad before moving back to India, share their experience of working overseas

Aasit Shah

I don't consider any of my experiences in the US particularly appalling. In fact, the US proved to be a great training ground for me. I was working in the Silicon Valley and that favoured me in terms of weather since we had a good number of sunshine days.

Dignity of labour is extremely high in the US. Even though there is hierarchy in terms of designations, I loved the personal connect one can have with their seniors. You can walk in and out of your senior's cabin any time.

Work-life balance is excellent so much so that sending professional emails on a weekend is frowned upon. Organisations are extremely flexible. There were days when I could work from home.

Since the US is considered to be the melting-pot of the world, I got the opportunity to work with people from different migrant communities there. And that was a great learning experience. I didn't miss India much because there are too many Indians around in the valley. So, for me, it was a home away from home!

Pan

kaj Khot

Working in the UAE had its own upside and downside.

The biggest benefit for me was to receive a tax-free salary, which is very rare. Companies in Dubai ensure that their employees have a perfect work-life balance. A major benefit of working in Dubai is that a number of international organisations have their offices there. So apart from helping you mingle with professionals from different cultures, it also enables you to understand the working styles of different countries.

The city is strategically located and has great infrastructure. Restaurants in Dubai offer cuisines from all over the world making the place a gastronomic delight.

On the flip side, house rents are too steep. Furthermore, if you don't have any family or friends, it can get boring and

difficult.

Kavita Gupta

When I think about my working stint in the UK, I am filled with mixed feelings. First, I worked for Nokia. The environment there was professional, yet friendly. Flexibility was granted, when required. What I particularly liked was the blurring of hierarchy in terms of accessibility. One could approach one's bosses anytime. Being able to interact with people from different countries was a great advantage too. Work-life balance was perfect and working beyond clocking hours was not appreciated. However, when I moved to another company and got pregnant six months into the job, it didn't go well down with my boss. My profile was changed and I didn't find that fair.

Guatam Parekh

The first thing that really impressed me about Singapore was the minimalistic bureaucracy. Be it taxes of work permit or anything, government authorities are very co-operative.

Every job or labour is treated with respect and this takes professionalism in the country to another level. Singapore being a first world country, infrastructure and connectivity are highly developed; both railways and roadways are well connected making travel hassle-free.

I was part of the event industry there and the best thing was that clients treated me as their associate and not merely a vendor. It was a ritual for us to take our clients out for dinners post events. Professionally, it was a great bonding exercise.

Technology is highly evolved in Singapore, so during events, each department knew their job to the T and that made our work easy. Since the country had professionals from all over the world, I got to learn a lot from people from varied cultures. Finally, Singapore is a welcoming country and doesn't let you feel homesick. My stint there was amazing.



The struggles of a single mother

Mirror writer and single mom Anjana Vaswani chats with three others of her tribe on raising kids alone with one eye on blood pressure.

Two months ago, just days before the final round of admissions to kindergarten and Grade 1 under the Right to Education quota, panicking single mothers flocked to BMC help centres. Their applications had been rejected because the fathers' income certificates were missing. The mothers' certificates weren't acceptable as substitutes.

It made newspaper copy, but ask a single mother, and she'll tell you niggles like these are a regular part of her life. Official paperwork that can be a nightmare in our patriarchal system is just the garnish on a gateaux of stress, guilt, feelings of isolation, stigma and self-doubt.

Is her health likely to be impacted negatively in the long run?

The answer though obvious is now confirmed by a study published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health which assessed over 25,000 women across 15 countries. It focused on women who had children before the age of 18 and also examined, "whether doing it alone is worse in countries with relatively weak social and safety nets."

Vital point, because our social structure may just be our redeemer. Not only does it alleviate the guilt when you leave your child with a grandparent, it allows us time for a fitness routine which, together, may render studies such as these altogether inapposite. This means you don't get to write us off yet.

As I see friends, many, a lot younger than me, negotiating around the rose garden of marriage with aching backs and knees, and thyroid problems (frequently also treating the headaches of family politics), I feel confident that we have at least as good a shot at health and longevity as any of them.

'Suddenly, health became top priority' Anita Khiara, stay-at-home mum
My daughters are now 14 and 11, but when I separated, they were nine and six. Since we had lived abroad for a while, moving to Mumbai postdivorce made it more challenging. We were grappling with a whole different culture, for one. I didn't even realise my health was headed downward. At the time, it appeared like a bout of illness. In the first three months, I lost enough weight to drop to an unhealthy size zero. It was only when I ended up fracturing my arm that I



realised my health was crying out for attention.

The consistent aches and pains, I realised, arose partly due to the stress that accompanies moving home, and of course, separating from someone you've been with for 12 years; 14 in my case if I count the courtship. No matter what anyone says, it's scary to be on your own after all those years. You wonder, will I be able to provide for us? Will my children be all right? Seeing my father cry, I remember, was very hard for me - the hurt that the divorce had caused him.

That I returned to a city where my siblings lived meant I could blend easily into their social circle. I found comfort in pouring my heart out to old friends. I sought out self-help literature. Carolyn Mays' Why People Don't Heal and How They Can helped me. There's a comprehensive table in the book that connects ailments to emotional issues.

Interestingly, after the split, since I was aware that I was the only one around for my kids, I began taking my health very seriously. I never missed an annual check-up and exercised regularly. That's a habit that has stayed with me.

'I made a career out of the split' Nivedita Rawal, behavioural psychotherapist
Twenty six and pregnant with my second child when my husband sought divorce in 1991, I had hoped then for a reconciliation. It wasn't until 2004 that I finally gathered the courage to confide in extended

family and friends about my single status. Single parenting is the toughest thing I have known, more so in the absence of family support. It was tough being mum and dad. The children's education, wellbeing, happiness. These became priority. Although I had worked in corporate jobs in Singapore, I was uncomfortable with the idea of leaving the kids in the care of a maid. I was petrified of child molestation and other possibilities. So, I decided to pursue psychology and set up a private practice after acquiring a Master's degree and then a Doctorate while the children were still in senior school.

I'd be driving them back and forth from tuitions, I'd supervise their homework, and put up with the occasional last minute requests: 'Mommy, I need 20 buttons for art work. Now.' I remember running to JW Marriott at 9 pm once to ask if I could buy the needle-and-thread home-kits they offer in guestrooms. I got 10 packets. The rest of the buttons the kids needed came off my shirts.

At one point, I supplemented my income by offering therapy to call centre employees during the graveyard shift. Social life was naturally sacrificed. In the last 23 years, I'd estimate that I must have attended about 10 social events. I did get into a relationship but ended it when I realised that he was not father material. Diwali, Christmas and Easter holidays were spent alone since the kids holidayed with their father.

But, having worked with single mothers who tend to develop acute depression, insomnia, even cancers and metabolic syndrome illnesses linked to diabetes, high blood pressure and heart conditions, I recognised my loneliness. I knew that I had to make a concerted effort to stay fit. I pursued Mallakhambh, yoga and swimming with dedication. It set the tone for the challenges that every day would bring.

Yes, I still continue to combat insomnia and some food intolerances. Today, I'm a step-parent too, blessed with four children and two puppies, and have a successful practice that boasts celebrity clientele.

'It's tough to stay fit as a sandwich generation member' Ragashree Porecha, sales professional
I kicked off my career with a monthly pay cheque of Rs 3,500 when I got divorced in 1995. It was a huge support to know that my family was there for my daughter. Still, there were heartbreaking moments when she'd complain that, unlike her, other kids always had mommy around. But by the time she got to the third

grade, she began to feel pride in the fact that her mother was a successful professional.

Working had other advantages too. My first boss, with whom I worked for 15 years, was a bit of a health nut. She'd insist that I walk to work and back. Having been a juvenile diabetic, this helped me because otherwise, health would not have been priority. I know that, back then, I avoided visiting the doctor as far as possible. Health check-ups were erratic, but the walking kept my blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check.

Over the last two years, however, after the demise of my mother, I'm now responsible not just for my daughter but my father too. And with that, my fitness has taken a beating. My blood pressure shot up over the last nine months, and sugar levels were erratic. I've developed hypothyroidism and my shoulders freeze up sometimes. But I know this is temporary. With years of work experience at luxury brands, I hope to have a job waiting for me when I'm able to take it, and I am working on rebuilding my immunity.

Is loneliness making your pets depressed?

Owners of two-and-a-half-year-old Brownie, whose habit of chasing her tail turned into a 24X7 obsession, panicked and took her to a veterinarian. The vet directed them to an animal behaviourist who diagnosed Brownie with boredom and separation anxiety. After months of treatment Brownie's behaviour has turned normal.

Leaving your pets alone at home for long periods, ignoring them or spending insufficient time with them can take a toll on them and cause serious health issues. In recent times many pets have been facing issues of separation anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorders and in extreme cases even self-destructive behaviour, say city based pet psychologists and pet behaviourists.

Priti Chauhan, a pet behaviourist and therapist for the last 10 years, said, "Every week I get two to three similar cases. Along with treating the pets, we also counsel the owners so that they do not repeat the same mistakes. In most of these cases the pets get affected due to suffering caused by their owners leaving them alone at home for long durations. Some people even tie them up, confining them to one place and don't keep sufficient drinking water among other things."

Anagha Mali, another pet behaviourist informed, "There are various ways to know if a pet is suffering from these issues. Separation anxiety includes pets refusing to stay indoors, barking

continuously, being destructive including chewing on furniture, soiling the house. In extreme cases pets start hurting themselves by either licking and creating a wound, shadow chasing or tail chasing etc." At times pets can also suffer due to other reasons, explained Priti. "Ensure that the pet is well fed, is done with his daily ablutions and



to smell flowers, leaves, roads etc. That will stimulate his brain," she said. Housewife Aarti Pednekar's case is an example of pets suffering due to other reasons. Aarti, who owns a six-year-old Labrador, Honey, narrated, "Though we are a family of four, Honey is most attached to me and becomes restless if I go out anywhere. Recently when I had gone out of town for a fortnight, she almost injured her front paw by licking it continuously. On consulting a behaviourist we realised she was suffering from separation anxiety. The behaviourist explained how important it is to engage other members of the family in taking care of the pet so that it feels attached to all."

Veterinary surgeon and behaviour counsellor Dr Shivshankar Chikodi, said, "It is good to train your pet if you are going to leave him alone for long hours. The training can ideally start at two years of age. Initially one should start keeping the pet alone for a period of 15 minutes which can gradually be increased to two hours and longer.

has continuous access to water. Tying the pet is a no-no but if you have to, then make sure the place doesn't get direct sunlight. Also, it is important to stimulate the pet physically and mentally. Apart from regular exercises like walks, running or playing the ball which will drain him physically, ensure you take your pet to a nearby park, hill or any place outdoors where he can get

Cockroach Janta Party beats BJP on Instagram, crosses 10 million followers in 5 days

A satirical political campaign, the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), born online after the Chief Justice of India's remarks on unemployed youth, has crossed 10 million Instagram followers in five days. The Abhijeet Dipke-founded CJP has managed to surpass the ruling BJP's follower count.

