



## Won't allow you to rest: Congress's message to Siddaramaiah as DKS takes charge

**Congress made it clear that Siddaramaiah would continue to play a key political role in both state and national politics, declaring the party will not allow him to rest.**

Jammu.(Agency)

Siddaramaiah has handed over the reins of Karnataka to DK Shivakumar, but the Congress on Saturday made it clear that the veteran leader's political role is far from over. Soon after the Congress Legislature Party meeting elected Shivakumar as leader, party general secretary KC Venugopal declared that the Congress would not allow Siddaramaiah to rest, urging him to continue playing an active role in both Karnataka and national politics. The Congress Legislature Party meeting in Bengaluru unanimously elected Shivakumar as the new CLP leader and formally named Karnataka's next Chief Minister, two days after Siddaramaiah's resignation on Congress's high command's direction. "I can proudly say that the sincere Congress heart of Siddaramaiah ji has won everyone over and given a befitting



reply to the BJP, which thought this would not be an easy transition," Venugopal said, referring to the BJP's repeated attacks on the Congress over the prolonged leadership tussle in Karnataka. Addressing Siddaramaiah directly, Venugopal added, "We will not allow you to rest. Your service is needed for Congress in Karnataka and at the national level also." During discussions over the leadership transition, the Congress leadership had reportedly offered Siddaramaiah a Rajya Sabha berth and a larger national role in Delhi, projecting him as the party's prominent OBC face ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. However, the 78-year-old leader declined the proposal, preferring to remain active in Karnataka politics. At the CLP meeting, it was Siddaramaiah himself who proposed Shivakumar's name for the top post, while senior leader G Parameshwara seconded the proposal. The legislators then unanimously endorsed Shivakumar as the CLP leader. Subsequently, Siddaramaiah.

## Mantri Pradhan's Ministry of Scandals': Congress alleges massive CBSE answer sheet data breach

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Congress on Sunday alleged a massive data breach involving the answer sheets of nearly two million CBSE Class 12 students, claiming the documents were accessible in the public domain and raising concerns over student privacy.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh described the alleged incident as a "data breach of monumental proportions" and accused the Centre of negligence in handling sensitive student data. "In today's developments on



Mantri Pradhan's Ministry of Scandals, the answer sheets of two million CBSE Grade 12 students have been shown to be available in the public domain," Ramesh said in a post on X, targeting Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. He alleged that the incident exposed the "incompetence and callousness" of COEMPT, the company contracted by the CBSE for digitisation and evaluation work.

Ramesh further claimed that the leaked answer sheets showed folds and drop shadows, suggesting they may have been scanned using mobile phones rather than professional scanning systems.

## Why TMC MLA lashed out at own party leaders over assault on Abhishek Banerjee

TMC MLA Kunal Ghosh has questioned the silence of several Trinamool Congress leaders after the alleged attack on Abhishek Banerjee in Sonarpur. His remarks have sharpened the political clash over the incident and the response of the police and hospitals.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader and party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh has publicly criticised a section of his own party's MPs, MLAs and office-bearers for their silence following the alleged attack on TMC National General Secretary and MP Abhishek Banerjee during his visit to Sonarpur in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district.

In a strongly worded social media post, Ghosh questioned why many leaders within the party had failed to condemn the incident or express solidarity with Banerjee. He noted that while leaders from other political parties had publicly denounced the attack, many elected representatives and office-bearers from the Trinamool Congress appeared absent from the conversation.

"I saw posts from national-level leaders of other parties protesting the attack on Abhishek. But posts from many MPs, MLAs, councillors, office-bearers and former government office-bearers of our own party did not catch my eye," Ghosh wrote. He further suggested that some individuals who had benefited from the party's platform were now conspicuously silent when support was needed. **'THE ATTACK ON ABHISHEK BANERJEE IS A CONSPIRACY'**



The remarks come a day after Banerjee was allegedly attacked and heckled during his visit to Sonarpur, where he had gone to meet families affected by post-poll violence. The incident triggered sharp political reactions, with the Trinamool Congress accusing its rivals of orchestrating a pre-planned attack. Speaking to reporters, Ghosh described the incident as a conspiracy and questioned the role of the local administration and police. He said Banerjee, who had recently represented India as part of a parliamentary outreach effort abroad, was targeted despite being a prominent national political figure.

"He is severely injured due to the attack. We took him to a hospital first. There are allegations that police administration pressurized them to show this attack in a light manner.

## BALAJI WAFERS UNDER FIRE: CORPORATE ARROGANCE OR SYSTEMIC COLLUSION? Toxic Industrial Discharge Allegedly Devastating 12 Villages

Millions of Liters of Polluted Wastewater Reportedly Released Into Rivers Near Rajkot; Farmers and Livestock Owners Demand Immediate Action

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Makan

Rajkot. A disturbing environmental controversy is emerging around one of India's most recognized snack brands. Serious allegations have surfaced against a Balaji Wafers manufacturing facility near Rajkot, Gujarat, accusing it of discharging millions of liters of chemically contaminated wastewater into nearby rivers and natural water channels on a daily basis. According to local residents and affected communities, the pollution has pushed surrounding villages toward an environmental and humanitarian crisis. Water bodies that once served as lifelines for agriculture and livestock are now allegedly turning into toxic drains, raising concerns over public health, environmental safety, and rural livelihoods. Environmental Disaster Affecting 12 Villages Residents from nearly a dozen villages claim they have been suffering the consequences of industrial pollution for years. Farmers, livestock owners, and local families say the contamination is steadily destroying their primary sources of income and survival. Agricultural Lands Losing Fertility Villagers allege that chemical-laden wastewater is seeping into



groundwater sources, wells, and irrigation systems. As a result, fertile agricultural land is reportedly becoming barren, crop productivity has declined significantly, and several farmers have suffered substantial financial losses. Livestock Facing Serious Health Risks Local livestock owners claim that cattle and other animals have fallen ill after consuming contaminated water. Reports of livestock deaths have fueled anger among rural communities, many of whom depend entirely on animal husbandry for their livelihood. Growing Public Health Concerns Residents further allege an increase in skin diseases, kidney-related ailments, and other serious health complications in the affected

areas. The situation has created widespread fear and frustration among villagers who believe their health and future are being sacrificed in the name of industrial growth. Why Is the Administration Silent? One of the biggest questions being raised by local communities is why authorities have allegedly failed to take decisive action despite repeated complaints. Villagers claim that multiple representations and memorandums have been submitted to the relevant departments, including the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB), yet no substantial measures have been taken to stop the alleged pollution. The growing controversy has sparked concerns over whether powerful corpo-

rate interests are influencing regulatory oversight and enforcement mechanisms. Public Anger Reaches Boiling Point Frustrated by what they describe as official inaction, affected villagers have warned of large-scale protests if immediate steps are not taken to address the issue. Farmers argue that development cannot come at the cost of destroying agricultural land, contaminating water resources, and endangering human lives. "When Will Justice Reach the Food Producers?" What began as an environmental complaint has now evolved into a larger debate about corporate accountability, environmental governance, and the rights of rural communities. Across the affected villages, one question continues to echo: "Do the lives of ordinary citizens matter less than the profits of large corporations?" Until a transparent investigation is conducted and affected communities receive justice, this issue is likely to remain a major public concern.

# Himanta Sarma To Expand Cabinet On June 5, 9 MLAs Likely To Be Inducted

**The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) returned to power for a third consecutive term in the state, winning 102 out of 126 seats in the April 9 elections**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday announced that the state council of ministers will be expanded on June 5, less than a month after he began his second consecutive term following the NDA's victory in the 2026 Assembly elections. Taking to X, Sarma said, "I am pleased to inform that the Council of Ministers of the Government of Assam will be expanded on 5 June 2026."

Sources indicated that eight to nine MLAs are likely to be inducted as Cabinet Ministers, with the possibility of appointing two Ministers of State as well. "Many new faces can be seen in the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led cabinet. From Barak valley, new faces can

be inducted in the ministry. Two to three new faces from upper Assam can be inducted in the ministry. Priority has been given to the old ones but new faces are also there," a source said.

Political observers expect the expansion to accommodate a mix of experienced leaders and new entrants from the BJP and its alliance partners.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) returned to power for a third consecutive term in the state, winning 102 out of 126 seats in the April 9 elections. The BJP secured 82 seats, while its allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) won 10 seats each. Sarma was sworn in as Chief Minister for a



second consecutive term on May 12 by Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya. The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP president Nitin Nabin, and several other

senior Union and state leaders. **Current Cabinet Composition**

At present, the cabinet consists of the Chief Minister and four ministers who took oath earlier this month. These include BJP leaders Ajanta Neog and Rameswar Teli, AGP's Atul Bora, and BPF's Charan Boro. The ministers currently hold the following portfolios: Rameswar Teli (Transformation and Development), Atul Bora (Panchayat and Rural Development), Charan Boro (Transport), and Ajanta Neog (Women and Child Development). Before the formation of the new government, Sarma had indicated that the Assam cabinet could eventually have around 18 to 19 ministers, with the final composition to be decided.

## News box

## Biker dies in hit &amp; run on highway near Dery Machha village

Noida.(Agency)

A 21-year-old man who was travelling on a bike died after he was hit by an unidentified vehicle on a highway near Dery Machha village under the Badalpur police station area on Saturday. The deceased, Himanshu, 21, was a resident of Utaralsi village under the Jaraha police station area. Police have launched an investigation to trace the vehicle involved in the incident. Locals informed police about the accident via the emergency helpline. A team reached the spot and found the man grievously hurt. He was rushed to a hospital but doctors declared him dead on arrival. The body has been sent for post-mortem examination. The report is expected to provide some clarity on how the incident took place.

Police have formed a team to examine available evidence, including possible CCTV footage from nearby locations and routes. A senior police officer said that law and order in the area remains normal and there is no public disturbance linked to the accident. Further legal proceedings are under way, and police have appealed to anyone with information about the incident to come forward and assist in the investigation.

## Overdrive on Sozzle Street — 900 complaints a month on Dial 112, public drinking becomes a nuisance in Gzb

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Every other night, returning home from work, a Ghaziabad resident would find cars parked outside the gate of his Indirapuram condominium. "Sometimes the stereos would be on full blast — audible from my flat, typically after midnight. Working in Delhi for 15 years, I've seen many car-o-bars, but these still surprised me. The groups made no attempt to be discreet. I've seen bottles kept on bonnets, on the road, even on dividers. And I've seen a few brawls," he said. Police data shows his experience is far from uncommon. Public drinking has become a serious nuisance in Ghaziabad, with 4,520 complaints received on UP Police's Dial 112 between Jan 1 and May 15 this year, leading to cases or fines against 9,885 people.

Between May 1 and 15 alone, 474 complaints came in. Additional CP (headquarters) Keshav Chaudhary said most were from Indirapuram and Nandgram police stations, both areas with large high-rise societies. "A team from the concerned police station went to the spot and took immediate action upon receiving information," he said. The nuisance extends well beyond drinking — it is accompanied by brawls, eve-teasing, and threats against those who try to intervene. Empty bottles smashed on roads have become a brazen symbol of this public flouting of rules. Many gather around two-wheelers, using the seats as table-tops for the glasses and snacks. In case of four-wheelers, the bonnets become tables. The offenders are not always outsiders. Residents of some high-rise societies also partake, often turning aggressive when questioned.

Deepak Kumar, president of Ghaziabad's AOA and a resident of Amrapali Village in Indirapuram, told TOI that residents have been caught drinking outside their own society gates and threatening security guards. "When guards asked some men not to drink outside the gate given the presence of women and children, they were told: 'chutti ke baad gate ke bahar ao, tab bataata hoon' (I'll see you outside the gate after your shift)," he said.

## Fire sparks at manufacturing unit, firefighters battle blaze into the night

Noida.(Agency)

A fire broke out at the Spark Minda manufacturing facility in Sector 59 on Saturday evening. Thick smoke shrouded the sky and was visible from several kilometres away. A total of 25 fire tenders were deployed to the scene and five people were treated for injuries. No casualties were reported as firefighters continued to battle the flames late into the night.

Fire officials said the blaze started around 4.30pm, the fire alarm sounded shortly after and around 600 employees promptly evacuated the factory. While five workers were treated for minor injuries and smoke inhalation, there were no major injuries reported. Chief fire officer (CFO) said the fire engulfed sections of the ground and first floor of the facility, where chemicals and thinner were stored. The presence of highly flammable materials caused the fire to spread rapidly.