New Delhi.(Agency)
What started as a satirical campaign is now overtaking India's most powerful political parties in online battles. The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), a meme-fuelled satirical political movement born out of outrage, irony, and online humour in response to the Chief Justice of India's remarks on youth, has crossed 10 million followers in just five days, overtaking the BJP on the platform. In a country where political dominance has been carefully cultivated over decades, the online party has managed to outpace the ruling party armed with nothing more than sarcasm, reels, and viral rage. The account, operating under the handle @cockroachjantaparty, crossed the 10-million mark on Thursday. In contrast, the BJP's official Instagram account

@bjp4india currently has around 8.7 million followers, while the Congress's account @incindia remains ahead with roughly 13.2 million followers. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), founded in 2012, has approximately 1.9 million followers. Both politicians and vocal non-politician backers or sympathisers of the Cockroach Janta Party include prominent YouTubers and social media influencers like Dhruv Rathee, veteran activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan. TMC leaders Mahua Moitra and Kirti Azad have also expressed their willingness to join the Cockroach Janta Party. Senior advocate and activist Prashant Bhushan called for the CJP to use its followers' surge to raise the issue of the NEET paper leak. "The Cockroach Janta Party has acquired 10.3M followers on



Instagram in 4 days, more than the BJP. It has promise if steered wisely & imaginatively. It must, of course, raise NEET paper leak & seek accountability of Dharmendra Pradhan", Bhushan posted on X. He also asked the CJP to voice the need for the right to employment. "Time to demand a right to Employment law. All people

between 21 and 60 must have the right to be employed at least the minimum wage, failing which they must receive unemployment allowance," he added on Thursday. There is a health warning here. Getting online followers is very different from getting people to join as members of a political party. Membership indicates on-ground presence. **WHO IS ABHIJEET DIPKE, FOUNDER OF COCKROACH JANATA PARTY?** The CJP's campaign first surfaced online on May 16 as a satirical youth movement responding to the controversial remarks of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant regarding sections of Indian youth. During a hearing on May 15, the CJI referred to a lawyer's social media conduct, saying,

"There are youngsters, like cockroaches, who don't get any employment or have any place in the profession. Some of them become media, some of them become social media, RTI activists, and other activists, and they start attacking everyone." These remarks sparked massive outrage on social media and gave birth to the CJP, a campaign headed by its founder Abhijeet Dipke. "I think the remarks were more triggering because they came from the Chief Justice of India, who is the custodian of the Constitution, which grants us freedom of expression. Someone who is there to safeguard our freedom of expression is comparing us to cockroaches and parasites just for putting forward our opinions. That was the more hurtful part," Dipke said in an interview.

Pharmacists' strike disrupts medicine supply

New Delhi.(Agency)
Delhi residents faced mounting inconvenience on Wednesday as a nationwide chemist strike disrupted access to medicines, while an upcoming strike by auto and cab drivers threatened to affect daily commuting across the national capital. The nationwide protest, called by the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD), led to the closure of several retail medical stores across Delhi.

Chemist shops in areas such as Palam, Mayur Vihar, Shahdara, Rohini, Yusuf Sarai, Daryaganj and Malviya Nagar remained shut throughout the day. Shops outside Sir Ganga Ram Hospital were also largely closed, causing inconvenience to patients and attendants seeking medicines.

The strike was organised against the rapid expansion of online pharmacies, which traditional chemists claim are hurting their businesses through steep discounts and aggressive pricing. Retail pharmacy owners said small offline stores were unable to compete with e-commerce platforms offering medicines at significantly lower prices.

Chemist associations also expressed concern over alleged weak prescription verification systems followed by some online pharmacies. According to them, the sale of regulated medicines without proper checks could compromise patient safety, while offline stores continue to follow strict documentation and regulatory norms. The impact of the shutdown was visible on the ground. Vanij, a 19-year-old resident, said he had gone to buy medicines for his grandmother but found nearby medical stores closed due to the strike.

Another resident, Kuljeet Kaur, criticised the protest, saying people could require medicines during emergencies at any time. "Ultimately, these pharmacists encouraged many people to order medicines online. Ironically, they are protesting against that fact," she said.

Almawakeing Foundation and Dr Shroff Hospital empower visually impaired

New Delhi.(Agency)
Aimed at supporting people with disabilities through technology-based assistive solutions, Almawakeing Foundation, in collaboration with Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital, has organised a special empowerment programme at Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital.

As part of the foundation's 'Enable Program', 26 visually impaired beneficiaries have received AI-enabled smart vision glasses that assist with mobility, reading support, object recognition, navigation, and independent living through



advanced assistive technology. The event was attended by Dr Alma Chopra-Founder, Almawakeing Foundation, motivational speaker and life coach & Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital officials—and other distinguished guests.

According to representatives from the Almawakeing Foundation, the initiative aligns with the foundation's vision of creating meaningful social impact through its five pillars and ensuring that no individual is left behind due to physical limitations. Dr Alma Chopra said, "This programme is to build accessibility, inclusion & innovation."

Delhi records warmest May night in 14 years; IMD forecasts heatwave conditions, issues orange alert

New Delhi.(Agency)
Delhi reeled under intense heat on Thursday as the minimum temperature settled at 31.9 degrees Celsius, 5.2 notches above normal, making it the warmest May night in the national capital in nearly 14 years. The last time the minimum temperature was higher than this was on May 26, 2012, when the minimum temperature settled at 32.5 degrees Celsius. The India Meteorological Department has predicted a heat wave for the day and the maximum temperature is expected to settle at 46 degrees Celsius.

Safdarjung and Lodi Road were among the stations that recorded warm night conditions, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

A warm night is declared when the

maximum temperature remains 40 degrees Celsius or more and the minimum temperature departure is between 4.5 degrees Celsius and 6.4



degrees Celsius above normal, according to the IMD. Among the weather stations, Safdarjung recorded a minimum temperature of 31.9 degrees Celsius, 5.2 notches above the season's normal, followed by Ridge at 30.6 degrees Celsius, 4.4 notches above normal. Palam stood at 30.5 degrees Celsius,

3.4 notches above normal, Lodi Road at 29.6 degrees Celsius, 4.6 notches above normal, and Ayanagar at 27.4 degrees Celsius, 0.7 notch above normal.

The city has been placed under an orange alert as the maximum temperature is expected to touch 46 degrees Celsius, with the IMD forecasting heatwave conditions during the day.

The air quality was recorded in the 'moderate' category at 9 am on Thursday, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) reading of 153, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data showed.

According to the CPCB, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 to 100 'satisfactory', 101 to 200 'moderate', 201 to 300 'poor', 301 to 400 'very poor', and 401 to 500 'severe'.

Sweltering summer heat pushes pets, stray animals to the brink

New Delhi.(Agency)
As Delhi continues to battle an intense heatwave, another crisis is unfolding quietly on the streets, in homes, and inside veterinary clinics, animals are struggling to survive the brutal summer heat. According to veterinarians in the city, every year, the number of heat-related illnesses among pets and stray animals rises sharply as temperatures climb.

From dehydration and heat strokes to burnt paws, skin infections, exhaustion, and loss of appetite, animals are increasingly becoming vulnerable victims of extreme weather conditions. Dr Ashwini Verma from CP Vet said veterinary clinics witness a noticeable spike in such cases



temperatures. Pets that spend time outdoors often arrive at clinics dehydrated and visibly distressed," he added.

The heat does not only affect larger animals. Rabbits, cats, and other

smaller pets are equally vulnerable. Namika Yadav, owner of two rabbits, said, "Summers leave them weak, lethargic, and dehydrated."

Pet owners are also witnessing major behavioural changes in their animals. Saif Anwar, who owns three cats, including a Siberian breed with thick fur, said the scorching weather becomes unbearable for them. Maintaining a cool environment throughout the day is a challenge but necessary to ensure their comfort and health.

For stray animals, however, survival is far more difficult. Animal welfare worker Xia Anwar says dehydration among stray animals frequently leads to exhaustion, illness, and critical medical emergencies.

Supreme Court 'inclined' to bail for two Delhi riots accused

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would hear on May 22 the pleas of two 2020 Delhi riots accused, Abdul Khalid Saifi and Tasleem Ahmed, challenging the high court order denying them bail.

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and P B Varale said that even though it was inclined to grant bail to them, it would first hear the Delhi Police's submissions regarding a recent judgment by a coordinate bench on the grant of bail.

The court deferred the hearing after ASG S V Raju, appearing for the Delhi Police, sought time to make submissions. The petitions challenged the September 2, 2025, order of the Delhi High Court denying them bail.

Raju said he would like to make a submission while taking into account a recent judgment by another bench,

comprising Justice B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan, where it has questioned the verdict denying bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case.

Earlier, on Tuesday, Raju had told the SC bench that the question of whether long jail time and delay in trial can outweigh statutory bars on bails under stringent laws like the UAPA may need to be decided by a larger bench of judges. He pointed out that two coordinate benches of the apex court had delivered conflicting decisions.

While referring to a judgment delivered on Monday by the bench headed by Justice B V Nagarathna which emphatically held that "bail is the rule and jail is an exception" even in prosecutions under the UAPA, Raju

submitted that the ruling may not have laid down the correct position in law. The bench posted the matter for hearing on May 22 and asked Raju to make



submissions on that date. Senior advocate Rebecca John appeared for Saifi while advocates Mehmoond Pracha and RHS Sikander appeared for Ahmed. 'Act against fake higher edu institutes'

The Delhi HC on Wednesday called upon the Centre to act against the mushrooming of fake higher education institutions. A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia said that students attracted to such institutions usually belong to small towns, who but end up with degrees that don't make them employable.

Chadha moves HC for personality rights

BJP MP Raghav Chadha on Wednesday moved the Delhi HC seeking protection of his personality rights, including his name, picture, and voice, from unauthorised use. The petition is likely to come up for hearing before Justice Subramonium Prasad on Thursday. Chadha has sought an injunction against.

96,000 street lights in Delhi to be converted into smart LEDs

The project, estimated to cost around Rs 473.24 crore, will be implemented in phases on roads maintained by the public works department (PWD).

New Delhi.(Agency)
Delhi's roads are set for a major lighting overhaul, with the city government approving an ambitious plan to replace nearly 96,000 street lights with advanced smart LED systems across the Capital. The decision was taken on Wednesday during a hybrid meeting of the expenditure finance committee (EFC) chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. The project, estimated to cost around Rs 473.24 crore, will be implemented in phases on roads maintained by the public works department (PWD).

The government aims to complete the transformation before Diwali so that Delhi's



major roads are fully illuminated with the new smart lighting system. The project is part of the announcement made by the Chief Minister in the 2026-27 Budget, where she had proposed replacing conventional street lighting with energy-efficient smart LED systems.

At present, PWD roads have nearly 45,000 old high-pressure sodium vapour (HPSV) lights and around 51,000 HPSV LED lights. Altogether, the network includes close to 96,000 lights and 51,160 poles.

Explaining the need for the project, the Chief Minister said the existing system had several shortcomings. Since there was no real-time monitoring mechanism, faulty street lights were often identified only after complaints were received. The Chief Minister said the initiative would help make Delhi's roads free of dark spots.

TSF Group announces JV with Bosch to make air suspension systems in India

New Delhi.(Agency)

TS Santhanam family-owned TSF Group, a branch of the TVS Group, on Wednesday announced a proposed joint venture with Bosch to manufacture next-generation electronically controlled air system products for trucks and buses in India.

The joint venture will have a 50:50 shareholding between TSF Group companies Wheels India and Brakes India. Globally, OEMs are increasingly shifting towards modular, electronically controlled air and braking platforms and suspension systems — segments that will form the core product portfolio of the joint venture. The JV will focus on the engineering, manufacturing and sale of electronically controlled and software-driven modules for air compression, air processing, air suspension and air parking brakes. The proposed venture seeks to combine Bosch's strengths in electronics, software, sensing and control systems with the mechanical system design, pneumatic management architecture and manufacturing capabilities of Brakes India and Wheels India.

"As part of the TSF Group, Wheels India has been a pioneer in air suspension systems for buses in India for over three decades. Over this period, we have built strong relationships with both OEMs and end users through consistent product quality and service. We are pleased to collaborate with Bosch on this development initiative to advance electronic air suspension systems for global customers," said Srivats Ram, chairman and managing director of Wheels India. Wheels India is a leading manufacturer of wheels for trucks, agricultural tractors, passenger vehicles and construction equipment, apart from air suspension systems for trucks and buses and industrial components for the construction and windmill industries. The company has manufacturing plants across Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Andhra Pradesh.

Instant home services startups burn cash as competition intensifies

Kolkata.(Agency)

India's instant home services market is rapidly emerging as the next major battleground in the country's consumer internet sector, with companies including Urban Company, Pronto and Snabbit pouring millions of dollars into ultra-fast domestic labour delivery even as losses mount and profitability remains uncertain.

The shift marks the latest evolution of India's quick-commerce boom, where the promise of 10-minute grocery deliveries is now extending to household chores such as cleaning, dishwashing, laundry and meal preparation. Urban Company said its rapid-response home services platform InstaHelp, launched only this financial year, delivered 2.7 million orders and a net transaction value of Rs 40 crore in the March quarter, with March alone crossing 1.1 million orders. The business reported an adjusted EBITDA loss of Rs 119 crore during the quarter as the company sharply increased spending on customer acquisition, supply onboarding and micro-market expansion. "We are investing to win, and we intend to stay ahead," cofounder and chief executive Abhiraj Singh Bhal said during the company's earnings call. The company's aggressive push comes amid a surge of investor interest in instant home services startups. Earlier this month, Pronto raised \$20 million in fresh funding from venture capitalist Lachy Groom, doubling its valuation to \$200 million within two months. The company said its daily bookings had jumped from 3,000 in December to more than 26,000 currently. Snabbit, another fast-growing player in the segment, raised \$56 million in April in a funding round led by Susquehanna Venture Capital, Mirae Asset Venture Investments and Bertelsmann India Investments. The company said it crossed one million monthly jobs in March. Recently, in a report, Morgan Stanley said combined monthly active users across Urban Company, Pronto and Snabbit reached 10.4 million in March, underlining the rapid adoption of app-based home services.

Adani Power to acquire 24% stake in JJPVL, key thermal assets for ₹4,194 cr

New Delhi.(Agency)

Adani Power on Thursday said it has entered into definitive agreements to acquire a 24 per cent stake in Jaiprakash Power Ventures and other thermal assets from Jaiprakash Associates for about ₹4,193.59 crore. According to a regulatory filing, the company has also inked a Share Purchase Agreement for the acquisition of 24 per cent shares of Jaiprakash Power Ventures Ltd, held by Jaiprakash Associates. Further, Adani Power has inked a Business Transfer Agreement for the acquisition of the 180 MW thermal power plant of Jaiprakash Associates located in Churk and other related assets, including 11.49 per cent shares of Prayagraj Power Generation Company Ltd, held by Jaiprakash Associates. It stated that the consideration for 24 per cent of the shareholding of JJPVL, held by JAL, stood at ₹2,993.60 crore and for the 180 MW thermal power plant of JAL located in Churk and other related assets, including 11.49 per cent shares of Prayagraj Power Generation Company Ltd, held by JAL, is ₹1,200 crore. On March 19, 2026, the company had intimated bourses that it had expressed its in-principle interest in becoming one of the "Implementing Entities" under the NCLT-approved resolution plan for Jaiprakash Associates Ltd. The company stated that as part of the implementation of the Approved Resolution Plan, the company has entered into these definitive agreements with JAL.

Can the rupee really crash to 150 against the US dollar?

Most economists will still rule out the viral prediction about the rupee hitting 150 against the US dollar. But in a world shaped by wars, oil shocks and volatile capital flows, is the debate really that absurd anymore?

New Delhi.(Agency)

Rs 150 for one US dollar sounds less like an exchange rate and more like the kind of number associated with an economy in deep trouble. Which is precisely why a recent prediction by finance commentator and Biz News+ founder Jayant Mundhra exploded across social media this week, triggering disbelief, panic, memes and a surprisingly serious debate about how vulnerable the rupee really is if the global energy crisis deepens further. Oil prices are climbing

again amid escalating geopolitical tensions. The US dollar is strengthening. American bond yields are surging. Foreign investors are turning cautious on emerging markets. And the rupee itself is already under pressure as fears of imported inflation and rising energy costs return to the centre of market conversations. Under normal circumstances, a prediction like "Rs 150 per dollar" may have been dismissed as internet sensationalism. But these are not normal market conditions. India imports the bulk of its crude oil requirements, making the rupee especially vulnerable whenever energy prices spiral higher. Every sustained jump in crude widens the country's import bill, increases demand for dollars, and puts fresh pressure on the currency. That vulnerability is exactly what Mundhra tapped into during his now-viral podcast appearance. His broader argument was that India's dependence on imported energy, electronics, technology infrastructure



and foreign capital leaves the rupee structurally exposed to external shocks. If oil prices remain elevated for a prolonged period while global investors continue rushing toward dollar assets, sustained rupee weakness could become difficult to avoid.

MAKING SENSE OF THE RUPEE'S FALL

The conversation around the rupee has already shifted noticeably in recent weeks. As India Today Digital noted in an analysis, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

appears increasingly comfortable allowing gradual depreciation rather than aggressively defending psychological currency levels through large-scale intervention. Economists tracking the currency market believe the RBI is now focused more on preventing disorderly volatility than defending specific exchange-rate levels. That shift matters because it changes how markets think about rupee weakness. Not very long ago, even discussing a three-digit rupee-dollar exchange rate sounded catastrophic. But former IMF Deputy Managing Director and Harvard professor Gita Gopinath recently argued that a rupee touching 100 against the dollar should not automatically be viewed as a crisis. Her point was not that a weakening rupee is harmless. Rather, it was that exchange rates alone do not determine economic strength, especially during periods of global dollar dominance and elevated oil prices. But Rs 150 is an entirely different conversation.

Silent listings? Why companies are going for confidential IPO filings

New Delhi.(Agency)

Rising tensions in West Asia are now beginning to reshape India's IPO market, with more companies reportedly considering confidential filings for their stock market debut as uncertainty grips global financial markets. Investment bankers and legal experts have said that a growing number of IPO-bound firms are now exploring the confidential filing route with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) instead of going through the traditional public filing process.

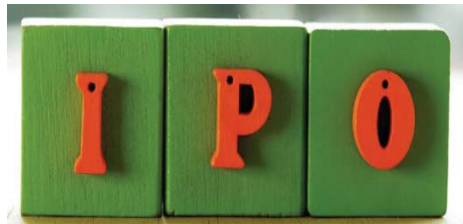
The shift comes at a time when crude oil prices remain elevated, the rupee is hitting record lows, foreign investor sentiment remains weak and stock markets continue to see volatility due to the prolonged conflict in West Asia.

WHY COMPANIES ARE TURNING CAUTIOUS

Companies planning IPOs usually prefer stable market conditions because uncertain markets can impact valuations, investor demand and listing performance. But the ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia have created fears around inflation, higher

energy prices, rising bond yields and weaker capital flows into emerging markets like India.

This has made several companies cautious about publicly revealing sensitive financial and business details



too early in the IPO process.

"Given that there is a lot of business uncertainty arising from the West Asia crisis, this additional time is an important benefit for IPO bound companies," Pracheta Bhattacharya, partner, JSA Advocates & Solicitors told The Economic Times (ET).

"Additionally, companies in niche sectors or the technology-led businesses do not want to reveal confidential performance metrics at the DRHP stage, with limited deal certainty. For them, it's making perfect sense to go for

the confidential route," he added. Under Sebi's confidential filing mechanism, companies can privately submit their draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) to the regulator without immediately making business and financial information public. The route gives firms greater flexibility to assess market conditions before formally launching their IPOs.

HOW CONFIDENTIAL IPO FILINGS WORK

Sebi introduced the confidential filing route in November 2022, bringing India closer to IPO practices followed in markets such as the United States, United Kingdom and Canada.

Under this mechanism, companies first file documents privately with SEBI and engage with the regulator confidentially during the review process.

The draft papers are eventually made public later in the IPO timeline before the issue opens for investors.

One major advantage is the timeline flexibility. Companies opting for the confidential route get an 18-month window from SEBI's final observations to launch their IPO, compared to 12 months under the traditional filing route.

Sensex, Nifty open higher as crude oil eases on hopes of Iran peace deal

New Delhi.(Agency)

stock markets opened higher on Thursday as easing crude oil prices and hopes of a possible peace deal between the US and Iran lifted investor sentiment. The BSE Sensex jumped 345.02 points, or 0.46%, to 75,663.41 in early trade, while the NSE Nifty50 rose 131.30 points, or 0.55%, to 23,790.30 as of 9:44 am.

Markets gained after crude oil prices cooled sharply overnight following comments by US President Donald Trump suggesting that negotiations with Iran may be nearing a conclusion. Brent crude oil prices, which had surged above USD 110 per barrel during the recent Iran conflict, slipped sharply on Wednesday and were trading near USD 105.87 per barrel on Thursday morning. WTI crude was around USD 99.18 per barrel. The fall in crude oil prices is being seen as a positive sign for India, which imports a large share of its oil requirements.

CRUDE OIL, RUPEE REMAIN KEY FOCUS
Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, said investors are closely watching crude oil prices and rupee stability. "The recent market movements indicate a buy on dips market construct. Buy on dips strategy has been working well," he said.

He added that the decline in Brent crude prices was helping improve market sentiment.