"The fire affected areas where chemicals and thinner were kept. Because of the combustible materials, the flames spread quickly. We are using the latest firefighting techniques to contain the blaze," Chaubey said. Initially, five fire tenders were dispatched to the spot, but additional units were called in due to the intensity of the flames, bringing the total number of fire units at the scene to 25. The blaze had not been doused late on Saturday night. Officials said the factory has a water storage capacity of approximately seven to eight lakh litres, which is being utilised in the firefighting effort. As a precautionary measure, nearby industrial units were alerted and security arrangements in the surrounding area were strengthened. Police and fire department teams established a secure perimeter around the affected area while rescue and containment operations continued. The exact cause of the fire has not yet been determined. Preliminary investigation point to a possible short circuit or technical malfunction, though officials stressed that the actual cause will only be known after the fire is completely extinguished and a detailed investigation is conducted. Immediate action was taken in accordance with emergency response procedures and the fire was brought under control with the assistance of the local fire department. There were no casualties or injuries," a Spark Minda spokesperson said. The impact on operations is currently being assessed, and necessary steps are being taken to restore normalcy at the earliest. A committee has been constituted by the company to oversee the situation and will provide further updates as and when verified information becomes available."

## Licence fee reduced, UP gets 360 bids for 11 liquor shops in Noida

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The excise department received 360 applications for 11 liquor shops during the fifth phase of the e-lottery held on Thursday, with officials expecting nearly Rs 50 crore in revenue through licence fees and minimum guaranteed revenue collections. The live online allotment process was conducted at the Surajpur Collectorate as per provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Excise Policy 2026-27. The shops up for allotment included one existing country liquor shop, five newly created country liquor shops, three existing model shops and two newly created model shops. District excise officer Subodh Kumar said that the department received 243 applications for six country liquor shops and 117 applications for five model shops — bringing the total to 360. The department generated around Rs 2.7 lakh in revenue through the application fees during the latest e-lottery phase.

"The allotment was conducted on random basis. Now the allottees have to deposit the licence fees for the shops they got within next three working days. If the amount is not deposited, allotment will be cancelled," Kumar said.

According to Kumar, the fifth phase lottery was conducted after several expensive liquor vends, particularly premium model shops with licence fee liabilities exceeding Rs 2 crore annually, failed to attract successful bidders despite repeated allotment attempts since April. "Although applications were being received in every phase, applicants were not depositing the licence fee amount within the stipulated timeline, due to which these shops repeatedly remained unsettled," he said.

If any of the applicants fail to deposit licence fees against the shop allotted to them this time too, that shop will also be cancelled and not carried forward for



any further lottery allotment, he added. "Though the chances are bleak, such shops which do not get licence fees deposited will be cancelled completely. However, it will not result in revenue loss as we will still have some margin to recover

from the existing shops," said Kumar.

The excise officer said the department had earlier restructured the unsold shops by redistributing their revenue targets and creating additional lower-fee shops to make the licences commercially viable. "Following rationalisation, the licence fee of some model shops was reduced from Rs 2.15 crore to around Rs 1.5 crore," Kumar said. The department has also carved out additional country liquor and model shops to distribute the pending Minimum Guaranteed Quantity (MGQ) and Minimum Guaranteed Revenue (MGR) targets attached to the unsold vends, he added. "If all shops are successfully settled, the department is expected to generate nearly Rs 50 crore through licence fee, MGQ and MGR collections alone, apart from annual consumption revenue," Kumar said.

## Gangajal reaches Vijay Nagar, supply begins in 9 wards

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

More than a year after the 10 million litres per day (MLD) Ganga Water Project was announced, Vijay Nagar, which faces severe water crisis every summer, is getting its supply of Gangajal. "Vijay Nagar has 14 wards, out of which water is currently being supplied to nine wards on a trial basis. In 10 days, we hope to start supply in the remaining wards," said Ghaziabad municipal commissioner Vikramaditya Singh Malik. Over the years, the groundwater table around Vijay Nagar has depleted drastically because of overexploitation. In 2017, groundwater was found 37.02 m below the soil. In 2023, the height of the water table depleted further and fell to 47.67 m below the ground. In 2025, it reduced to 50 m. The average depletion over six years was 13 m, which is the worst in the city. Ganga

Water Project was proposed as a 10 km pipeline laid from the Ganga water treatment plant in Pratap Vihar. The



pipeline would be connected to six underground water reservoirs in the area, through which water would be supplied to Vijay Nagar. The Rs 16.5 crore project will be sponsored by Ghaziabad municipal corporation (GMC) with the funds under

the 15th Finance Commission.

Mayor Sunita Dayal said the move could finally put an end to the residents' water woes. "The population of Vijay Nagar is about six lakhs. For many years, the area has been facing water scarcity, especially of potable water. GMC so far was dependent on groundwater supply to cater to the needs but there was a shortfall in that too," she said. GMC produces 372 MLD of water, out of which 108 MLD is Ganga water. Till now, Ganga water supply is limited to areas like Indirapuram, Vaishali, Kaushambi, Siddharth Vihar and Surya Nagar.

With groundwater tables depleting, there is a demand for Ganga water from other parts of the city as well. "Ganga water is fit for potable use. Groundwater in Ghaziabad is brackish," said Malik.

## Tension in Khoda over murder of teenager, 3 held, but not prime accused

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Tension gripped Khoda through Saturday, a day after a Class 11 student, 17, died from stab wounds allegedly inflicted by another youth on Bakrid, with grieving relatives and local residents seeking justice and several right-wing outfits reaching the colony on the Delhi-Ghaziabad border, prompting police to heavily deploy there.

More than 300 police personnel, including two battalions of PAC, were rushed to Khoda to prevent any flare-up. Multiple SHOs were also stationed there.

The boy's body reached his house after an autopsy to scenes of mourning and protest. His family delayed the cremation for hours as they demanded the arrest of all those involved. The teenager, a resident of Navneet Vihar, was stabbed on Thursday afternoon near Sharma Dairy in Khoda and died during treatment at a Noida hospital on Friday. Police said the main

accused is a minor and absconding.

According to the complaint filed by the victim's elder brother, the boy was with two friends when the accused confronted him, abused him and stabbed him repeatedly in the abdomen. One of the friends told police they were called near the accused's house on Bakrid and that several others were present there. The family alleged it was not a spontaneous quarrel but a planned attack.

According to a friend of the victim, they were invited to a neighbour's place on Bakrid, where the accused teenager asked the victim: "Tumne kabhi bakra halal hote dekha hai?" To that, the victim replied, "Nahi." The accused said, "Aao dikhate hain (Have you ever seen a goat being killed? Come, we will show you)." When the victim refused and got up to leave, the accused allegedly began abusing and hurling expletives. During the altercation,

the accused stabbed the victim in the stomach multiple times. The victim's sister said they had no reason to suspect anything when her brother was called to meet. "We thought it was a normal meeting. But he was not alone. Seven or eight others were there," she alleged. Their mother, overcome with grief, demanded the harshest punishment. "The way my son was killed, I want the same punishment for the accused," she said. As protests escalated on Saturday, demonstrators demanded the arrest of all accused, strict legal action and demolition of their properties. Former Khoda municipal council chairperson Reena Bhati and BJP functionary Ajay Sharma visited the family. Police and administrative officials remained at the victim's house for hours. Officials said the family was assured of strong legal action, financial assistance, security.

## Another exam, another mess: Glitches cancel Cuet morning slot at Noida centre

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

At 7.30am, candidates began arriving. Biometric verification was done by 8.30am. The exam was scheduled to begin at 9am. But till 11am, no one had any answers. "The system failed us again. They kept us waiting for three hours with no communication, then simply asked us to go home," said Anshika Mishra, 18, tears rolling down her face as she walked out of the examination centre in Sector 64 on Saturday. For thousands of Cuet-UG aspirants, what should have been one of the most important days of their academic lives dissolved into hours of chaos, confusion and helpless waiting in the scorching heat. Technical glitches cancelled the morning slot and threw the second shift into disarray at Aadarsh Pariksha Kendra, which was handling nearly 2,000 candidates across multiple shifts. Students alleged they were kept inside exam halls for hours with no clarity, triggering panic and protests. The exam did, eventually, happen in the second shift. Anshika, a commerce student hoping to pursue BCom from Delhi University, had left her home in Sector 134 early morning with her father. "I studied so hard for this that I couldn't focus properly on my CBSE boards. Cuet was my main target — I spent the last two to three months in coaching, mock tests,



back-to-back exams. My parents even postponed our family trip because the dates kept changing. Now it feels like it all went in vain," she told. Around 10am, students said officials "casually" informed them of "technical issues" — but gave no formal update and did not allow anyone to leave. Between 10.55am and 11.10am, candidates were finally asked to go home.

In a statement, National Testing Agency (NTA) said 73,106 candidates had completed biometric registration for shift

1, of whom 69,341 were eventually able to appear after delays. It added that 3,765 candidates "could not wait until the examination resumed and left."

"I didn't leave. I waited because I had no choice," said a candidate, who was present outside the centre. "Every 10 minutes they said 'just wait a little more'. How can students walk out when an exam deciding their future is at stake? And then NTA says we chose to leave — the entire burden is being put on us when the system is the one that failed." Others echoed the

frustration. "We still don't know what happened or when the exam will be held again," said another candidate, admit card still in hand, waiting outside the gates. The physical conditions inside added to the distress. Students alleged there were no functioning fans despite the heat. "Some hadn't even eaten breakfast properly out of anxiety. I dropped my brother off at 6.30am and came back at 10am expecting it to be over — nobody had even appeared for the paper yet," said Anuj, whose younger brother was among the candidates. Those who had travelled long distances bore the brunt. "I came from Dwarka — nearly two hours. We had no phones inside, no way to reach our parents. My mother waited outside in the heat the entire time. Is this a joke?" said another candidate. The chaos spilled into the second shift as well. Entry gates that were supposed to open at 1pm did not let students in until nearly 2.30pm. "It breaks my heart to see the mental agony students are being put through. An aspirant puts in months of work for this day — subjecting them to this level of administrative chaos right before they enter the hall is deeply unfair. NTA must issue an immediate clarification," said Varun Goel, a faculty member at PhysicsWallah, who accompanied his students to the centre.

# Meet the 150th course medalists: One cracked NDA entrance in fifth attempt, another strived to be a 'good senior'

All the three toppers who have background military schools are set to join the Army.

**Pune. (Agency)**

A CADET who cracked the National Defence Academy (NDA) entrance in his fifth attempt and another who always strived to be the 'good senior' to his juniors, were among the medal winners in overall order of merit from the historic 150th course which passed out on Saturday. All the three toppers who have background military schools are set to join the Army.

The training of the 150th course of NDA culminated on Saturday with the Passing Out Parade (POP) held at the iconic Khetarpal Parade Ground of the academy. In a display of precision and discipline, the cadets marched past the Quarterdeck flag mast with a background score of the emotional and nostalgic Scottish tune of Auld Lang Syne.

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi, himself an alumnus of the 65th course from the 'Charlie Squadron', was the Reviewing Officer for the POP.

The parade was conducted by NDA Adjutant Lt Col Avinash Pandey astride the horse Reliant Robin. This was Reliant Robin's 11th passing out parade. The parade for which the cadets wearing the white summer uniform was commanded by Academy Cadet Captain (ACC) Mayank Choudhary of Lima Squadron.

The parade line-up included a total of 1250 cadets of which 353 were from the passing out course. A total of 353 cadets, including 18 female cadets and 24 cadets from 12 friendly foreign countries marched shoulder to shoulder crossing the Antim Pag - the symbolic last step at



the NDA. The Army Chief presented the President's Gold, Silver and Bronze Medal to the first, second and third in the overall order of merit, respectively.

President's Bronze Medal winner Battalion Cadet Captain (BCC) Sahil Sharma, who hails from Jammu, said his journey to the National Defence Academy was shaped by perseverance, family support and the

inspiration he drew from his father, an ex-serviceman.

"My father's service in the Army inspired me to pursue a career in the armed forces. When I told him about my dream, he got me admitted to Rashtriya Military School Chail," Sharma said.