"Brent crude declining to USD 106 this morning is a positive signal. Perhaps the market is taking cues from President Trump's remark that 'the conflict will end soon and oil prices would plummet'," Vijayakumar said. However, he cautioned that markets would need stronger confirmation before turning fully optimistic. ALL MAJOR SECTORS TRADE HIGHER
Buying was visible across sectors, with all 16 major sectoral indices trading in the green. Nifty Realty rose 1.14%, while Nifty Metal gained 0.92%. Nifty Media climbed 0.75%, and Nifty Healthcare advanced 0.70%. Financial stocks also supported the market, with Nifty Financial Services rising 0.50% and Nifty PSU Bank gaining 0.57%. Broader markets remained strong as well. Nifty Midcap100 was up 0.59%, while Nifty Smallcap100 climbed 0.94%. India VIX, the market's fear gauge, dropped 2.80%, indicating easing volatility.

WHICH STOCKS GAINED?

Among Sensex and Nifty stocks, IndiGo led the gains with a rise of more than 3%. BEL jumped 2.44%, Asian Paints gained 1.59%, while Eternal rose 1.19%.

BPCL raises spot crude purchases to 60% amid West Asia conflict

New Delhi.(Agency)

State-owned oil marketing company Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited on Wednesday said it has increased its spot purchase of crude oil to 60% due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

The company, during its investor call for the fourth-quarter results, said it had initially planned to procure 45% of its crude requirement through spot purchases. However, disruptions in crude supply through the Strait of Hormuz — a key waterway that handles nearly 20% of global crude supply and around 40% of India's crude imports — forced the company to raise spot purchases to 60%.

"At the beginning of the year, we had allocated around 55% of our requirement through term contracts.

But we are not getting the full term quantities. We are getting around 45-46% of our term requirement because there are constraints in the Strait of Hormuz. The roughly 10% shortfall is being met through spot purchases. Initially, we had planned for 45% spot procurement, but now it is around 60%," said the company in an investor call. BPCL further said that several grades of crude are available in the spot market, but Russia continues to remain the major source of procurement. The company increased its Russian crude procurement from 25% in Q3 to 31% in Q4 and said it continues to rise to bridge supply gaps arising from the current geopolitical situation. The company also outlined a capital expenditure plan of Rs25,000

crore for FY27, with major investments focused on the Bina petrochemical project. According to the company, around Rs11,000 crore has been allocated towards refinery and petrochemical projects, including the Polypropylene project at Kochi, the PRFCC project at Mumbai Refinery and the Bina project. For marketing initiatives, including expansion of retail outlets, infrastructure and supply logistics, BPCL has earmarked around Rs10,000 crore. The company has also planned an equity infusion of around Rs2,250 crore into BPCL for ongoing upstream projects, while around Rs1,700 crore has been allocated towards CGD network expansion. Overall, the total capital allocation for FY27 stands at Rs25,000 crore.

Nvidia's AI gold rush continues: Posts record revenue, announces \$80 billion buyback

Nvidia Q1 results: The chip giant reported another blockbuster quarter, posting record revenue and profit numbers as global technology companies continue spending heavily on AI infrastructure, data centres and advanced computing systems.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The artificial intelligence boom continues to mint money for the world's most valuable company, Nvidia. The chip giant on Wednesday reported another blockbuster quarter, posting record revenue and profit numbers as global technology companies continue spending heavily on AI infrastructure, data centres and advanced computing systems. Nvidia also announced a massive USD 80 billion share buyback programme, underlining the company's confidence in

future growth even as competition in the AI chip market intensifies. The results once again highlighted how Nvidia has become the biggest beneficiary of the global AI race.

RECORD REVENUE DRIVEN BY AI DEMAND

Nvidia forecast second-quarter revenue of around USD 91 billion, above Wall Street estimates of USD 86.84 billion.

The company's earnings continue to be closely watched globally because Nvidia's chips power most of the world's leading artificial intelligence models and large data centres. From ChatGPT-style AI tools to cloud computing and enterprise AI systems, Nvidia processors have become central to the current AI expansion. Demand for AI infrastructure has surged sharply over the past two years, with major technology companies including Alphabet, Amazon and Microsoft continuing to pour massive investments into AI. According to estimates, Big Tech

firms are expected to spend more than USD 700 billion on AI this year, up sharply from around USD 400 billion in 2025.

That spending wave has directly boosted



Nvidia's business, making it one of the world's most valuable companies.

Alongside strong earnings, Nvidia announced a USD 80 billion share repurchase programme. A buyback allows companies to purchase their own shares

from the market, often helping improve shareholder returns and signalling management confidence in long-term growth. The move comes at a time when Nvidia's market value has already surged dramatically due to investor optimism around artificial intelligence.

The company also raised its dividend, adding to positive sentiment among investors.

JENSEN HUANG'S BIG AI BET CONTINUES TO PAY OFF

Under CEO Jensen Huang, Nvidia has transformed from a gaming-focused chipmaker into the backbone of the global AI industry. Its high-performance GPUs are now used across cloud platforms, AI research labs, autonomous systems and advanced enterprise computing. Nvidia's results are increasingly being viewed as a health check for the broader AI economy itself. Strong numbers from the company often indicate that spending on AI infrastructure remains strong across the technology sector.

Short news

Karnataka HC upholds jail term for KSRTC driver

BENGALURU.(Agency)

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday confirmed a sessions court ruling which awarded one year of simple imprisonment and imposed Rs 5,000 fine on a KSRTC bus driver who knocked down a commuter named Chitrashekharappa in 2019 at Chikkaballapura bus stand, leading to his death due to head injury. The HC said that the accused, being a professional driver, was expected to drive the bus by expecting unexpected things to occur within the precincts of the bus station.

The court also noted that merely on the ground that the accused, Nagaraj G H, attached to the Chikkaballapura depot, would lose the job if the conviction is upheld, cannot be treated as a mitigating circumstance to set aside the sentence of imprisonment either.

Justice V Srishananda passed the order recently, while partly allowing the criminal revision petition filed in 2023 by Nagaraj, challenging the order of conviction and sentence passed by the sessions court. He confirmed the order passed by the magistrate in 2023 for the offence under Section 304A IPC and one month imprisonment and Rs 1,000 fine for the offence under Section 279 IPC.

However, the high court noted that the separate sentence ordered by the magistrate for the offence under Section 279, a one-month simple imprisonment, needs to be set aside. No other mitigating circumstances are found to reduce the punishment for the offence under Section 304A, the judge said.

UP man swept away by crocodile during mother-in-law's funeral rites at Saryu river

Gonda, UP. (Agency)

A 30-year-old man was attacked and dragged into the Saryu River by a crocodile while bathing on its banks in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday. He has not been found since. Deepak Sharma, a resident of Greater Noida, had travelled to Umri village in Gonda district following the death of his mother-in-law, Urmila Devi. After helping dig a pit to prepare the funeral pyre at the riverbank, he went to bathe in the river. A crocodile emerged from the water, clamped its jaws around his head, and dragged him away. Witnesses said the attack happened within seconds.

Eyewitness Rajesh Shukla told reporters that those present at the funeral had advised Sharma not to enter the river, but he ignored the warning. The screams of onlookers drew a crowd, and villagers along with local boatmen immediately launched a search. However, by late evening, there was still no trace of Sharma.

Local police and district officials reached the spot soon after the incident, and a search operation was carried out by the revenue department team as well, but without success.

The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) team has been called in from Lucknow to intensify the search operation.

As the family and villagers await the team's arrival, Sharma's body has not yet been recovered.

Twisha Sharma's mother-in-law called people in judiciary after death: Family

Bhopal.(Agency)

The mother-in-law of Twisha Sharma allegedly made phone calls to several people, including some linked to the judiciary, a day after her 33-year-old daughter-in-law died by suicide at their home in Bhopal, her family alleged. Giribala Singh, a retired additional district judge, has been accused of dowry harassment by the Twisha's Noida-based parents. While some of the calls were reportedly made to relatives and acquaintances, others were allegedly made to persons associated with the judiciary, the family alleged, raising suspicions of possible attempts to influence the investigation.

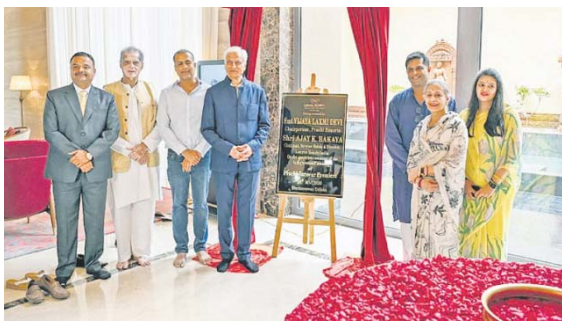
The family further claimed that the individuals who had installed CCTV cameras at the house were also contacted from Giribala Singh's phone number on May 13.

Twisha's family has released a list of the phone numbers and demanded a detailed investigation into the call records and communication trail. Twisha Sharma, a former model who is originally from Noida, was found dead on the night of May 12 at her marital home in Bhopal. Her in-laws claimed that she died by suicide, and a post-mortem report released on Wednesday also confirmed suicide. However, Twisha's family, which has accused the in-laws of dowry harassment, has strongly disputed the suicide claim. They alleged that Twisha made distressed phone calls.

Bhubaneswar adds new upscale hospitality address in Prachi Sarovar Premiere

BHUBANESWAR.(Agency)

Odisha's growing hospitality and tourism landscape received a major boost on Wednesday with the virtual inauguration of Prachi Sarovar Premiere Bhubaneswar by Union minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. Developed through a strategic partnership between Sarovar Hotels and Prachi Resorts, the upscale property is expected to strengthen Bhubaneswar's emergence as a prominent tourism, business and events destination in eastern India. Speaking on the occasion, Shekhawat said the tourism sector has been witnessing rapid growth across the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He praised the Odisha government for its efforts in promoting tourism and expressed confidence that the opening of the new hotel would further accelerate the sector's growth in the state.



Chairman of Sarovar Hotels Ajay K Bakaya said Bhubaneswar is rapidly evolving into one of India's most promising cultural, business and tourism destinations. The inauguration of Prachi Sarovar Premiere reflects Sarovar Hotels' commitment to expanding in high-growth markets with strong tourism and infrastructure potential, he said.

Bakaya also announced that the group is developing seven more hotels in

Bhubaneswar, Puri, Gopalpur, Berhampur and Keonjhar, which are expected to become operational in the coming years.

Prachi Resorts chairperson Vijaya Laxmi Devi said the hotel was envisioned as a property that reflects the spirit and cultural richness of Odisha while offering refined hospitality experiences for modern travellers. She added that the partnership with Sarovar Hotels would help bring world-class hospitality standards to the state and further strengthen Bhubaneswar's position as a destination for tourism, businesses and events. Director of Prachi Resorts Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo said the group has been associated with the hospitality sector since the late 1970s and plans to establish more such hotels across Odisha. The hospitality business contributes in a large way to economic growth through employment generation and providing income opportunities.