Sharma added that success did not come easily. "I cleared the NDA entrance examination on my fifth attempt. Through the four unsuccessful attempts, what kept me going was the unwavering support of my family and the encouragement of my mentors from school." Reflecting on his time at the academy, Sharma said, "The three years at the NDA have been the most challenging, demanding, rewarding and enriching years of my life. Looking back, I can only say that times like these and

people like them will never come back. Every teacher, instructor, officer, staff member and senior contributed, directly or indirectly, to my success." Sharma is now set to join the Indian Military Academy. Winner of the President's silver medal was Academy Cadet Adjutant Peeyush Rautela, who secured first position in the Science stream in academics. Rautela credits his success to the training he received at Sainik School Ghorakhal before joining the NDA and the support from the seniors and faculty at the NDA. President's Gold Medal winner Battalion Cadet Captain (BCC) Rohit Kajla, who hails from Jhajjar in Haryana and studied at Rashtriya Military School Bangalore, said his school years prepared him well for life in the armed forces but the NDA shaped him into a leader.

## Short news

### Help desk back home for troubled migrants

**AMALAPURAM. (Agency)**

Distress video calls from the Gulf are now being handled effectively by the district administration through the Konaseema Centre for Migration (KCM), a dedicated support system ensuring that migrants never feel abandoned.

Since its inception in March 2025, KCM has registered 292 distress cases, resolving 287 so far. The centre has repatriated 87 migrant workers and brought back 10 mortal remains, while five cases remain in progress.

Earlier, family members of stranded workers abroad had to approach the District Collector or the Superintendent of Police, often submitting self-recorded videos of victims to seek urgent intervention. Recognising the scale of the crisis, Konaseema District Collector Mahesh Kumar Ravirala reviewed the situation and formed a trained five-member team in Hyderabad. The committee includes a Nodal Officer, Coordinator, Manager, and four constables.

Konaseema has seen more than 14,000 residents migrate abroad, mostly to the Middle East, working as painters, masons, carpenters, drivers, cooks, and domestic workers. From 2017 onward, 3,000-4,000 people left annually, with numbers dipping during COVID-19 but surging again afterwards. Many were lured by fake agents promising salaries of Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000 and easy jobs. But migrants often faced harsh realities-unfamiliar food habits, cultural differences, exploitative work conditions, and even physical assault.

### Virtual autopsy may replace surgical procedure

**KOCHI. (Agency)**

"Doctor, is it possible to avoid performing a postmortem on my child?" It was a heart-wrenching question that a forensic surgeon in Kerala encountered recently when an eight-year-old boy, who had drowned in a swimming pool during a family outing, was brought for postmortem examination. For grieving families, the anguish is often compounded by the thought of a surgical blade cutting into the body of a loved one, the distress of seeing it stitched up after examination, or religious beliefs surrounding death and dignity.

To address such concerns, forensic experts in Kerala have proposed a modern method - 'virtual autopsy' (VA) or 'virtopsy'. A detailed project report for establishing a VA centre in the public sector is pending with the state government.

According to Dr A K Unmesh, head of forensic medicine department at Kottayam Medical College Hospital (MCH) and police surgeon, who prepared the report, the technique makes it possible to determine the cause of death without cutting open the body. While VA may not be applicable in all cases, it could significantly reduce the need for conventional open-body autopsies, he said.

The report states that every human being deserves dignity in life and after death. Traditional autopsies, involving large incisions and extensive dissection, are often distressing for grieving families and add to their emotional trauma. VA has emerged as a valuable alternative, supporting both forensic experts and families by reducing the need for invasive procedures.

**Virtual autopsy cannot fully replace conventional postmortems: Doctor**

Although medico-legal autopsy is mandatory in suspicious or unnatural deaths worldwide, conventional techniques require opening body cavities through long incisions and altering the appearance of the deceased. This, the report notes, causes immense mental distress to relatives, with studies indicating a societal preference for non-invasive alternatives.

## Congo traveller tests negative for Ebola in 2nd test

**Ahmedabad. (Agency)**

A 37-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of Congo who was admitted to the Civil Hospital here on May 26 has tested negative for the deadly Ebola Virus Disease in the second and confirmatory blood test, confirmed the hospital's medical superintendent Dr Rakesh Joshi on Saturday. The individual had arrived in India earlier this month. The Indian Express reported on May 28 that the first test conducted at the National Institute of Virology (ICMR-NIV) returned negative for Ebola, but positive for Falciparum Malaria.

Subsequently, the Government of India decided to carry out the second test on the traveller within 48 hours of the first sample being drawn.

Dr Joshi added that the patient would be

transferred out of the Ebola isolation ward and moved to a special room where he will be treated for malaria.

His fever abated and he was feeling better



on Saturday, said Dr Joshi.

Ebola is a high-mortality disease, and it has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The

major outbreak is in the countries of DR Congo, Uganda and South Sudan. The incubation period of the Ebola virus can vary from 2 to 21 days with symptoms appearing within 8 to 10 days of exposure.

The patient in question landed in Mumbai on May 18.

He stayed there for five days till May 22. He then travelled to the Union Territories of Silvassa (DNH) and Daman and stayed there till May 25. On May 25, he came to Vadodara and stayed at the Express Hotel. He was admitted to Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, the designated apex hospital for Ebola in Gujarat, at 10:13 pm on May 26.

Three of the patient's colleagues, all foreign nationals, who had been identified as his close contacts, were quarantined at SVP Hospital in Ahmedabad on May 27. They are likely to be allowed to leave following this development.

## Hunt for militants enters Day 8 in Rajouri-Poonch forests, drones and helicopters deployed

**Jammu. (Agency)**

Army, police and paramilitary forces continued combing the forests of Rajouri and nearby Poonch for the eighth day Saturday, as search operations launched last week following reports of militant presence expanded to more areas. Codenamed Operation Sherwali, the searches were launched in the Ghambir Mughalan forests of Rajouri on May 22 following intelligence reports but have now expanded to the forests of Surankote in Poonch, with security forces using sniffer dogs, drones and helicopters to target areas suspected to be militant hideouts. Officials said although security forces sighted some militants last Saturday, there had been "no contact with



militants" since then. "The last time troops had contact with militants was last Saturday, but they managed to escape deeper inside the forests after a brief exchange of fire," an official said. "The group appears to be well trained in jungle warfare in view of its strategy of continuously changing location so as to avoid contact with the search parties." Officials believe 2-5 militants have been

operating in the area between the Rajouri-BG-Surankote road (National Highway 144-A) and the Rajouri-Thanamandi-DKG-Buffliaz road for the last two-three years. "There are two groups - one hiding in forests in Rajouri and the other in Surankote in Poonch district. They appear to have come down to the lower heights of Pir Panjal to escape relentless search operations by the counter-insurgency Romeo Force in the forests of Sukhsar and Lalansar, adjoining the Kashmir Valley, over the last three months." Characterised by thick forest cover, the forests connecting Rajouri and Poonch districts previously witnessed militant attacks in which 10 security personnel were killed in two major attacks on April 20 and May 5, 2023.

Sources close to Sreedharan said the crowdfunding component could be implemented through the issuance of tax-free bonds, a model that proved successful during the construction of the Konkan Railway. However, the interim report only refers to crowdfunding and does not specify the mechanism.

The proposal also differs substantially from SilverLine in its design. It envisages a double-line railway corridor running largely on elevated viaducts, with only a short underground stretch in Thiruvananthapuram.

**Extensions to Wayanad, Palakkad planned**  
Future extensions towards Kasaragod, Wayanad and Palakkad have also been factored into the planning. Sreedharan has proposed the use of standard-gauge tracks, arguing that lower axle loads would reduce both construction and operational costs while allowing the system to adopt globally proven high-speed rail technologies.

## Methanol in Pune hooch deaths traced to Rex International in Bhiwandi; 22 officials suspended

At least 10 persons from Phugewadi-Dapodi areas of Pimpri-Chinchwad and four from Hadapsar area in Pune city died by consuming spurious liquor between May 26 and May 28.

**Pune. (Agency)**

Following the hooch deaths in Pune, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), seized over 5,000 kg Methanol from the premises of Rex International Company in Bhiwandi in Thane district, on Saturday. As per an FDA press release, the spurious liquor that caused multiple deaths in Pune district, contained Methanol procured from Rex International.

Meanwhile, as many as nine police personnel from Pune city and Pimpri Chinchwad police, along with 13 state excise department officials in Pune, were suspended from service, for allegedly failing in their duties to control the illicit liquor trade. At least 10 persons from Phugewadi-Dapodi areas of Pimpri-Chinchwad and four from Hadapsar area in Pune city died by consuming spurious

liquor between May 26 and May 28. Seven persons from Pimpri-Chinchwad, who too had consumed the same liquor, are undergoing treatment at different hospitals.

A few more deceased persons including one from Phugewadi-Dapodi and three from Hadapsar, are suspected to have died after drinking toxic liquor. But the police have not yet confirmed the cause behind their death.

An FIR was registered at Dapodi police station in Pimpri Chinchwad and another at Hadapsar police station in Pune city, against the illicit liquor racketeers, under sections 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 123 (causing hurt by means of harmful substances with the intent to commit a crime), 110, 125, 275, and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita



(BNS), 2023, sections 65(E), 68, 81 and 83 of the Maharashtra Prohibition Act. Three more offences were lodged with the state excise department. Police officials said the state CID has taken over the investigation in hooch death cases. On Friday, the Pimpri Chinchwad police had arrested five persons identified as Karnelsingh Takhtsingh Virka, 73, Gurmangatsingh

Karnelsingh Virka, 45, both residing near Deccan Paper Mill, Sanjay Nagar, Phugewadi; Yogesh Ramchandra Vhankade alias Sikandar Rathod, 23, of Keshavnagar in Mundhwa area Pune city; Radheshyam Hariram Prajapati, 35, of Urulikanchan and Kalpesh Ashok Agrawal, 29, of Khadki. A court remanded them to police custody till June 8. Probe revealed that accused Vhankhade got liquor from Prajapati in Uruli Kanchan, and further supplied it to different parts of Pune and also to Virka in Phugewadi in Pimpri Chinchwad. Police suspect that Vhankhade purchased over 200 litres of Methanol online a few days before. Then, at a location in the Phursungi area, he allegedly mixed Methanol into liquor.

## Jimmying open Gymkhana doors

The bubble has burst and nothing will quite set Humpty right again. No committee, court order, heritage note or emotional WhatsApp forward by a wailing cop can quite put it back together. A full-scale attack on clubs is now underway, leaving everyone perplexed about the intent. The touch-me-not charm that clubbers inhabiting these manicured islands of privilege had, is destroyed in a way that can't quite be described by those who haven't felt their bliss.

The roughshod entry of regulatory rulers into these hallowed portals has once again raised the question of what this brouhaha means. And club members will forever feel that horror every time they hear the bells toll.

Let's draw out the three blimps that float around in this debate. First, there are the trustees, committee members, members and their dependents, and those close to the finish line on that forever-waiting list. Then there are the outstation users and frequent guests. Employees, somehow a special worker-class (often hereditary), fall into this second category. In the third circle of the Venn diagram is the larger mass of city dwellers whose aspiration is just to be a powerful auntie in one's resident welfare association, or be part of a colonial club that doesn't entitle one to any fields of fancy, bars of belonging, or floridity of ritual beyond paying the measly dues. Outside these three circles—'Ah, Dante!' a club classicist would exclaim—exists the rest of the world, which is busy with bhajan-based raves for the young and all-night jagratas or prayer circles for the elderly as preferred group kinks. This much larger world—and some would say, the real world—very often doesn't even realise it's living cheek-by-jowl with clubs whose walls they have never attempted to scale. What has been shattered is the sense of colonial continuity that some clubs attempted to replicate in the little nuances they insisted were membership rituals. They used the power vested by perpetual leases to inflict behavioural regulations on those who wished to pass through their portals, escape being blackballed, and had the accountable resources to pay the fees that have become astronomical in recent years. To facetiously comprehend how exclusive these clubs are, one can consider the rumour that their 'strict' vetting process simply involves keeping out anyone who has to ask the price of a gin-and-tonic, which is heavily subsidised anyway. In some cases, the entry regulation was made simply a matter of waiting until the death of an existing member. In others, it was genetically proscribed for some and inscribed for those lucky enough to have some controlling authority able to subpoena a hidden quota. In a few places, there was the fig leaf of producing national-level sportspersons because they had been privileged to be young participants in games they couldn't otherwise afford to attempt. This illusion of exclusivity has lasted much longer than these 70 years. There are seriously important elements of those practices and privileges that are part of almost all democratic countries that have been colonised in the past. The English led by a league, but the Portuguese and French colonisers didn't quite abandon this process. Clubs were created or retained in places they had conquered. At all points, however, exclusivity was the theme. Civility was the veneer that was put on as an overlay. Ensuring that the natives were kept in place and allowing in those who were willing and powerful collaborators—as long as they mimicked and brown-nosed their cruel rulers—was the real game. That carries on to this day. (Remember those quotas?) Today, that same game is made out as an issue of nostalgia, of nationally-vital networking, and sometimes of nepotism disguised by some other convenient name. In the case of some clubs, the membership was automatic for administrators and uniformed star bearers, who otherwise were fleeting birds of passage in most places, intended to retire.

A Daniel come to judgment!" exclaims Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* as Portia concedes his right to Antonio's "pound of flesh". Somewhat similar might be the Election Commission of India's (ECI) reaction after the Supreme Court's (SC) May 27 order sanctifying the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), a process devised by the ECI to eliminate "ineligible" electors.

Unfortunately, in the real world of the Indian electoral system, there was no twist in the SIR tale like the one in the play, when Portia turns the tables on Shylock by denying him "one drop of blood" as he extracts his pound of flesh. The SIR is no Shakespearean play, although it contains a lot of drama and a few tragic elements. The SC judgment, in the process of settling the issues, has unsettled people. It says nothing that is not already contained in law. There is little adjudication; only an unqualified reaffirmation of the letter, no matter if the spirit seems stifled. The order reaffirms the "legality" of the SIR process and the ECI's authority in doing it "in such manner as it may think fit", provided in Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, which was never in doubt even though its "fairness" was challenged. It has stoutly defended the ECI's plenary powers, including its authority to discard time-tested procedures that earned the people's trust. The SC has upheld the "might" of the ECI and left the people with the impression that "might is right" and all that is legal is presumed fair. The farcical element is that while acknowledging the ECI's "institutional expertise", the SC has taken credit for protecting the constitutional rights of the electors through "a series of judicial interventions, which progressively infused the process with safeguards". The Court is unmindful of the wrongful exclusion of electors through the "logical discrepancy" tool and has overlooked the denial of voting rights to over 27 lakh electors who couldn't complete the appellate process conducted under its own supervision in West Bengal.

The SIR became contentious because of the ECI's unprecedented classification of electors in two groups in Bihar: pre- and post-2003, a template for all subsequent exercises of "purifying" the electoral rolls (ER). The more disturbing part was the ECI attaching a "presumption of citizenship" to the pre-2003 electors, thereby cloaking the rest of the electors in a shroud of "non-citizenship". Such "intruders" were asked to produce one of the 11 prescribed documents, to which the SC added the Aadhaar card, knowing full well that none of them was conclusive evidence of citizenship. It is this central issue of citizenship that remains as ambiguous after the SC judgment as it was before the

## No twist in the SIR tale

Supreme Court's endorsement must not prompt the ECI to carry on with its present ways



ECI stirred a hornet's nest on June 24, 2025, when it issued the initial notification. In its judgment, the SC states that the ECI is empowered "to undertake a limited enquiry into citizenship for the purpose of satisfying itself as to eligibility for inclusion in the electoral roll." However, it holds that "such an enquiry does not amount to a determination of citizenship". While this affects the individual's entitlement to be included in the ER, it doesn't "divest the individual of claims of citizenship, nor does it foreclose a determination of that question by the Competent Authority under the Citizenship Act."

What this means is that if the Electoral Registration Officer is not satisfied with the citizenship status of electors, they will not be allowed to remain in the ER and such cases will be referred to the competent authority for finally "determining" citizenship. This implies losing the right to vote even before citizenship is finally determined. A similar exercise was done in Assam a few years ago when doubtful voters were put in the D list and their voting right suspended. To this day, the ECI hasn't divulged how many of these have had their citizenship determined. Shouldn't the SC have asked the ECI to disclose the fate of these electors before prescribing a similar procedure for the future? It simply shrugged its shoulders as if saying, "bad luck if the gravy train of Indian electoral democracy just passed you and you couldn't get on to it. Try another time." The right to vote may be the most precious gift of the

Constitution, but it can be suspended by an unconvinced ECI. The SC order states that being enrolled once as an elector doesn't guarantee continuance because it is a "rebuttable presumption". If found "infected", you could be "quarantined" and must lie "moorchhit" like Lakshman till you find a Hanuman to fetch "jadibooti" to revive you. While the SC has voted in the ECI's favour, it is up to the latter to legitimise its victory by placing in the public domain the "material on record" that convinced the Court that the earlier ER suffered from "cumulative inaccuracies over an extended period" necessitating the comprehensive SIR exercise instead of "piecemeal solutions". It should present a complete report card on the health of the ER following the SIR as per the parameters of "integrity, accuracy and purity" compared to the ER prepared under its own supervision earlier.

The ECI must disclose the number of "ineligible" people whose citizenship was found doubtful through the SIR and refer them within four weeks to the competent authority for adjudicating their citizenship. So far, the ECI has not disclosed this number while providing details of those "permanently shifted, dead or duplicate", entries which are supposed to be removed during the routine ER revision exercise. The ECI must also bring out a compendium of lessons learnt in the first two phases and the improvement in the procedure for future SIR rather than carry on with its present ways because of the SC's endorsement.

## Karnataka transition : Siddaramaiah's exit signals a reset

A big challenge for the Congress is to retain the support of backward classes, minorities and Dalits — communities which have remained loyal to Siddaramaiah

THE resignation of Siddaramaiah as Karnataka Chief Minister has cleared the way for the elevation of his deputy, DK Shivakumar. Siddaramaiah (77), who completed three years of his current tenure last week, has stated that he stepped down at the behest of the Congress high command. The protests across the state by his supporters show that the transition cannot be treated as a routine change in leadership. Siddaramaiah's exit appears to validate speculation about a rotational power-sharing arrangement following the Congress victory in the May 2023 Assembly elections. Though never officially acknowledged, the understanding seems to have shaped the party's internal dynamics in Karnataka.

It's apparent that the 64-year-old Shivakumar could wait no more for the coveted post. The onus would now be on him to prioritise good governance over the next two years and prepare the

party for the 2028 poll battle. A big challenge for the Congress is to retain the support of backward classes,



minorities and Dalits — communities which have remained loyal to Siddaramaiah. The outgoing CM's

reluctance to accept a central role has made the situation more complicated.

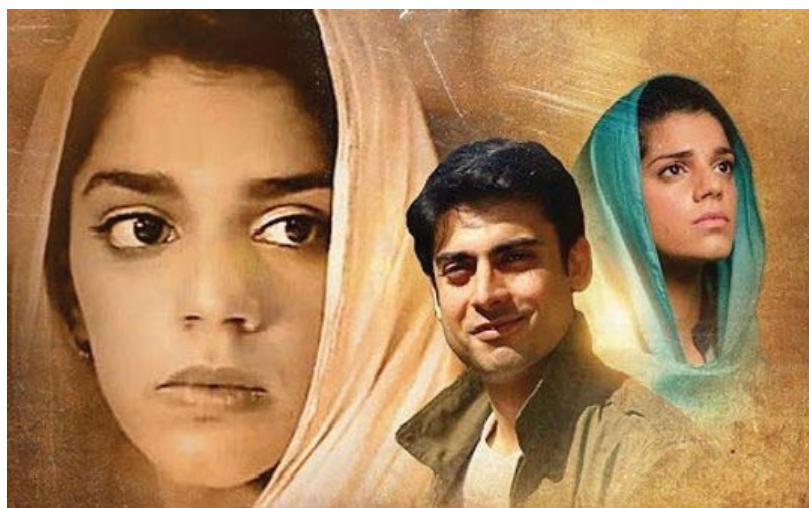
Notably, the Congress has persisted with Bhupesh Baghel as Chhattisgarh CM (2018-23) despite the sustained pressure exerted by his colleague and rival, TS Singh Deo. In Punjab, the party eased out Capt Amarinder Singh from the top post barely five months before the 2022 Assembly elections. The drastic step, aimed at countering anti-incumbency, could not save the Congress from finishing a distant second in the polls. Karnataka is central to the grand old party's southern scheme of things, considering that the BJP is a significant player in the state. The Congress top brass needs to ensure that its gamble strengthens the state party unit rather than sharpening the differences between the camps led by Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah.

## When Indian viewers tune into Pakistani TV dramas slyly on YouTube channels

What Indian viewers of Pakistani dramas recognise is not Pakistan as a state, but echoes of a shared civilisational past

A 58-year-old woman I know in Chandigarh, a retired schoolteacher and devoted grandmother, recently finished watching the famous Pakistani show *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* for the fourth time. She also believes, quite firmly, that Pakistan remains India's most irresponsible neighbour. When I mentioned the show to her husband, a retired government officer known for his harsh views on the Pakistan army, his eyes lit up instantly. "Adnan Siddiqui is an exceptional actor," he admitted, before quickly correcting himself: "But don't quote me. I have no love for Pakistan. I just happened to watch it." That awkward disclaimer captures something millions of Indians, particularly Punjabis, quietly experience today. People across Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Delhi and beyond, who hold deeply critical views of the Pakistani state are simultaneously hooked on Pakistani television dramas. They may not watch it openly on TV screens in their living rooms, but slyly on YouTube channels on their phones. It is a contradiction few openly acknowledge. This comes at perhaps the lowest point in India-Pakistan relations in decades. In May last year, India launched Operation Sindoor, following the Pakistan-sponsored Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 innocent civilians in Jammu and Kashmir. Indian strikes targeted terror infrastructure across Pakistan and PoK. Military exchanges followed. The Indus Waters Treaty remains suspended, diplomatic ties are frozen and bilateral engagement is virtually non-existent. Yet even

as commemorative videos of Operation Sindoor circulated this month, viewers across Indian cities were still catching up on episodes of *Hania Amir's Meri Zindagi Hai Tu*. After the Indian government blocked major Pakistani YouTube channels following the



Pahalgam attack, mirror channels emerged almost instantly. The audience seemed to have simply migrated with them. Part of the explanation lies in Punjab's memory. Many families in Indian Punjab still trace their roots to Lahore, Lyallpur, Multan or Jhang. The stories passed down through generations are often stories of homes left behind overnight. My own childhood, like that of many Punjabis, was narrated through memories

of cities now in Pakistan. That emotional geography never entirely disappeared. Pakistani dramas unintentionally recreate fragments of that lost world. The language, food, courtyard homes, wedding rituals, family structures and Urdu-blended Punjabi tones feel deeply familiar to many Indian Punjabis. What viewers recognise is not Pakistan as a state, but echoes of a shared civilisational past.

There is also a simpler reason: the dramas are genuinely well-made. For years, Indian television increasingly leaned towards exaggerated melodrama and unrealistic spectacle. Pakistani dramas moved in the opposite direction. Their appeal lies in restraint. Characters resemble ordinary people, homes look lived-in and conflicts revolve around believable emotional tensions: marriage, class, ambition and family expectations.

That realism has found a massive audience across borders. Several Pakistani dramas have crossed billions of views online. Even after official restrictions, Indian audiences continued finding alternative channels to watch them.