Cyberabad Municipal Corporation plans energy-efficient solar streetlights

HYDERABAD. (Agency)

The Cyberabad Municipal Corporation (CMC) has initiated steps to implement smart solar LED street lighting systems across its jurisdictions to push sustainable urban infrastructure and smart city development.

The project, worth Rs 1.43 crore, aims to modernise street lighting infrastructure with energy-efficient, solar-powered systems equipped with adaptive energy management, remote Internet of Things (IoT) monitoring and a GIS-based asset intelligence platform. The project also includes a five-year Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC). Officials said the initiative is expected to reduce electricity consumption, improve public safety, enhance monitoring capabilities and support sustainable urban governance. The

selected agency will design, supply, install and commission the LED-based solar streetlights at identified locations.

Under the Type-A category, 190 integrated



smart solar LED streetlight units will be installed. Each unit will feature a 70W LED luminaire producing at least 9,800 lumens, a 200Wp solar photovoltaic module with a

25-year warranty, an inbuilt Lithium Ferro Phosphate (LiFePO4) battery, three-day backup, smart charge controller, adaptive energy management system, remote IoT monitoring and a GIS-enabled asset intelligence platform.

The project also includes 15 high-capacity Type-B smart lighting systems for major roads and high-traffic stretches. These units will have a 120W LED luminaire producing at least 16,800 lumens, a 540Wp solar module, LiFePO4 battery with three-day backup, remote IoT monitoring and a GIS-based centralised monitoring platform.

The scope includes GI poles, brackets, civil foundation works and installation activities. Around 130 poles or mounting structures will also be installed.

Police bust UAE-linked drug network, two held

Amritsar.(Agency)

Amritsar Commissionerate Police has busted an international drug cartel with the arrest of two accused persons, and seized 10 kg ICE (Methamphetamine) and 4 kg heroin, said Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav on Wednesday. However, police have yet to find out the source of the drug.

Police identified the arrested accused as Mohit alias Bachi (19), from Jalandhar's Pavaar, and Arshdeep Singh alias Arsh alias Harman (23), from Amritsar's Kot Khalsa.

The DGP said that preliminary investigation revealed that the arrested accused were in contact with a Dubai-based drug smuggler operating. They were acting under his directions to traffic narcotics in Punjab and Delhi, he said. Yadav said Mohit has recently returned from Dubai, where he was allegedly trained and tasked with transporting consignments of heroin and ICE.

The accused were further supplying the narcotics across the Majha and Doaba regions, he said. Sharing operational details, Amritsar CP Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said police teams acted on specific inputs and with a well-



planned operation. The CP also said during interrogation, accused Mohit revealed that the Dubai-based smuggler was targeting young individuals and motivating them to participate in drug trafficking activities. In February this year, two associates — Sahibpreet Singh alias Sahib and Gagandeep Singh alias Gagan — of the Dubai-based accused were arrested with 7.6 kg heroin and Rs 21,000 drug money. Moreover, the mother and sister of the smuggler in

Dubai are presently lodged in Central Jail (Amritsar) in connection with an FIR registered under NDPS Act at Police Station Raja Sansi involving seizure of 42 Kg heroin. When asked if the heroin and ICE was being sent from the UAE, the SHO Balwinder said, "We are yet to investigate that part. We need 10 more days to find out."

Amritsar CP Bhullar also said the source of the drug was in Pakistan and it was being smuggled into India via drones.

9 members of gang involved in theft, sale of newborns arrested in Raebareli

Lucknow. (Agency)

Police in Uttar Pradesh's Raebareli on Wednesday arrested nine persons, including four women, in connection with an alleged inter-state gang involved in the theft and sale of newborn children. Police said the arrests were made during an investigation into the abduction of an infant from her mother at a railway station. The nine-month-old child was recovered through surveillance operations and coordinated field action, police added.

"We suspect that more people may be linked to the network and the investigation is continuing," said Raebareli Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Alok Singh.

The arrested suspects are from different districts and Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, he added.

According to the police, the complainant, a native of Madhya Pradesh living with her husband in Delhi, was travelling by train with her two children on May 13 after a domestic dispute. During the journey, she befriended an unidentified man and woman, who gradually gained her trust.

Before the train reached Raebareli, the woman took the complainant's nine-month-old child on the pretext of feeding and caring for him. After arriving at the railway station, the couple allegedly took the mother towards a food stall and fled with the infant.

The woman later filed a kidnapping case at the Kotwali Nagar police station in Raebareli. Police also added charges related to human trafficking in the case. Police launched an investigation, using CCTV footage, surveillance inputs, railway station monitoring and human intelligence to identify the suspects and trace the child's movements.

UP boy working in J&K rescued before alleged religious conversion, probe ordered

Lucknow.(Agency)

Uttar Pradesh Police and their Jammu and Kashmir counterparts, in a joint operation, rescued a boy from Kupwara and brought him back to Bijnor amid allegations of religious conversion to Islam. Authorities have also ordered a detailed probe into the alleged conversion of the 17-year-old boy, who had reportedly been sent from Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district to Ganderbal in Jammu and Kashmir to work at a local salon. According to police officials, the boy had been brought to and was later traced to Kupwara. He had been brought to Kupwara from Ganderbal, where he had been working at a salon outlet.

A police team from Bijnor travelled to Jammu and Kashmir and, with assistance from local authorities, brought the minor back to Uttar Pradesh.

Officials described the action as a rescue operation, adding that further legal proceedings in the matter are underway.

Police said the teenager is currently being questioned to gather complete details about the incident and to determine the extent of the alleged conversion network and the involvement of other individuals.

The case came to light after the boy's father, Krishna Kumar, a resident of Khanjahanpur Bahadur village in Bijnor, filed a complaint alleging that his son Vishal had been taken to Jammu and Kashmir around three years ago by Wasim, a resident of Kajiwala village, to work at a salon in Ganderbal.

Attack on advocate Gagandeep Jammu: HCH questions Punjab and Haryana Bar strike

Chandigarh.(Agency)

"Do you imagine the plight of that litigant who must have come from 100 kilometres or 200 kilometres just with the hope that his case will be decided today?" With these remarks, Punjab and Haryana High Court Chief Justice Sheel Nagu on Wednesday questioned the Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association's decision to abstain from work during the post-lunch session in solidarity with advocate Gagandeep Jammu, two days after an alleged attempt on his life.

The observations came during the hearing of a suo motu matter taken up by a Division Bench of Chief Justice Nagu and Justice Justice Sanjiv Berry in connection with the



alleged firing incident involving Jammu.

Earlier in the day, the Bar Association issued a communication stating that the High Court had directed authorities to ensure the "life and liberty" of Jammu and that a permanent PCR had been stationed outside his residence. The association also

said it would pursue a fair and expeditious investigation into the FIR registered on May 19, 2026.

The Bar Association later announced that members would abstain from work during the post-lunch session as a mark of solidarity with Jammu and in protest against the alleged attack. During the proceedings, High Court Bar Association president Rohit Sud submitted that the abstention was symbolic and reflected the sentiments of Bar members. Chief Justice Nagu, however, objected to the move and questioned the impact such decisions had on litigants. "If you abstain from work, will the gangsters stop functioning? We have not yet signed the order. I will not sign the order unless you withdraw the strike. We

had taken the case out of turn and passed the order. We did our duty. Are you doing your duty towards your client?" the Chief Justice asked.

When members of the Bar informed the court that the abstention was limited to the post-lunch session and intended as a symbolic gesture, the Chief Justice responded: "You are disrespecting your profession by going on strike."

At another point during the hearing, the Chief Justice remarked: "What attracts you towards just not working? That's your duty. It is your duty as an advocate to represent the client." The Bench also observed that there were "other ways" to express solidarity apart from abstaining from court work.

NEWS BOX

No trip to Ahmedabad? MS Dhoni heads to Ranchi on CSK's final matchday

CHENNAI. (Agency)

In a move that aligns perfectly with his detached approach to this season's away fixtures, Mahendra Singh Dhoni has reportedly packed his bags and departed for Ranchi on the exact day Chennai Super Kings face Gujarat Titans in their final league stage match. The legendary former captain left the team hotel and has already reached his hometown, according to ESPNcricinfo. The 44-year-old maestro will only rejoin the squad if CSK manage to navigate the mathematical minefield required to secure a spot in the playoffs. The move comes as no surprise to close observers, given that Dhoni has strictly avoided travelling for away games this season, making his solitary exceptional road trip to Lucknow earlier this month the lone outlier. CSK batting coach Mike Hussey later confirmed the reason behind Dhoni's complete unavailability for the crucial clash in Ahmedabad, revealing that the veteran has picked up a fresh, painful thumb injury. This development sheds clear light on why Dhoni was spotted with a



heavily taped thumb during CSK's recent match against Sunrisers Hyderabad—notably the only game this entire IPL 2026 season where he actually came out to the ground for his home fans at Chepauk. For the yellow army, Dhoni's departure is a pragmatic conclusion to a campaign that has entirely passed him by on the pitch. Sidelined by a stubborn calf injury sustained just before the tournament opener, and now worsened by the thumb issue, Dhoni has not played a single game in IPL 2026. While he has remained a looming presence in the dugout during home matches, he has spent the season dressed in training gear rather than matchday yellow, leaving a gaping void in the middle order. The emotional crescendo of this underlying retirement saga reached its peak earlier this week at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium.

Following CSK's disappointing five-wicket defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad, the team conducted their traditional lap of appreciation to thank the Chepauk faithful.

BCCI's domestic outlook: Focus on T20s



NEW DELHI. (Agency)

The much-awaited 2026-27 domestic calendar was announced by the Indian cricket board (BCCI) on Wednesday with the U23 white ball competition and the inter-zonal university tournament for Vizzy Trophy being changed to T20 from 50-over per side format. The move by the richest cricket board could be a sign for big changes expected in future and former players, who now are coaches of successful domestic sides, see it as a positive step going forward. "I think change is an essence of life and this is absolutely fine if it's going this way," former India batter Amay Khurasiya told this daily. With cricket officially returning to Olympics for the 2028 Los Angeles Games since its first appearance in 1900, the ex-flamboyant left-hand batter from Madhya Pradesh believed the move could have been taken keeping the new order in mind. "With time, I see the world playing more T20s and maybe T20s will take over as they are cricket's gateway to the Olympics also. This is my feeling and it's absolutely fine. If things are changing and everything is going into this mode, we just have to accept the way it is going to be," he opined. Usman Gani, Vidarbha head coach, who led the side to Ranji Trophy and historic Vijay Hazare title, echoed Khurasiya's sentiments. "The cricket world is changing with time being a big factor. It's a logical decision as talented U23 cricketers can feature both in Vijay Hazare and Ranji Trophy to get the feel of both formats apart from playing T20 format. More importantly, it will help the players financially as the IPL scouts now have one more tournament to look out for talented youngsters," said Gani.

As per the calendar, the Men's U23 State A Trophy (Elite and Plate) will begin on December 1. The knockouts of the Elite category will be held from December 17 to 23. The timing will be apt for U23 cricketers to showcase their skills ahead of the IPL auction, which is usually held during that time of the year.