Is this Pakistan's soft power? To an extent, yes. Pakistani dramas have succeeded in creating familiarity where official diplomacy repeatedly collapses. Just as Bollywood has long been Pakistan's guilty pleasure, India may have quietly conceded an edge to its neighbour in the human business of television drama. But we should be careful about overstating what this

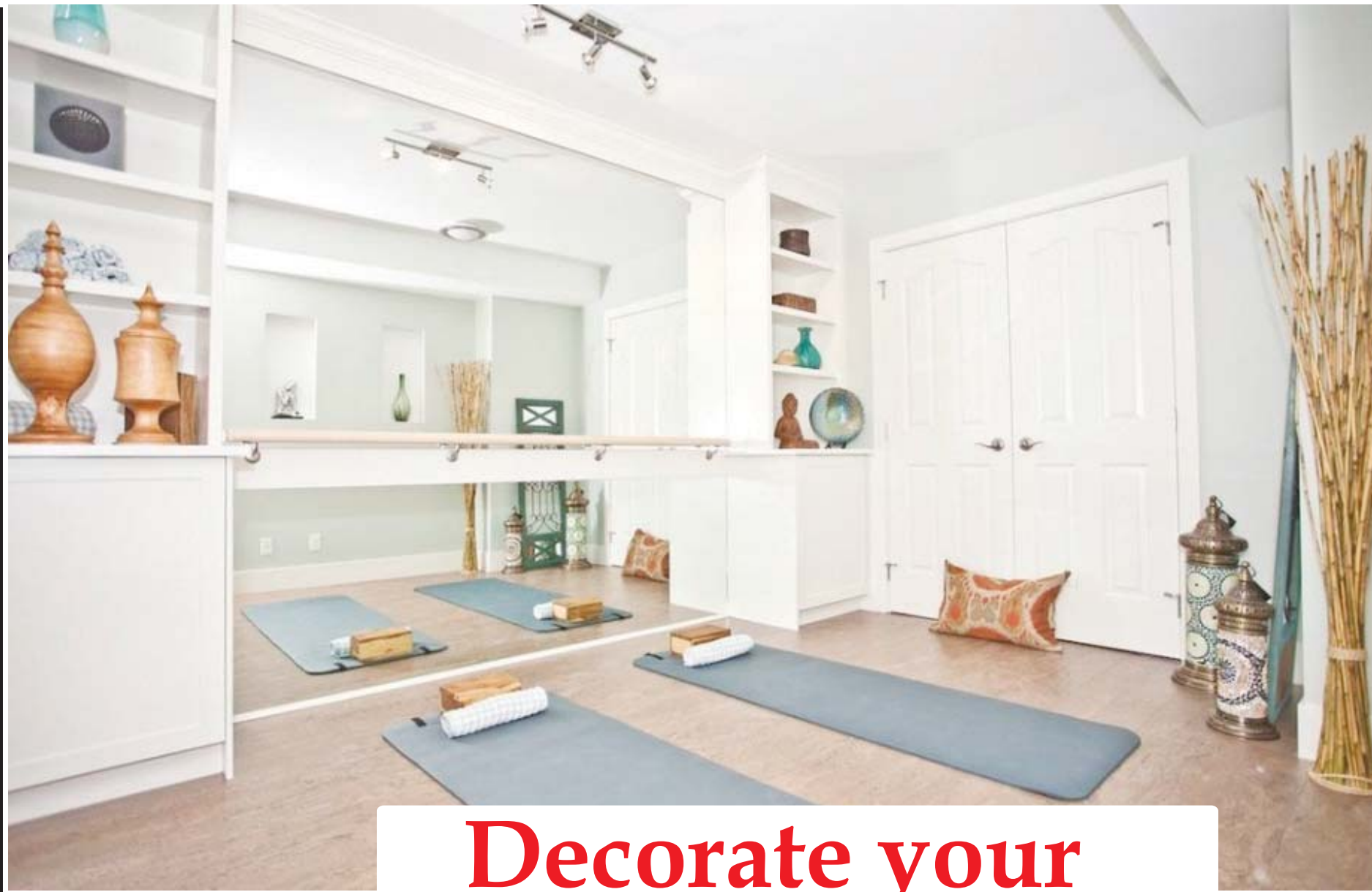
means at the level of statecraft.

In November 2008, then Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari spoke at a conference in Delhi and reflected on how Indians and Pakistanis still carried traces of one another despite the Partition. The remarks were warmly received, but within days came the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. The contrast was brutal and unforgettable: cultural warmth on one side, terrorism on the other. That tension still defines the relationship today.

Pakistan's sponsorship of cross-border terrorism is not a diplomatic misunderstanding. It is a long and documented reality with devastating consequences for Indian civilians and security personnel alike. The Pahalgam attack reinforced why Indian concerns remain legitimate and non-negotiable.

At the same time, Indian viewers who enjoy Pakistani dramas while supporting firm action against terrorism are not being contradictory. They are caught up between a hostile security establishment and popular culture. That distinction rarely appears in official rhetoric, but it exists quietly inside millions of Indian homes.

None of this implies naivety. When families in Ludhiana or Amritsar watch scenes that resemble conversations once common in undivided Punjab, what they experience is less political reconciliation than cultural familiarity. Cultural consumption cannot substitute for accountability, nor does it erase decades of violence, mistrust and hostility. But it does reveal something worth noticing: even during periods of extreme political hostility, people continue consuming stories that feel emotionally recognisable. A year after Operation Sindoor, trade is frozen, diplomacy is minimal and mistrust dominates the relationship. Yet Pakistani dramas continue to find Indian audiences, even if many viewers discuss them almost with guilt.



popular in meditation rooms. You may also want a CD player to play meditative music during your meditations.

#### Comfortable seating

Include comfortable seating. If you spend most of your time on the floor, make sure you have plenty of comfy cushions or a mat that can support your stance. If you sit or kneel, make sure you have the right bench or chair to use. You can meditate in peace only if you are physically comfortable. Meditation chairs are made for ultimate comfort, but some prefer the simplicity of a mat. If you have a serene atmosphere and a comfy seating place, your meditation sessions will be more effective.

#### Paint and air quality

If you are concerned about the purity of the air in your meditation room, please consider using low-emission paints so as to minimize the presence of chemical fumes. Low emission paints reduce this effect dramatically. If you intend to use any high-gloss paints in your meditation room, make sure you select a water-based variety. Oil-based high gloss paints look great, but they take days to dry properly and they can smell for weeks afterwards.

#### Dream board

You may also want to include a dream board that you've created. This is a large piece of paper or poster board filled with images that remind you of your goals and deepest desires. It's believed that if you meditate on these things and envision them in your life, they will come to you.

#### Burn incense

Scents play a big role in meditation. Smelling certain scents induce calming and relaxation and even lift stress. Smelling scents are also associated with memory enhancement. An important fact about scents, if you can't identify the ingredients in incense, then you do not want to purchase them. Also, your smoke should never be black, it should always be white. Sandalwood is the number one scent used by Buddhists; the aroma is warm, thick and rich, very nectarous and has slight undertones of wood, almost like good aged red wine. More common scents like Lavender help you relax and distress your mind and body. Violet or jasmine is very good as well, but they are sleep inducing, and you don't want

# Decorate your Meditation Room

The practice of meditation is the practice of controlling ones thoughts and learning to focus your thoughts is the key for meditation.

You must focus on the subject you are meditating on — love, success, money, happiness and peace. Before we can start effective meditation, we have to make sure that our environment is conducive. You cannot get pure thoughts in a dirty, smelly, filthy room. If there is too much noise coming in from other rooms, you are setting yourself up for failure and will give up easily because you cannot concentrate.

#### Designing a meditation room

This can be an incredibly enjoyable and satisfying process. If you are fortunate enough to have a space that you can dedicate purely to the practice of meditation, then what you read here will help you to create your very own special sanctuary.

A meditation room is meant to be a place of relaxation and serenity. Any source of distraction, such as TV, computer and telephone, should be kept out of the space. Decorating your meditation room is a very personal thing, since everyone has different ways of relaxing. Your meditation room should be a room

that you can walk into and instantly begin to feel relaxed in. Everything in the room — the colors, the items, the decorations should help you with your daily meditation. Therefore, your deliberations for your own meditation room are important and vital for continued success with meditation.

#### Location

Choose a room that is as far from distraction as possible. If you live in an apartment or condo, use a space that doesn't share a wall with other units.

#### Colour

The colours you choose will have an effect on your perception of space in the room. For example — darker colours may feel very cozy, but they can make a room feel smaller. Lighter colours on the other hand will help open a room up, but may not have the warmth you seek. Paint the room a colour that is calming for you. Blues and yellows are believed to produce a calming effect. Greens and blues are great choices, but you wouldn't want to use red or orange — these colours are too stimulating and provocative.

Most interior decorators will advise you to avoid the overuse of bold colors,



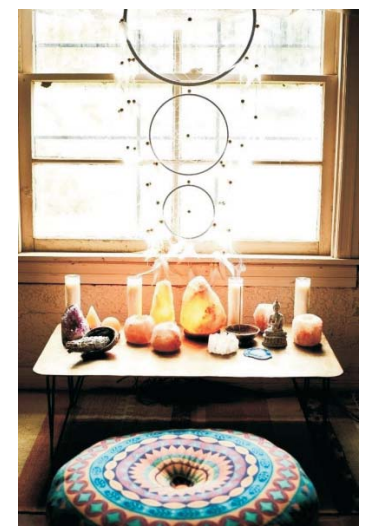
however if a certain color resonates positively with you, then do not hesitate to defy convention and use as much of it as you like. Not all traditional decorating advice applies when you are designing a meditation room. Keep your desired room theme in mind and go with your instincts. Any kind of wall decorations or borders that will draw your attention away from your meditation should be removed.

#### Lighting

Use lighting that relaxes you. Fluorescent lights have been proven to cause anxiety and fatigue in many people, so avoid them. Natural light works well, or you can use candles to create soft light.

#### No clutter

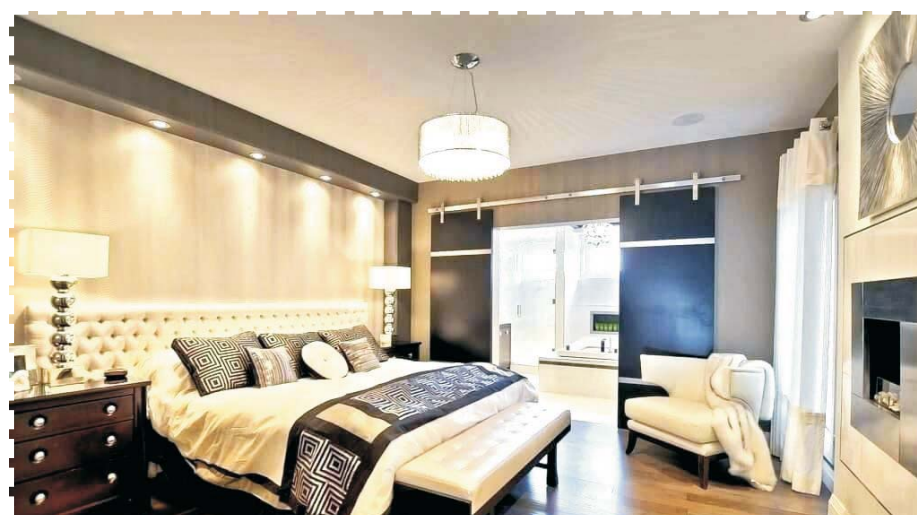
Keep it simple. Don't clutter up your space. Decorating any room is always the fun part, but you don't want to go overboard with accessories in your meditation room. You should only surround yourself with beautiful and meaningful items, not clutter that will ultimately distract you from why you're there. Your room should include only those things that relax you. Candles, plants and fountains are



to fall asleep.

Finally, when it comes to decorating a meditation room in your home, follow your personal style and tastes to create a relaxing atmosphere in which you feel comfortable.

## Themes for a Dream Bedrooms



Themed bedrooms are getting increasingly popular. Themes are no longer restricted to just styling up an individual, but have become an intrinsic part of many homes. Creating interiors on a theme that reflects one's lifestyle and taste is becoming increasingly popular with people getting more and more involved in home decor.

In fact, one of the most popular trends in home decor today is 'theme bedrooms'. You can design a

'zen' bedroom, or a classical or retro bedroom — the options are plenty; all that is required is your imagination and creativity. Says interior designer Shilpi Dokahia, "Themed rooms have existed for quite sometime now. However, they have become extremely popular of late, as people are becoming more lifestyle and fashion conscious. Just like they know what to wear to work, to sleep, to party, they know how to decorate their personal spaces. They

no longer believe in living only for others, and have started living according to their taste and preferences."

Agrees interior designer Mallika Thakker, "Creating a theme bedroom allows you to make your own dream zone to escape into. It creates a different destination, and gives us a break from the everyday mundane world that we live in. One can extend their imagination and creativity to no limit to personalise their bedroom. It is the room, where one spends a lot of time in, and the surroundings contribute a lot to the comfort." Just like changing fashion, people are more clued into changing interior trends too. They know that interior is bold or subtle, ethnic or contemporary, theatrical or classy, Mediterranean or South African, colour coordinated or contrasted and so on. So is the awareness that the moment you enter a house, it shouts out a specific theme, either through the wall colours or wallpapers, or through the accessories like the lamp shades, upholstery, cushion covers and carpets too. Interior designer Akshika Luthra Hemnani attributes this to the excessive travelling that people do these days. "The world is becoming smaller and smaller, and so people are getting exposed to a lot new styles and themes. They are exposed to varied eye-catching home decors at the places they travel to, and want to replicate this in their own space, especially the bedroom, which is an intimate place."

The Zen theme, Retro theme, Moroccan theme, the evergreen Classical and Earthy themes are few of the most popular themes today. In fact, rather than doing up the entire room on a theme, people are using accessories to create theme look. Explains interior designer Bindiya Chabbria, "Interiors has now become subjective."