GT vs CSK preview: Can Chennai keep their stuttering hopes alive in Ahmedabad?

IPL 2026: Destiny isn't in the hands of CSK as they look to keep their fading playoff hopes alive in Ahmedabad against GT. Gujarat will be aiming to get back to winning ways and tighten up their performance in front of their home crowd.

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

For Chennai Super Kings, Ahmedabad brings in a lot of good memories. On a rainy couple of nights in 2023, they defeated the Gujarat Titans to win their fifth title. It almost seemed like they will race ahead of the rest in terms of trophies and establish their dynasty. But CSK now find that destiny isn't in their hands at the moment. After a poor start as they lost the first three games, the five-time IPL champions were able to find their mojo and went on a run that got them close to playoff contention. This was

powered by the might of their batters and the form of the bowlers, especially of Jamie Overton along with the rest. But just when Chennai looked like getting away from the rest, injuries would come in and pull them back. That happened with Overton, who was forced to head back home with an injury. That ruined their plans and combination even more, resulting in two straight losses. The last one against Sunrisers Hyderabad has now left them in a very precarious spot. Even with a win, their place for the playoff isn't guaranteed. Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings can still go above them. Even the Delhi Capitals can catch them also on 14 points. A loss means a direct knockout and a third season of missing out on the playoffs. They won't be having the noise around MS Dhoni, who has returned home to Ranchi ahead of the final league game. For the Gujarat Titans, their qualification was sealed with CSK's loss to SRH and Shubman Gill would be pleased with a lot of things from his side. With the bat, Gill, Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler have once again been the main aggregators, with Washington Sundar

playing a big role at No.4. The bowling has been phenomenal in the powerplay phase, with Kagiso Rabada and Mohammed Siraj usually bowling their first three overs during



that time. Rashid Khan's form and Prasad Krishna always being amongst the wickets has helped. But they do have a few things to iron out before the playoffs. Also a win will strengthen their chances to finish in the top two and play in the qualifier 1 in Dharamsala. So they will get a chance to have two cracks at reaching the final, even if they lose and escape from the heat that is taking over the north. So, with a lot on the line for both sides, we can expect a scintillating clash under the bright lights at the Narendra Modi stadium.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH RUTURAJ?

When the prospect of seeing Sanju Samson and Ruturaj Gaikwad at the top became a reality, CSK fans were expecting a major shift for them after the failure of the openers last season. While Samson has gotten off the blocks quickly, scoring 477 runs from 13 matches with two hundreds to his name. He has a strike-rate of 166.20 and an average of 47.7. But at the same time, Ruturaj has scored 321 runs from 13 matches with an average of 29.18 and a strike-rate of 120.67. He has only managed 28 boundaries and 10 sixes during the same time. To give context, Finn Allen smoked 10 maximums during his outing against GT. Probably a knock that summed up the struggles for the Chennai skipper was his outing against SRH. He scored 15 runs from 21 balls, with all of them coming via singles. While Stephen Fleming and the CSK management remain firmly behind their skipper, he needs to start letting the bat do the talking on Thursday. In the three matches Ruturaj has played at the Narendra Modi stadium, he has scored 118 runs with a highest of 92.

IPL Play of the Day: Sunil Narine weaves his magic again to keep Kolkata afloat

New Delhi. (Agency)

How many times have we seen Sunil Narine weave a web around opposition batters and help Kolkata Knight Riders emerge victorious? How often has he stepped up exactly when KKR needed him the most? There's a reason the franchise has continued to retain him year after year. The relationship has gone far beyond the IPL, with Narine also representing several other Knight Riders franchises across global T20 leagues. On Wednesday, Narine once again showed why he is still regarded as one of the greatest T20 spinners despite being well past his prime. He returned exceptional figures of 4-0-13-1 and completely strangled the Mumbai Indians batting line-up as KKR sealed a crucial four-wicket win. Had Narine not applied the brakes in the middle overs, Kolkata could easily have ended up chasing something around 165, a target that would have been far from straightforward on a Kolkata surface that was not exactly a batting paradise. Yes, the Knight Riders had already reduced Mumbai to 46 for four inside the powerplay, but Narine still had

the responsibility of ensuring the opposition did not claw their way back into the contest. With his trademark accuracy, subtle variations and relentless control, he never allowed the batters to break free or shift the momentum back in Mumbai's favour.



HOW NARINE TIED DOWN MUMBAI

No matter how batting-friendly a T20 pitch may be, conceding just one boundary in a four-over spell says plenty about the control and aura a bowler possesses. Sunil Narine once again showed why batters still approach him with caution, if not fear, as he bowled 16 dot balls and never allowed Tilak

Varma, Hardik Pandya or Corbin Bosch to dominate him. Narine strangled the MI innings during the middle overs on a pitch offering grip and turn. Using all his experience, the veteran spinner steadily drained the momentum out of the contest and forced the batters into survival mode.

Tilak looked uncomfortable from the moment Narine entered the attack. The left-hander struggled to read both the off-break and the deceptive carrom ball, often getting rooted to the crease while trying to pick the variation from Narine's hand. Even after Tilak managed to break free with a slog sweep for six, Narine quickly tightened his lines again and denied him any rhythm.

Hardik also found it difficult to break the shackles. Narine repeatedly cramped him for room while varying his pace cleverly. One sharp carrom ball straightened past Hardik's outside edge, showing how difficult Narine remained to read. The breakthrough eventually came when Narine bowled a beautiful off-break that spun through Hardik's defence and rattled the stumps.

Hardik Pandya rues fielding collapse behind MI's disastrous IPL 2026 season

Kolkata. (Agency)

Hardik Pandya did not try to hide Mumbai Indians' biggest problem after another crushing defeat ended their already disastrous IPL 2026 campaign even further. The MI captain admitted the franchise's repeated fielding failures throughout the season had badly hurt the team, saying dropped catches constantly left Mumbai "chasing the game." Mumbai Indians slumped to another defeat against Kolkata Knight Riders on May 20 at Eden Gardens, a result that summed up much of their miserable season. After managing just four wins in 13 matches, MI now sit second-last on the IPL 2026 points table with only eight points and already eliminated from playoff contention. Speaking after the defeat, Hardik openly admitted Mumbai's fielding standards had fallen well below the level required to compete consistently in the IPL. "I think throughout the season, we've been quite poor in fielding. I think we have



dropped a lot of catches, which obviously no one wants to do it. But in that part of the game, I think there is no hiding away. I think if you get chances, if you want to win games, you need to grab all the chances, even half chances as well," Hardik Pandya said. "But yeah, when you drop chances which can change the game, it's always you are chasing the game," added the embattled Pandya. After posting a below-par 147/8, MI still managed to create moments during KKR's chase where they could have dragged themselves back into the contest.

But once again, their fielding let them down badly. The most frustrating moment came in the 10th over. Rovman Powell top-edged a pull shot off Hardik Pandya, and what should have been a straightforward catch turned into complete confusion between Deepak Chahar and Robin Minz. Both fielders hesitated, neither committed properly, and the ball eventually dropped safely between them. It was exactly the kind of moment that has haunted Mumbai throughout IPL 2026.

FIELDING ERRORS SUMMED UP MI'S HORROR SEASON

Mumbai's catching problems have followed them almost the entire season. The franchise dropped five catches in a single game against Punjab Kings earlier in the tournament, while multiple matches have slipped away because of missed opportunities in the field. For a side that once built its dominance on discipline and ruthlessness.

The forgotten IPL OG: How cricket repaid Manish Pandey in Kolkata



New Delhi. (Agency)

There is a particular kind of cricketer who never gets the biography, rarely gets the documentary, but always, always, seems to be around when it matters. Manish Pandey is that cricketer. KKR vs MI: Highlights | Scorecard

On Wednesday night at Eden Gardens, in a must-win game against Mumbai Indians, he did what he has quietly done for two decades, contributed in every way imaginable, without fuss, without fanfare. A catch in the ring. A steady hand at the crease. 45 runs on a pitch that made run-scoring feel like hard labour. Manish Pandey has featured in all 19 seasons of the Indian Premier League. He shares that distinction with exactly three others — Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and MS Dhoni. The names require no introduction. Between them, they have amassed thousands of international appearances, World Cup medals, and enough records to fill an encyclopedia.

Manish Pandey, by contrast, played 29 ODIs and 39 T20Is. His international career never quite caught the fire that everyone who watched him bat in his prime felt it should. While his three contemporaries scaled Everest, Pandey quietly climbed smaller mountains — doing it again, and again, and again. In the last six seasons, he has managed just 28 innings. He last played a full IPL season way back in 2020, for Sunrisers Hyderabad. He is 36 years and 263 days old. Wednesday began before the batting even started. Chasing a catch inside the ring — the kind high and swirling, the sort that younger fielders misjudge. Pandey settled under it with the calm authority of a man who has caught a thousand of them. Earlier in the season, he had taken a catch against RCB that Shane Watson, KKR's assistant coach, says will be in contention for Catch of the Season. **NOT SURE HOW HE'S DOING IT**

When Watson speaks about Pandey, the admiration is unguarded.

V for victory, V for Villa: Emery's Europa League magic strikes again

Aston Villa won their first Europa League title on Wednesday, May 20, under the coaching of Unai Emery. This was the Spanish coach's fifth Europa trophy, funnily with clubs having 'Villa' in their name.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Aston Villa won their maiden Europa League title on Wednesday, May 20, under the guidance of Unai Emery, as the Spanish coach once again proved why he remains the undisputed king of the competition. Remarkably, all five of Emery's Europa League triumphs have come with clubs carrying 'Villa' in their name - Sevilla,

Villarreal and now Aston Villa. Villa dismantled Freiburg 3-0 in the final in Istanbul, capping off a stunning rise under Emery, who took charge of the club in 2022 when they were hovering dangerously close to the Premier League relegation zone. Less than four years later, he has transformed Villa into one of England's strongest sides, guided them back into the Champions League and now delivered their first European trophy since 1982. Wednesday's performance was perhaps the perfect representation of Emery's Aston Villa project. They were organised without the ball, ruthless in transition and clinical in front of goal, completely overwhelming Freiburg on the biggest night of their season. "This final is the confirmation about how we are progressing," Emery told TNT Sports after the match. "Europe gave us a lot." As the final whistle blew in Turkey, thousands of Aston Villa supporters erupted in celebration inside the stadium. Among them was Prince William, arguably the club's

most famous fan, who watched on ecstatically as Villa lifted European silverware once again.