It's got to do a lot with your own taste and so emphasising on accessories for a theme is the best option. Not only is it easy to create a theme for your room using accessories, it can be changed from time to time making it affordable and cost effective. So, using cushions, carpets, curtains and even upholstery, you can give a different look to your room."

## Eco-chic decor on a budget

Sustainable and eco-friendly decorating ideas for your home.

#### Upcycled furniture

Scour secondhand furniture markets for material to create fresh furniture for your home. Two bookshelves can be joined to make a table. Old wooden chairs and shelves can be sanded and polished (or repainted) to look fresh.

#### Bottle vase showpiece

Create a unique centerpiece for the living room without spending thousands of rupees. Collect old glass bottles in different colours, shapes and sizes. Place them together on a wooden tray. Fill some of them with flowers, dried leaves and potpourri.

#### Plant screen

Want your bedroom to have an open view and still maintain your privacy? Place potted plants by the window to create a natural screen from prying eyes. The pure air filtration that the plants provide is an added bonus.

#### Wine cork trivet

With a little inventiveness, you can use corks of wine bottles to make a trivet. A trivet is an object placed between a serving bowl and a dining table to protect the tabletop from heat or water damage. To make one, collect 50 to 60 wine corks and



arrange them upright in a circle. Buy a medium-sized metal clamp from a hardware store and bind the corks tight to make an ecofriendly trivet!

#### Glam bathroom

You've picked the most gorgeous combination of tiles for the bathroom, then why settle for harsh fluorescent lights? Rig up an old chandelier from a used furniture market and light it up with energy-efficient LED bulbs that give off a warm glow.

#### Quilt of scarves

Don't reject old woollen scarves after they've been worn out. Line up a few that have identical colours or patterns and stitch them together by hand to make a scarf quilt for wintry nights.

# How will you style your Coffee table?

People are styling their coffee tables in variety of ways and making them attractive as ever. While books is one of the most common things to decorate the table with, here we give you some ideas on how you can make this area and the coffee table lively and attractive:

## 1) Candlestands and a tray

The market is going crazy with candles and stands to keep them and so decorating your

### STYLING YOUR COFFEE TABLE



**Coffee Table is that special area in your house where you love to enjoy your coffee in luxury or browse through a book at any time of the day.**

table with a beautiful candlestand, which can be lit in the evening will bring joy. A tray should be nice to decorate with flowers or artefacts.

## 2) Your choice of drinks and bar

You can easily put a tray if the table is small and if it is big, you can make a mini bar area on the table. The tray can have your list of favourite liquor and a pair of glasses, opener and ice tub, so you are ready to party.

## 3) Coffee Table books

A coffee table is incomplete without books and that's why you have coffee table books for this purpose. While you can easily put them neatly in an orderly manner on the table, you can also display some of your favourite books in such a way, that they reflect your choice and gives a reason to converse with your guests.

## 4) Small boxes

Small decorative boxes that can have your remote control, emergency kits, pair of spectacles, pen and paper, napkins, coasters can be kept in them. This will help not keep these things outside just anywhere in your



room.

## 5) Flower vases

Flower vases are to be chosen according to the size of the room. Not too big or not too small. If possible fresh flowers add to the fragrance of the room, but if not possible arrange for a few artificial flowers which come in huge variety these days.

## 6) Two coffee tables

When the room is big, you can add one more coffee table and use that one for putting artefacts or relaxing your legs.

## 7) Round tray on a rectangle table

This will look ideal when the table is small and you want to decorate it with a tray and some interesting things on it.

## 8) Personal style statement

The table can also have a box that keeps your painting brushes or choice of pens which you require to write when you sit down near it. You can also keep your favourite piece of artificial jewellery or any handicraft piece that you just bought.

**9) Table cloth** Table cloth is not just meant for the table. If you come across a nice earthy coloured cloth, which will add style, then it is ideal investing in one.

## How rattan furniture from Thailand is making waves

[It is not about spending a leisure holiday in Thailand now! While people discuss adventure and beauty of Thailand, they are also now going there to buy home decor and furniture. Bangkok has become popular for its Rattan furniture and you find designer homes housing a lot of this Rattan furniture from Thailand.](#)



Rattan is a palm and grows in the tropical regions of Asia, Africa and Australia. Rattans are used for making furniture and baskets. It can accept paint and stains and so it is available in many styles and can be moulded into a variety of styles. More durable than bamboo, and suitable in garden environment, people in India purchase the furniture mainly for rooftop gardens and their drawing rooms. Rattan is also used for sofas, minibars, chairs, cupboards and more.

In addition, Thailand is also popular for transformation of natural materials such as bamboo, rattan, para wood, teakwood, leather and water hyacinth into fabulous and functional contemporary pieces. Crafactor and Yothaka are the two leading brands that set the trend for both materials and designs each year. Agal decor, Korakot International, Papaya Vintage shop and Yothaka are also some of the important places for buying furniture in Thailand.

## 10 tips to attract Wealth with vastu

Ever imagine living in a world which is not materialistic? Well, had that been true it would've been the ideal place to live in, but sadly money does form a very important part of our lives and if you are struggling to hold onto it, then you ought to read



through these amazing Mahavastu tips to increase your wealth, shared by Vastu guru Khushdeep Bansal.

1. Five elements or Panchtatva and the 16 Mahavastu zones determine how you think, react.
2. Vastu-perfect homes attract wealth.
3. In the north vastu zone, ensure that blue is the main colour; avoid red shade, designating space for kitchen and toilet. Also, don't place a dustbin, broom, washing machine, mixer-grinder here. The kitchen represents fire and with wrong placements, you'll end up diluting money, opportunities and career.
4. Keep a money plant in a green vase, or hang a scenery showing a lush field or thick forest in north zone. These will attract money and better career opportunities.
5. The north west vastu zone is the one which gets you support (financial) of banks and relevant persons in your ventures
6. A beautiful entrance brings happiness and prosperity, and helps in appreciation of an individual's value in the society. If it is a sloppy and unkempt one, troubles will hound you.
- For instance, the south-west door will bring in debts, loans and financial problems. A north vastu entrance

- brings good career opportunities and money. The east vastu entrance brings peace. The west entrance brings in wealth and prosperity. The south entrance is also a beneficial one.
7. Keep the kitchen in the south east or south south-east. The main colour should be pastel shades of red, orange and pink. Keep the safe, work table, drawing room in the northern areas for a healthy money flow.
8. In the West, the main colours are white and yellow. This is another location for the safe. Use round shapes as these represent the earth element here. The west south-west is the zone of savings. Keep this clean and use as a place for studies. Keep money and valuables in an iron safe in this area— this will ensure your wealth remains safe.
9. Overall, see if there is a harmonious and balanced energy cycle in your house.
10. Get your house thoroughly checked using the 4-Step Mahavastu method. Discover which areas have an imbalance and whether zones are cut, extended or missing. These areas can be treated with simple vastu cures using colours, lights, symbols, rangoli and plants.

## How to decorate your house with purple

**To add some colour to your house, there is nothing better than a touch of purple to make your abode look brighter. Here's how...**

Purple is considered to be the current colour of the season. There are so many ways you can add a hint of this hue to your room.

**Living area:** You can have curtains in light or dark purple. However, you can also pair white curtains along with purple upholstery. A combination of purple, pink and white floral designs look great.

**Bedroom:** Your bedsheet or bedcover can be in purple or mauve. Alternatively, you can also have a purple wallpaper in your bedroom to make the whole room look soothing.

**Dining area:** You can have a table runner in purple or possibly also have seating in the dining room in shades of purple.

### Tips—

- Purple looks best when combined with patterns in white.
- Make sure that you do not overdo with the whole purple look.
- While choosing a shade of purple, always go with a milder hue. This way you won't go wrong with the colour. Other colours you can choose — Pink is another colour that looks good as a colour option just as purple. - If you do not want bright shades, you can alternatively select a sombre shade of green as well.



# Loud bang, flames: Aviation probe details SWISS flight engine failure in Delhi

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has released its preliminary report into the serious incident involving a Swiss International Air Lines flight that suffered an engine failure during take-off at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on April 26. According to the report, SWISS flight LX147 from New Delhi to Zurich was involved in a rejected take-off at around 1:27 am after the failure of its left-hand engine.

The AAIB has categorised the occurrence as a "serious incident" that left six people injured. The Airbus A330-343 was carrying 245 people on board, including 232 passengers and 13 crew members. The preliminary report said the flight crew rejected the take-off after the aircraft's left-hand engine failed at a speed of about 106 knots. The pilots immediately

informed air traffic control and requested emergency assistance.

The crew later reported hearing a "loud bang" and observing a large flame emanating from Engine No. 1. The aircraft reportedly veered to the left before the pilots successfully brought it to a stop on the runway.

A full emergency was declared at Delhi Airport, with all seven emergency gates opened. Four passengers sustained injuries during the incident. As part of the investigation, the AAIB carried out a visual inspection of the aircraft and observed small metal particles and debris in the exhaust section of the affected engine.

Both flight recorders -- the Solid State

Flight Data Recorder (SSFDR) and the Solid State Cockpit Voice Recorder

The AAIB said the engine involved in the incident will be retrieved for a detailed examination to determine the root cause of the failure.

France's Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis for Aviation Safety (BEA) has appointed an accredited representative to assist the investigation, while Airbus and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) have also been associated with the probe.

The preliminary report noted several findings during the engine examination. External observations before the borescope inspection found broken bolts and spacers of the high-pressure/intermediate-pressure bearing support in the thrust reverser ducts.

High-pressure bleed valves were also found

partially blocked with debris. During the core engine borescope inspection, investigators observed damage to the High Pressure Turbine blades and Nozzle Guide Vanes. Damage was also found in the Intermediate Pressure Turbine blades, Low Pressure Turbine blades, and High Pressure Compressor blades and stator vanes.

The report said the high-pressure shaft and intermediate-pressure shaft were seized, preventing a complete inspection. However, investigators found no signs of impact damage or blade distortion in the Intermediate Pressure Compressor, although the IPC shaft was also seized and could not be fully inspected. The AAIB said further analysis of the engine and flight recorder data is underway and safety recommendations may be issued at a later stage.



--have been removed for further analysis. The bureau said crew data, flight data and air traffic control records are being examined as part of the ongoing probe.

## Four-storey building crashes to rubble in Delhi's Saket, eight people rescued to safety

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Several people are feared trapped under the debris after a four-storey commercial building collapsed near Saket Metro station in south Delhi on Saturday evening, officials said.

The incident occurred on Western Marg in Saidulajab. According to officials at the site, the entire structure collapsed into a massive mound of rubble. Police said the building housed a coaching institute on the ground floor, while construction work was underway on the upper floors. Eight people trapped under the debris were rescued safely and taken for treatment with minor injuries, the officials said.

"It was a glass-facade commercial building and no one can say with certainty how many occupants were present inside at the time of the incident," a resident said. A small adjoining building housing a mess was also affected, though people there were evacuated safely. Apart from a few minor injuries, no major casualties have been reported so far.

The Delhi Fire Services received a call about the collapse at 7.44 pm and rushed seven fire tenders to the spot. Rescue teams, police personnel and local residents launched search operations amid heaps of concrete, twisted metal and broken pillars. Residents used mobile phone flashlights to assist rescue efforts as emergency teams searched for possible survivors trapped beneath the rubble.

Officials said the number of people trapped remains unconfirmed. Rescue operations were underway at the time of filing this report, and further details are awaited.

## Liveable city needs active citizen participation: Delhi L-G Sandhu

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

L-G Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Saturday interacted with fitness enthusiasts, senior citizens, community groups and residents at Bonta Park in Kamlia Nehru Ridge, emphasising citizen participation in building a healthier, greener and more liveable capital. The visit reflected the spirit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Fit India Movement, with the park serving as a hub for recreation, fitness and community engagement. Sandhu said accessible and well-maintained public spaces are



essential for promoting health, well-being and social cohesion.

The L-G received a warm welcome from a yoga group, which greeted him with a laughter yoga session. The park, which attracts around 4,000 visitors daily, has emerged as a popular public space combining recreation, fitness and environmental awareness.

During the visit, Sandhu met representatives of community organisations and sports groups and heard suggestions on park infrastructure, cleanliness, accessibility and visitor amenities.

Stressing collective ownership, he said, "This is your park. Delhi belongs to all of us, and its development and upkeep are our shared responsibility."