"Amazing night!! Huge congratulations to all the players, team, staff and everyone connected to the club! 44 years since the last taste of European silverware!" Prince William posted on X. **UNAI EMERY: MR EUROPA LEAGUE**

Dubbed "Mr Europa League" by fans across

Europe, Emery has built an unparalleled legacy in the competition. He first dominated the tournament with Sevilla, winning three consecutive titles between 2014 and 2016, before guiding Villarreal to glory in 2021. Aston Villa have now become the latest club to benefit from his remarkable European touch. The triumph also marked Villa's first major trophy since the League Cup in 1996, underlining just how dramatically the club has risen under the Spaniard. Emery said after the game that he was proud to have elevated Aston Villa's standing in Europe and insisted that the ambition now was to establish the club among the Premier League elite while competing strongly in the Champions League next season. Villa captain John McGinn dedicated the victory to supporters who stood by the club through some of the darkest moments in recent history, including their three-year spell in the Championship between 2016 and 2019.



Rakul Preet Singh

Weighs In On 'One-Time Cheating' In Relationships: 'Life Is Too Long To Not Forgive'

Rakul Preet Singh is currently enjoying love and appreciation coming her way for her performance in the film *Pati, Patni Aur Woh Do*. Directed by Mudassar Aziz, the film also stars Ayushmann Khurrana, Sara Ali Khan and Wamiqa Gabbi in key roles. Amid the positive reactions from the audience, Rakul recently spoke about cheating and forgiveness in relationships. Her comment came days after her husband, Jacky Bhagnani, jokingly described his marriage to her as a "situationship." In a recent interview, Rakul admitted that "one-time cheating" could, in some cases, be forgiven, but she also made it clear that cheating is ultimately "not okay." While speaking to Mashable India, the cast of *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* was asked if cheating can ever be acceptable in a relationship. Rakul Preet Singh was quick to respond with a firm "no." Sara Ali Khan said, "I mean the least you can do is say sorry, but it is definitely not okay." Ayushmann Khurrana added, "Marriage has its own rules. At the same time, if sorry has been said genuinely, then why not?" A visibly shocked Rakul reacted and asked, "Cheating kar ke?"

Ayushmann clarified his point and said, "People make mistakes. It may be genuine." Rakul went on to add, "It also depends on what is the extent... What is the extent? If cheating is a habit..." Before Rakul Preet Singh could finish her point, Sara jumped in and asked, "One-time cheating is okay?" Rakul quickly clarified her stance, saying, "I am not okay." She and Ayushmann Khurrana then reiterated together that cheating is "not okay," with Ayushmann further emphasizing, "Primarily, it is not okay."

The *De De Pyaar De* actress further elaborated, "But if somebody can have a slip, life is too long to not forgive for one mistake." She quickly clarified that the statement had nothing to do with her own marriage, adding, "This doesn't apply to my personal relationship. Please note." Ayushmann supported her stance and said, "Humans make mistakes. But if they are genuinely apologetic about it, and if you feel for that person... life is too long." Sara, meanwhile, admitted, "I might forgive but not forget." Rakul responded, "But I think if you forgive then you will have to forget," to which Sara concluded: "That's where it gets tricky." Earlier, in an interview, Jacky's "situationship" comment took social media by storm. He said, "Rakul and I are married, but we are like in a situationship, which is, of course, we are exclusive to each other because that's why we are married. But the most important thing is that I can talk to her about anything." Social media was surprised with his comment, and it led to many thinking if things are not well between them. However, Rakul posted a playful video later, making Jacky hold his ears. In the video she was heard saying, "Kitne baar bola hai isko, that we are millennials... Gen Z banne ki zarurat nahi hain! Bola tha na."



Amaal Malik Accuses 'Mixed Syndicate Of Egoistic Humans' Of Choking His Growth In Industry



Music composer Amaal Malik has levelled serious allegations of lobbying against him by "a mixed syndicate of egoistic humans" in the industry. The music composer recently took to his X, formerly Twitter, and shared a long note in which he spoke about tough working conditions and hostility towards him by certain professionals in the industry.

He wrote, "My Dear #AMAALIAN 2019 to 2026 The big boys in powerful positions have got me out of more than 60 odd projects. 20 films toh maine khud hi mana kar diye as it was beneath me to work in those setups. The musician in me wouldn't be able to respect himself. I still did my bit, and will always do my best to put music and shoot videos whenever possible for my fans, with or without the movies.. No regrets at all, it's their loss. But somehow it becomes a loss to my listeners & fans, and I'm sorry for that but I need to make it clear to all of you." He further mentioned that he has been trying his best for the last 8 years, with utmost sincerity & obviously some respectful terms & conditions of working but sadly it doesn't work for this place. He also shared that his inability to hide the truth about the industry and its workings has irked them even more, leading to pointless threats to him and his family.

He shared, "There are some very powerful set of people that don't want me to be part of their films or any film for a matter of fact, and it's not just labels, it's beyond that NOW, it's a mixed syndicate of egoistic humans. I will not name them today but their time will come someday and the lord above will show them their place. All of them are playing award worthy politics for almost 8 years now and that's why you hear less of my music in films".

"I can't be part of a clout, a power setup, or be part of petty groupism. Even the NEPOTISM isn't working. So mujhe maaf karo..... Mera indie music suno (So forgive me..... Listen to my indie music). If a film song comes great, if not then don't fret", he added.

Celina Jaitley Gets Emotional During Visit To Maa Baglamukhi Temple, Prays To Reunite With Her Kids



Actress Celina Jaitley has been dealing with personal turmoil as she is fighting a divorce battle with her Austrian husband, Peter Haag. Amid the ongoing battle, she visited the Maa Baglamukhi Temple and prayed for a reunion with her kids and brother. In the video, a visibly emotional Celina was seen praying to Maa Baglamukhi. While sharing the video, Celina Jaitley wrote a long caption and said, "#maabaglamukhi: In the Garbhagriha of Maa Baglamukhi, I placed my prayers at the feet of the Divine Mother for reunion with my brother, for reunion with my children, and for the restoration of what love and destiny should never separate (sic)."

"I share this sacred puja with every soul seeking Maa Baglamukhi's blessings, protection, justice, and the strength to bring their loved ones home (sic)," she further added. Earlier, Celina had shared another set of pictures from the temple and wrote, "A month ago... Maa Baglamukhi entered my life through a well-wisher and friend, Hiten. As a lifelong Devi Bhakt, I humbly admit... I knew very little about the Divine Mother, Maa Baglamukhi. And then... she began appearing everywhere. Through people... Through signs... Through random pop-up mantras. Through divine synchronicities, I simply could not ignore. And within just four weeks of first appearing in my life... my Mother called me to her."

"Not by road. Not by chance. But in a way only the Divine could orchestrate... she brought me to her sacred temple in the most unexpected, beautiful, and luxurious way possible... on my friend's private jet... I still cannot fully comprehend it. And perhaps it was always written... as some of my own roots trace back to Kotgarh, in the beautiful mountains of Himachal Pradesh. My deepest gratitude to my dearest friend @realpz for flying me here," she added. For the unversed, in November 2025, Celina filed a case against Peter, accusing him of domestic violence, cruelty, and manipulation.

She sought ₹50 crore and other sums in compensation. The case is currently in court. Celina Jaitley has been away from films for over a decade. She was last seen in a lead role in the 2011 romantic comedy *Thank You*.



Huma Qureshi

On Bias In Bollywood: 'Female-Led Films Still Don't Get Budgets Male Stars Do'

Huma Qureshi, who is currently at Cannes, spoke candidly about the challenges faced by women-led films in Bollywood, saying that despite changing times, female-oriented projects still struggle to receive the same budgets and backing as films headlined by male stars. Talking about India's cultural diversity and mythology, she said that there is a lot of potential in India to have stories with female-forward narratives. However, she said that female-led movies don't get the kind of budgets that films with male stars get. Despite the challenges, Huma said female actors across the industry are continuously pushing boundaries and working to change the landscape for future generations.



Huma Qureshi On Female-Oriented Films

During an interaction with Brut India at the Cannes Film Festival, Huma Qureshi was asked whether audiences have become more accepting of women-centric cinema and if more Hindi adaptations of female-led films are on the horizon. The actress replied, "I hope we don't do any remakes. I hope we do more original content. We have so much potential in our country to have our own kind of female forward narrative. We have such a diverse country. Look at our mythology,

culture. Look at the stories that come from our country. I feel like the focus should be on that constantly."

Huma also reflected on the industry's long-standing perception that women-led films have limited box office potential. "Honestly, if you ask me, it's something that I am also going through or struggling with right now. Where we don't get the kind of budgets that male movie stars get. There's always that bias that female films have a certain box office potential." When asked whether such bias still exists in the industry today, the actor replied, "Yes, definitely. Maybe people wouldn't say it as much, but that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. And that's something you have to constantly navigate. But the only way to break that is to keep going through and just constantly keep working. And not just me, I feel so many of my female colleagues are constantly pushing that envelope and pushing hard to change the reality for not just themselves in their careers, but also for many others that will follow through."

NEWS BOX

Pakistan commits to fiscal targets as IMF reviews reforms, budget

World. (Agency)

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has concluded its latest round of discussions with Pakistan, focusing on the country's economic outlook, upcoming budget plans and the implementation of reforms linked to its ongoing IMF-supported financial programmes. In a statement released on Wednesday, the IMF said Pakistani authorities had committed to achieving a primary budget surplus target of 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the 2027 fiscal year as part of efforts to stabilise the economy and maintain fiscal discipline.

The IMF delegation, led by adviser Iva Petrova, visited Islamabad from May 13 to May 20 for detailed consultations with Pakistani officials. The discussions covered recent economic developments, reform progress and the possible impact of growing instability in the Middle East on Pakistan's economy. The latest talks come shortly after the IMF approved around \$1.32 billion in additional funding for Pakistan earlier this month under the country's broader \$7 billion financial assistance programme.

According to the IMF, Pakistan's central bank reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a tight monetary policy stance to control inflation and stabilise economic expectations. The fund noted that authorities would continue closely monitoring the possible spillover effects of rising global energy prices, particularly amid tensions in the Middle East that have increased volatility in oil markets.

Pakistan has been battling persistent inflation, external financing pressures and weakening foreign exchange reserves in recent years, making IMF support crucial for economic stability and investor confidence.

Israeli minister makes Gaza flotilla activists kneel with hands tied, sparks row

World. (Agency)

Israeli police forced activists from a Gaza-bound aid flotilla to kneel with their hands tied behind their backs on Wednesday. The action sparked outrage from foreign leaders and members of Israel's own government. The activists had been aboard a flotilla carrying humanitarian aid toward Gaza, as aid groups continue to warn of deep shortages despite a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States in October 2025. Organisers said the mission sought to challenge Israel's blockade and draw global attention to conditions inside the enclave. Israel, meanwhile, said that the naval blockade remains legal under international law. The video was posted online by far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, which showed detained activists kneeling on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs as armed personnel guarded the area nearby. In one moment from the footage, officers push an activist to the ground after she shouts, "Free, free Palestine," while others remain lined up beside her. "They came as big heroes," Ben-Gvir says while walking past detainees with an Israeli flag in hand. "Look at them now. See how they look now, not heroes and not anything." Instead of strengthening Israel's position internationally, the video opened cracks within the government itself. Foreign Minister Gideon Saar rebuked Ben-Gvir accused him of damaging the country's image after what he described as careful diplomatic efforts by soldiers and officials. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also appeared uneasy with the optics. While defending Israel's right to stop the flotilla, Netanyahu said the treatment shown in the footage was "not in line with Israel's values and norms".

PRESSURE BUILDS ON ISRAEL

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni described Ben-Gvir's conduct as "inadmissible" after reports confirmed Italian citizens, including a lawmaker and a journalist, were among those detained. Rome demanded explanations from Israel and summoned the Israeli ambassador.

India slams Pakistan at UN, says 'heinous acts' no surprise from country bombing its own people

World. (Agency)

India on Wednesday slammed Pakistan at the United Nations Security Council, accusing it of carrying out cross-border attacks on Afghan civilians and describing such actions as consistent with a country that "bombs its own people" and engages in "systematic genocide".

The remarks came after Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during the annual open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, held under China's presidency of the Council for May.

Responding strongly, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Harish Parvathaneni, said it was "ironic" that Pakistan, with long-tainted record of genocidal acts, had sought to comment on matters that were internal to India.

Parvathaneni referred to estimates by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which documented around 750 civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan during the first three months of 2026 due to cross-border violence allegedly involving Pakistani military forces. According to UNAMA estimates cited by India, 94 of 95 civilian casualty incidents were attributed to Pakistani security personnel.

How China built world's largest train station in just 38 months with robot army

In just 38 months, China built the world's largest railway station in Chongqing, a sprawling megacity strategically developed under Mao Zedong's Third Front campaign. Beijing could make the unthinkable possible due to a robot revolution.

World. (Agency)

While visiting China as part of US President Donald Trump's high-profile billionaire entourage last week, Elon Musk took to X to repost a video of the construction journey of the Chongqing East Railway Station, which is the world's largest. While Musk didn't write anything in the post, it remains a subject of curiosity about why he made the post. That's because he has

previously expressed scepticism about public transport. Curiosity aside, the real story of Chongqing East Railway Station is more interesting. The story of how it was constructed in 38 months using an army of robots. The Chongqing East Railway Station is a gigantic multi-modal transit complex. It is the world's largest railway station by floor area, which was opened to the public in May 2025.

Located deep inland in Southwestern China, Chongqing, where the station is located, is the country's largest city by both population and administrative area. A major economic powerhouse today, Chongqing was dramatically transformed starting in the 1960s under Mao Zedong's Third Front Campaign. It was a massive effort that redirected huge national resources to rapidly industrialise China's historically neglected interior regions. As a result, industries spread westwards from the Pacific coast to the

east. Today, Chongqing, and its new station, stand as a striking display of China's formidable engineering prowess, and its massive economic heft. It's the same Chinese city



where one would see metro trains passing through apartment blocks. While many countries struggle for decades to deliver large-scale projects, China built this colossal 1.22-million-square-meter

station in just 38 months. Here's how the station was built by an army of robots.

HOW CHONGQING BECAME CHINA'S INLAND MEGACITY

Before diving into the station itself, it is essential to first understand the city behind it. Chongqing is one of China's most important and dynamic megacities. Like many other Chinese urban centres like Shanghai and Beijing, Chongqing is an ancient city dating back nearly 3,000 years. During World War II, it served as the capital of the Chinese Nationalist (KMT) Government after the fall of the erstwhile capital, Nanking, to Japanese forces in 1937. It was during the 1960s that Chongqing truly rose as one of China's most important urban centres. The city became a major beneficiary of the Third Front Campaign, a massive industrialisation campaign directed by Mao Zedong.

Xi Jinping could mediate Trump-Kim talks during North Korea visit

World. (Agency)

Chinese President Xi Jinping is reportedly preparing for a possible visit to North Korea in the coming days as Beijing and Pyongyang move to strengthen ties. Reports suggest Xi could also seek to play a mediating role between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un amid renewed diplomatic activity surrounding Pyongyang. According to a report by South Korea's Yonhap news agency, citing senior government officials, Xi could travel to Pyongyang as early as next week. Another source familiar with the matter reportedly said Chinese security and protocol teams had recently visited North Korea, signalling that preparations for

a high-level visit were already underway. If confirmed, the trip would underline



China's efforts to strengthen ties with North Korea at a time of rising geopolitical uncertainty in the region. Reports suggest Xi may also seek to position himself as a mediator between Trump and Kim Jong Un amid

renewed discussions surrounding Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

Trump, who recently met Xi, has repeatedly signalled openness to re-engaging diplomatically with Kim. During his first presidential term, Trump and Kim held three high-profile meetings aimed at reducing tensions over North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Although those negotiations eventually stalled, Trump has continued to describe his relationship with Kim as positive and has indicated he would be willing to meet him again.

China remains North Korea's most important economic and political ally, with Beijing serving as a crucial source of trade, diplomatic support and economic assistance for the isolated country.

Iran builds new system of control in Hormuz with island checkpoints, fees: Report

World. (Agency)

The tanker crew gathered their courage and carefully navigated along a route designated by Iran, hugging the coastline and maneuvering their hulking vessel between island checkpoints through the Strait of Hormuz.

The 330-metre-long Agios Fanourios I, laden with Iraqi crude oil and bound for Vietnam, had been bottled up off the coast of Dubai since late April. But on May 10 it set off for the strait after a direct deal with Iran overseen by Iraq's prime minister.

Iran's orders to the tanker were part of a complex, multi-tiered mechanism that the country has deployed for clearing vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. With Iran now in de facto control of the strait, the system can involve government-to-government arrangements, intense vetting by the

Iranian government and sometimes fees in exchange for safe passage, Reuters has found. In Vietnam, Iraq, Greece and beyond, the ship's progress was monitored closely, including by two people interviewed by Reuters.



Periodically, the transponder went dark but the Agios Fanourios I sailed on. Not far away that same day, another ship was hit with a projectile, causing a small fire, according to a British maritime safety agency. Late on May 10, screens lit up with the

icon for the Agios Fanourios I. But as the tanker passed Hormuz Island, it was stopped by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps speedboats, according to an Iranian official. The IRGC fighters patrolling the strait, who had initially

let the vessel through, now ordered the ship to halt. The Iranian official said there was a suspicion of smuggled cargo and they wanted to inspect the ship. Several hours later, the vessel received Iranian authorisation to continue, turning what is typically a five-hour transit through the strait into a two-day ordeal. "Once we were informed Agios passed Hormuz, we breathed a sigh of relief," said one of the people monitoring the journey. No payments were made, said the ship's manager, Eastern Mediterranean Shipping and six people with knowledge of the passage.

US can wait a few days for right answers from Iran, says Trump

World. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said the United States was prepared to wait "a few days" for the "right answers" from Iran as negotiations between Washington and Tehran entered what he described as a decisive phase. Speaking to reporters after stepping off Air Force One, Trump said the talks were "right on the borderline" and warned that the situation could escalate rapidly if diplomacy failed.

"If we don't get the right answers, it goes very quickly," Trump said. "We're all ready to go." The US president stressed that Washington expected "complete, 100% good answers" from Tehran and argued that a successful agreement could save "a lot of time, energy and lives." Trump also indicated that the current Iranian representatives involved in the negotiations appeared "far more reasonable" than previous officials and expressed hope that a deal beneficial to both sides could still be reached.

"We're dealing with people that are, I think, far more reasonable than the people that are really no longer with us," he said, adding that he hoped "those people will make a deal that's going to be great for everyone." At the same time, Trump cautioned that the diplomatic window remained narrow. "It could be a few days, but it could go very quickly," he added. Earlier in the day, Trump reiterated that the US would not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon and said negotiations had entered the final phase.

"We're in the final stages of Iran. We'll see what happens. Either have a deal or we're going to do some things that are a little bit nasty, but hopefully that won't happen," Trump said. "Ideally I'd like to see few people killed, as opposed to a lot. We can do it either way."

Trump also spoke with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who welcomed the extension of the ceasefire and reportedly told the US president that a "reasonable solution" to the crisis remained possible. The remarks briefly eased concerns in global energy markets, with oil prices falling nearly six percent on hopes that negotiations were nearing a breakthrough and that wider disruption in the Middle East could be avoided.

IRAN WARNS AGAINST ANY RENEWED MILITARY ACTION

Iran, however, warned against any renewed military action by Washington. "If aggression against Iran is repeated, the promised regional war will extend beyond the region this time," Iran's Revolutionary Guards said in a statement. Tehran also announced the launch of a new "Persian Gulf Strait Authority" aimed at controlling maritime traffic through the strategically crucial Strait of Hormuz waterway.

Americans brace for costly summer travel as Iran crisis drives fuel prices higher

World. (Agency)

Americans heading out for the Memorial Day holiday weekend are facing a sharp rise in fuel costs as the ongoing conflict involving Iran continues to disrupt global oil supplies, setting the stage for what analysts warn could become one of the most expensive summer travel seasons in recent years.

Despite soaring gasoline prices, travel demand across the United States remains strong. According to projections from the American Automobile Association (AAA), nearly 39.1 million people are expected to travel by car during the long weekend, while another 3.66 million are likely to fly. The holiday traditionally marks the beginning of the summer travel season in the US. However, the enthusiasm for road trips is increasingly being overshadowed by growing costs at the pump.

Retail gasoline prices in the US have climbed by more than \$1.50 per gallon since late February, when military tensions in the Middle East escalated following strikes involving the United States and Israel

against Iran. The conflict has severely disrupted shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz — one of the world's most critical oil transit corridors, through which nearly one-fifth of global oil supplies pass.

The resulting supply uncertainty has pushed crude oil prices sharply higher, feeding into rising fuel and transportation costs across the American economy.

The surge in energy prices is also creating political pressure for Donald Trump, as households across the country struggle with the increasing burden of fuel expenses. Several US states are already considering temporary suspensions of gasoline taxes to provide relief to consumers, while discussions have also intensified around reducing the federal fuel tax.

Industry analysts warn that the pressure on consumers may only grow worse in the coming months. Speaking to Reuters,

Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy, described the current market as one of the most volatile fuel environments in years, saying the



disruption in the Strait of Hormuz was now at the center of global energy concerns. He warned that even if shipping through the waterway resumes normally, fuel prices may take months — or even longer — to stabilise completely. The impact is already changing travel behaviour among

Americans. According to Reuters, a recent GasBuddy survey found that fewer Americans are planning long-distance summer road trips this year. Only 56 percent of respondents said they intended to drive more than two hours during the summer, compared to 69 percent last year. Rising fuel prices have emerged as the biggest factor influencing travel plans, with many travellers cutting back on vacation distances and frequency.

At the same time, experts are increasingly concerned about shrinking gasoline inventories in the US. Energy analysts point out that gasoline storage levels have been falling steadily for weeks, even as demand remains relatively strong heading into peak driving season. Additional risks — including refinery outages, tightening global fuel supplies and the approaching Atlantic hurricane season — could put even more upward pressure on prices.