DDA officials and ecological experts briefed him on efforts to strengthen the Ridge ecosystem, including plans for biodiversity zones aimed at improving ecological health and creating a more resilient urban habitat. Citizens also raised concerns regarding park boundaries, entry points, water facilities, rain shelters and cleanliness.

## Delhi police busts ISI-underworld module, eight held in terror conspiracy case

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Delhi Police said on Saturday that it has busted a terrorist-criminal network linked to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Mumbai underworld. The Special Cell arrested eight people, including a Nepalese national, in the operation.

The police claimed the accused were conspiring to carry out grenade attacks and targeted shootings at vital installations, security establishments, and police personnel in Delhi and other parts of the country.

The police said the accused worked at the behest of ISI handlers Shahzad Bhatti, Munna Jhingada, and Yawar Khan. Jhingada is a Dawood Ibrahim's henchman, who is accused of carrying out an attack on Chhota



Rajan in Bangkok in 2000 at Ibrahim's behest. Jhingada remained in a Thai jail for 17 years for the attack.

The Special Cell recovered four Pakistan-made hand grenades, two Glock pistols, and 24 live rounds from three operatives held in the operation.

The accused have been identified as

Vijay, alias Shooter, 23, a resident of Uttar Pradesh; Nitish Paswan, 23, a resident of Jharkhand; Taooqeer Rizwan Ahmad Shaikh, 27, and Sajid Mehboob Shaikh, alias Arbaz Khan, 27, both residents of Maharashtra; Harvinder Singh, 28, Gagandeep Singh, 28, and Manjeet Singh, 23, all residents of Punjab; and Lama Ang Kami, 66, from Nepal. Lama was tasked to arrange a hideout for operatives in Delhi and handle finances for Jhingada.

Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Anil Shukla said the arrests led to the dismantling of an international network. The module was involved in a criminal conspiracy to execute grenade attacks and firing at vital installations, security establishments and cops in Delhi and Mumbai, he said.

## 58-year-old man held for using NGO bank account in Rs 5 crore cheque scam in Delhi

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has arrested a 58-year-old man for his alleged involvement in a cheque forgery and bank fraud case involving more than Rs 5 crore, officials said on Saturday.

The accused, identified as Sudama Narware, was arrested from Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. According to police, he allegedly played a key role in diverting funds fraudulently withdrawn from the account of a university through forged cheques.

The case was registered on the complaint of an Assistant General Manager of a public sector bank regarding the fraudulent withdrawal



of Rs 6.25 crore from the university's account.

Police said that in August 2019, three forged cheques purportedly issued by the university were presented for clearance. Two cheques were cleared through a private bank, resulting in the transfer of Rs 5.20 crore to separate accounts in Vadodra, Gujarat, and Betul, Madhya Pradesh. Payment on the

third cheque was stopped before clearance.

During the investigation, police examined bank records and found that Rs 2.5 crore was credited to the account of a firm, NS Infrastructure, in Vadodra, while Rs 2.7 crore was deposited into the account of an NGO in Betul, a senior police officer said.

According to DCP (EOW) Subodh Kumar Goswami, Narware was the secretary and authorised signatory of the NGO. He allegedly transferred ₹2.07 crore from the NGO's account to another accused, after which the money was routed through five alleged shell firms in Delhi. Three accused have already been arrested, while further investigation is underway.

# General NS Raja Subramani takes charge as India's new Chief of Defence Staff

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

General NS Raja Subramani on Saturday officially assumed charge as India's third Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), succeeding General Anil Chauhan, who retired after serving in the post for three-and-a-half years. The change of command was marked by a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the South Block lawns in New Delhi.

An officer of the Garhwal Regiment, General Subramani previously served as Military Adviser to the National Security Advisory Committee, where he played a key role in strategic assessments and inter-agency coordination on national security matters.

Upon taking charge, the new CDS expressed gratitude for the trust reposed in the armed forces and outlined his

priorities for the future. He said strengthening jointness, synergy and integration among the Army, Navy and Air Force would remain a key focus area. "I am honoured to assume charge as the Chief of Defence Staff. We are committed to implementing the Prime Minister's vision of JAI — Jointness, Atma Nirbharta and Innovation," General Subramani said.

He emphasised that organisational reforms and the transformation of the armed forces would continue to be pursued to enhance operational effectiveness. Highlighting self-reliance as a cornerstone of national security, he said efforts would be

intensified to accelerate the development, induction and integration



of indigenous weapons and defence technologies. **THE KEY AREAS TO FOCUS** General Subramani also underscored the importance of innovation in military

modernisation, calling for greater collaboration between the armed forces, industry, academia, startups and the research ecosystem. "Innovation in thought and action will drive our capability development," he said.

Paying tribute to his predecessors, the new CDS acknowledged the contributions of late General Bipin Rawat, India's first Chief of Defence Staff, and General Anil Chauhan for their leadership in advancing military integration and reforms.

He also reiterated the armed forces' commitment to safeguarding India's sovereignty and territorial integrity while stressing that the welfare of soldiers, sailors, air warriors, veterans.

## 980 tankers and 6,000 daily trips govt solution for water supply deficit in Delhi

**CM Rekha Gupta reviewed the city's drinking water situation through a video conference meeting with senior officials, including Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh and Delhi Jal Board representatives.**



**New Delhi.(Agency)**

Amid reports of water shortages in several parts of the capital, the government on Saturday said it is focusing on both immediate relief measures and long-term solutions to address the water crisis and strengthen future water security.

CM Rekha Gupta reviewed the city's drinking water situation through a video conference meeting with senior officials, including Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh and Delhi Jal Board representatives.

Following the meeting, Gupta said the Haryana government has assured Delhi of a minimum supply of 1,000 cusecs of water through the Munak Canal after she spoke with Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini. She said ensuring adequate drinking water supply remains one of the government's top priorities.

Officials informed the meeting that more than 980 DJB tankers are making over 6,000 trips daily to supply water across the city. Small tankers have also been deployed in densely populated areas and narrow lanes. Additional borewells in the Yamuna Khadar area have increased water production capacity by 10.5 MGD per day.

The chief minister directed officials to treat every water leakage incident seriously. She also asked DJB officials to personally monitor complaints and conduct field inspections when necessary. Of the 11,055 complaints received on the DJB helpline during the past week, more than 8,500 have been resolved. Gupta directed officials to ensure prompt redressal of the remaining complaints.

## Leaving your job? Here is what form 10C does and when you need it

New Delhi, (Agency)

Switching jobs or stepping away from work entirely comes with a fair amount of paperwork. If you have been contributing to the Employees' Pension Scheme, one form worth understanding before you move on is Form 10C. Form 10C is the document EPFO members use to claim benefits under the Employees' Pension Scheme after leaving a job. It serves two distinct purposes depending on where you are in your career — you can either use it to pull out the pension amount sitting in your EPS account, or you can use it to get a Scheme Certificate that keeps your pension benefits alive for future employment. Two situations where it comes into play: The first is a straightforward withdrawal. If you are leaving a job before completing 10 years of pensionable service and do not plan to return to an EPF-covered organisation, you can apply to withdraw whatever has accumulated in your EPS account. The second option is the Scheme Certificate route. If you are moving to another job in the organised sector and want to carry your pensionable service forward rather than cash it out, this certificate protects that history and keeps your future pension eligibility intact.

Who can apply

You are eligible to file Form 10C if you left your job before hitting the 10-year service mark, if you turned 58 without completing 10 years of pensionable service, if you are changing jobs and want to safeguard your pension record through a Scheme Certificate, or if you are a nominee or legal heir claiming EPS benefits following the death of a member. One important point — if you have already completed 10 or more years of pensionable service, withdrawal is not an option. You can only get a Scheme Certificate and will become eligible for a monthly pension once you reach retirement age.

## Resilient India faces headwinds from Wasia, weak monsoon outlook: Finance Ministry

BENGALURU, (Agency)

India's economy remains resilient despite escalating global uncertainties triggered by the conflict in West Asia, but rising energy prices, a weakening rupee, mounting inflationary pressures and the prospect of a below-normal monsoon pose significant risks to growth and price stability, the Finance Ministry said in its Monthly Economic Review (MER) for May 2026. The ministry said the near-term outlook for the economy is one of cautious resilience, with domestic fundamentals remaining broadly intact. Manufacturing and services activity continues to expand, the labour market remains stable and the country's foreign exchange reserves provide a substantial buffer against external shocks.

However, it cautioned that the global environment has become materially more challenging since the outbreak of the West Asia conflict, with elevated crude oil prices, tighter financial conditions and slowing growth across major economies creating headwinds that India cannot fully escape. "The near-term outlook for the Indian economy is one of cautious resilience," the report said, while warning that forecasts of a below-normal monsoon and a likely moderation in economic activity could weigh on consumption demand in the months ahead. The review noted that the conflict has disrupted energy markets, trade routes and supply chains, reviving inflationary pressures globally. Brent crude averaged \$120.4 per barrel in April before easing to \$108.3 in May, while supply-chain disruptions intensified.

## LIC plans foray in fintech space, strategic investment also on table: CEO

New Delhi, (Agency)

Insurance giant LIC is actively considering establishing a fintech arm either through strategic investment or organic way to cater to its growing digital needs, CEO and MD R Doraiswamy said.

"Naturally, to meet the modernisation requirement and particularly to bring innovation, we are engaging both fintech and insurtech players and we are getting a lot of new things being developed by such players," Doraiswamy told PTI in an interview. On the other side, he said, "we are a big financial institution investing in multiple organisations and we also look at strategic investments in any specialised player as a way of improving the returns on the policyholders' funds." Talking about Life Insurance Corporation of India's IT journey, he said, it was one of the early adopters of digital technologies. We have built our own core competence in developing our business applications by building up a software development centre. We have sizable number of people working in our IT department creating the IT solutions for us but that does not mean that we can be totally self-dependent. We engage a lot of IT service providers for the new infrastructure and platforms," he said. Doraiswamy, who had spearheaded the modernization of IT infrastructure and Business Applications of LIC's Individual Business as Executive Director, said, the Corporation need to have both its own core development teams as well as the support of IT players. "So, both go hand in hand...we are engaging the fintech players but whether it can be a strategic partner, we are looking at various options available and we may be coming up with something...our first aim is to modernize our IT applications and become as agile and nimble-footed as possible to remain relevant in the competition," he said. LIC is currently evaluating value proposition of various options on the table, he added. Asked if LIC is prepared for further dilution of stake by the Centre, Doraiswamy said, "We have been prepared right from day one. When we started preparing for the IPO, we were prepared for this kind of subsequent actions as well. So the call is taken by the government."

**As home prices race ahead of incomes, more Indians are stretching EMI into retirement, cutting savings and relying on decades of future earnings to keep the dream of homeownership alive. This is the story of how India's housing dream is increasingly being financed by tomorrow's income.**

New Delhi, (Agency)

There was a time when buying a home came after years of saving. Families would build a down payment over time, buy within their means and take a home loan that could be comfortably repaid before retirement. Today, that journey is beginning to look very different.

Across India's biggest cities, homebuyers are increasingly starting their housing search not by deciding what they can afford, but by asking banks how much

they can borrow. The answer often determines not just the home they buy, but how much of the next 20 to 30 years of their income is already committed. As property prices continue to rise faster than incomes in many urban centres, homeownership is increasingly being supported by longer loan tenures, larger mortgages, dual-income households and future earnings that have not yet been made. The result is a growing concern among economists, personal finance experts and real estate professionals: Are Indians buying homes with money they have, or with money they hope to earn over the next three decades?

**FROM AFFORDABILITY TO ELIGIBILITY**

One of the clearest signs of the shift can be seen in how people shop for homes today. "A few years ago, buyers would typically choose the asset, determine a comfortable budget first and then seek financing accordingly," says Pratyush



Pandey, Founder of AARE Consulting.

"A large number of buyers begin the process by asking lenders what their maximum eligible loan amount is and then searching for homes within that financing capacity." Pandey says this trend is particularly visible among first-time homebuyers in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. "The focus has moved from affordability-led buying to eligibility-led buying," he says. That distinction may sound subtle, but financial advisers say it is reshaping how Indian households approach one of the biggest financial

decisions of their lives. Abhishek Kumar, Sebi-registered investment adviser and founder of Sahaj Money, says many buyers confuse what a bank is willing to lend with what they can comfortably afford. "The most common mistake is confusing maximum bank loan eligibility with true personal affordability," he says. "Buyers often look only at the basic EMI while completely ignoring maintenance costs, property taxes, registration expenses and the impact of future interest-rate hikes."

**WHY 30-YEAR HOME LOANS ARE BECOMING NORMAL**

The reason behind this shift is simple: homes are becoming harder to afford. According to Dr Manoranjan Sharma, Chief Economist at Infomeric Ratings, housing affordability in many Indian cities has deteriorated sharply. He points out that price-to-income ratios in major cities now range between 7 and 10, compared to the globally accepted affordability benchmark of below 5.

## RBI rate decision and US-Iran tensions set to keep markets on edge next week

New Delhi, (Agency)

Indian stock markets took a sharp hit on Friday, with a heavy selloff in the last hour of trading wiping out most of the day's cautious stability. Investors chose to step back ahead of several big developments expected to shape market direction next week. The Sensex dropped 1,092 points or 1.44 percent to close at 74,775.74. The Nifty fell 359 points or 1.50 percent to settle at 23,547.75. At its lowest point during the session, the Nifty touched 23,485 before recovering slightly into the close. For most of Friday, markets moved within a tight range. Investors were sitting on the fence, uncertain about how talks between the United States and Iran might play out. That caution turned into active selling toward the end of the day, and the decline spread across sectors rather than being limited to one or two areas. What markets will be watching next week

The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee meeting runs from

June 3 to June 5, 2026. The six-member panel, led by Governor Sanjay Malhotra, will take up interest rates, inflation, liquidity, and the broader



growth outlook. Whatever the committee decides — or signals — is likely to set the tone for markets in the days that follow. On the global side, the US-Iran situation remains fluid. Iranian state media reported that a proposed agreement between the two countries includes the release of USD 12 billion in frozen Iranian assets. The report cited what it described as an unofficial draft

of the deal. The White House, however, pushed back on similar claims earlier in the week, calling them a fabrication. Markets are watching this closely given how quickly the situation can shift. Crude oil prices fell sharply on Friday, dropping more than 2 percent to hit their lowest level in six weeks. The decline came on hopes of a ceasefire involving the US, Israel, and Iran. For India, which imports a large share of its oil needs, lower crude prices are a meaningful positive — they ease the import bill, reduce pressure on the rupee, and help keep inflation in check.

What to watch

The coming week brings a packed calendar. The RBI policy decision, any fresh developments on the US-Iran front, crude oil price movements, and the behaviour of foreign institutional investors will all be closely tracked. Together, these factors are likely to determine whether markets find a floor or face further pressure.

## Govt revises fuel export levies for fortnight beginning June 1; no impact on domestic petrol, diesel rates - Check

New Delhi, (Agency)

The Centre has revised export levies on petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) for the fortnight beginning on June 1, 2026. However, the government has left excise duty rates on petrol and diesel sold in the domestic market unchanged. The duty has been set at Rs 1.5 per litre on petrol exports, Rs 13.5 per litre on diesel exports and Rs 9.5 per litre on ATF exports, as per an official notification, IANS reported. According to the notification, the revised rates have been prescribed based on the average international prices of crude oil, petrol, diesel and ATF prevailing during the period since the last review. Export levies Earlier, on March 27, 2026, the export levies were

introduced to ensure domestic availability of petroleum products by discouraging exports in the backdrop of the West Asia crisis. The last revision came into effect on May



16, 2026. On May 16, the government revised export taxes on petroleum products, imposing a special additional excise duty (SAED) of Rs 3 per litre on petrol exports while reducing the duty

on diesel to Rs 16.5 per litre.

The notification by the Ministry of Finance stated that the entry of Rs 3 per litre shall be substituted for petrol exports, while diesel has been revised to Rs 16.5 per litre. It further clarified that the road and infrastructure cess has been reduced to zero on petrol and diesel exports. Notably, the domestic fuel tax rates remained unchanged. Earlier, export duty on diesel was revised multiple times. It was first set at Rs 21.50 per litre on March 26, then raised to Rs 55.5 per litre on April 11. Later, it was cut to Rs 23 per litre on April 30, and has now been further reduced to Rs 16.5 per litre. The ATF followed a similar pattern. The duty was first Rs 29.5 per litre, then increased to Rs 42 per litre. It was later reduced to Rs 33 per litre and has now been brought down to Rs 16 per litre.

## India reduces diesel and ATF export duties, keeps domestic taxes unchanged

**The government has cut export duties on petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel for the fortnight from June 1. The move follows its price-linked review mechanism, while domestic fuel excise and retail rates remain unchanged.**

New Delhi, (Agency)

The government has reduced export duties on petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) for the fortnight beginning June 1, 2026, as part of its periodic review of levies imposed on petroleum product exports. According to a notification issued by the government on Saturday, the export duty on petrol has been cut to Rs 1.5 per litre, while the duty on diesel has been reduced to Rs 13.5 per litre. Export duty on aviation turbine fuel has also been lowered to Rs 9.5 per litre. The revised



rates will come into effect from June 1 and remain applicable for the next fortnight. The government reviews these duties every two weeks based on prevailing international prices of crude oil and refined petroleum products. The export levies, comprising the Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) and the Road and Infrastructure Cess (RIC), were introduced on March 27, 2026, amid escalating geopolitical tensions in West

Asia. The move was aimed at ensuring adequate domestic availability of petroleum products by discouraging excessive exports during a period of heightened uncertainty in global energy markets.

**THE REVISED STRUCTURE**

Under the revised structure, petrol exports will attract only a Special Additional Excise Duty of Rs 1.5 per litre, while diesel exports will be subject to an SAED

of Rs 13.5 per litre. ATF exports will continue to attract only the SAED component at Rs 9.5 per litre. The latest revision marks a significant reduction from the rates announced on May 16. At that time, the government had raised the export duty on petrol to Rs 3 per litre while reducing duties on diesel and aviation fuel to Rs 16.5 per litre and Rs 16 per litre, respectively.

Officials said the fortnightly revisions are based on average international prices of crude oil, petrol, diesel and ATF recorded since the previous review period. The mechanism is intended to allow the government to respond quickly to fluctuations in global energy markets while balancing domestic supply requirements.

The government also clarified that there is no change in the existing excise duty rates applicable to petrol and diesel sold in the domestic market. As a result, consumers are unlikely to see any immediate impact on retail fuel prices from the latest revision in export duties.

## Short news

**Mumbai horror: Father kills specially abled 4-year-old son in Powai, arrested**

Mumbai (Agency)

A four-year-old boy was allegedly killed by his father in Morarji Nagar in Powai on Friday morning. Powai Police have arrested the accused, Rajesh Prakash Singh (27), on murder charges.

Police said Rajesh was living with his elderly mother and two children. His



wife had reportedly left the house around 15 days ago due to his alcohol addiction and unemployment. The deceased child, Yash, was a special child and depended mainly on milk for food.

Police said Yash started crying for milk on Friday morning, which allegedly enraged Rajesh. In a fit of anger, he allegedly slammed the child against a door and smashed his head on the floor, killing him.

**Telangana high court defers habeas corpus plea in advocate's murder case**

Hyderabad (Agency)

A vacation bench of Telangana high court adjourned a habeas corpus petition linked to the alleged murder of advocate Khaja Moizuddin at Masab Tank on May 23.

The plea, filed by Syed Sadiq on behalf of suspects Hasan Bin Ali Yafai and Muneer Ahmed, was moved as a lunch motion and carried serious allegations against police conduct.

A division bench, comprising Justice Nagesh Bheemappa and Justice Vakiti Ramakrishna Reddy, posted the matter to June 4 without passing interim orders.

The petitioner alleged that police illegally detained and tortured family members of the suspects, including elderly parents, and urged the court to direct police to produce them immediately.

Specifically, the petition named family members of Hasan, a mechanic, his mother Akhtar Unnisa Begum, wife Safina Khatun, brother Omer Bin Ali Yafai, and son Essa Bin Hasan Yafai, who have allegedly been in custody since May 25.

The petitioner urged the court to direct police to produce the missing persons. Compensation was also sought for violation of statutory and fundamental rights.

Further, the petition claimed the motive behind the advocate's killing was tied to his professional work. Moizuddin had been engaged in long-standing legal battles to safeguard Waqf Board properties, making him a target, the petitioner argued. Moizuddin had also been actively working to protect institutional lands from illegal encroachers who had established properties on them, the petitioner added.

**Ahmedabad: Ola told to refund e-scooter cost over repeated breakdowns**

Ahmedabad (Agency)

A consumer commission here has ordered Ola Electric Mobility Ltd to refund the value of an electric scooter after the complainant that it was not repaired and the vehicle continued to conk out in the middle of the road.

This case involved a resident of Nava Vadaj, Shailesh Bharwad, who bought an Ola company's electric scooter in Oct 2024 from the company's authorised showroom by paying Rs 1.19 lakh. According to Bharwad's complaint before the Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission, Ahmedabad (Main), the scooter stopped suddenly in the middle of the road when he was riding in the Akhbarnagar area. He contacted the company's service centre and complained on umpteen occasions regarding the issue, but the problem was not resolved. He claimed that he often had to restart the vehicle and bear with it. Ultimately, the scooter had to be towed to the service centre, but it could not be repaired.

The commission issued notice to the company, but nobody appeared in its defence, and the proceedings took place ex parte. After perusing the material submitted by the complainant, the commission said that considering the fact that the electric scooter was often breaking down, putting the complainant's life at risk because a sudden stoppage of the vehicle might cause an accident, and if the respondent company could not remove the defect on a permanent.

**Dairy farmers pour thousands of litres of milk in Odisha's Umerkote as Omfed denies procurement**

UMERKOTE (Agency)

Dairy farmers from Umerkote in Nabarangpur district on Saturday were forced to spill thousands of litres of fresh milk on the streets following the abrupt suspension of procurement by the local chilling centre of Odisha State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation (Omfed).

Eyewitnesses said that farmers poured nearly 20,000 litres of milk onto the roads after arriving to sell their produce at the Omfed centre in Umerkote. The Omfed reportedly stopped milk procurement citing storage and processing constraints at the Jeypore dairy plant, leaving hundreds of farmers without buyers for their daily produce. Furious over the sudden disruption, farmers dumped milk outside the chilling centre in protest, exposing what they described as the "complete collapse" of the dairy support system.

Local officials claimed that the Jeypore Omfed unit had refused to accept additional supplies



due to exhausted storage capacity. While the region had earlier supplied around 5,000 to 6,000 litres of milk daily, procurement reportedly surged to nearly 17,000 litres.

The farmers warned of a district-wide agitation if procurement is not restored immediately. They demanded urgent intervention from the

state government, alleging official apathy towards their plight. Milk procurement officer Krushna Chandra Sahu confirmed that there is a lack of storage space at the chilling centre due to which milk cannot be procured. "Efforts are underway to resolve this issue as soon as possible," he added.

**Odisha invites bids for 11 mining blocks, contentious Karlapat mine on the table**

BHUBANESWAR (Agency)

Intensifying efforts to attract fresh investments in the mining and metals sector, the state government has initiated the auction process for 11 mineral blocks comprising bauxite, iron ore, manganese, limestone, dolomite and aluminous laterite deposits across five mineral-rich districts.

The directorate of Mines and Geology has invited bids for grant of mining leases (ML) for eight mineral blocks and composite licences (CL) for three bauxite blocks spread across Kalahandi, Rayagada, Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Bargarh districts. Among the blocks on offer are the Karlapat bauxite block in Kalahandi district and Nunapaimali bauxite block in Rayagada district, both of which are expected to draw interest from aluminium producers seeking long-term access to raw material resources.



Under the CL category, the government has offered three unexplored bauxite-bearing blocks in Rayagada district including the Tikirimali-Budharajamali, Tikriguda-Maliguda and NangalMarhimali. Successful bidders for these blocks will undertake exploration before obtaining mining rights.

However, the auction of the Karlapat block is likely to be watched closely by industry and

environmental groups alike. The deposit, estimated to be around 220 million tonne of bauxite spanning more than 3,100 hectare area, lies in close proximity to the ecologically sensitive Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary. The block has a history of legal and environmental controversy. In 2021, the Orissa High Court had halted the auction process following petitions raising concerns about mining activities near the sanctuary and their potential impact on forest, wildlife habitats and water sources. The state government's decision to once again place the block on the auction list is likely to revive the controversy. The state has also put up for auction the Gadadharpur iron ore block in Keonjhar district. Other ferrous mineral assets include the Patamunda-B iron ore and manganese block and the Barpada South iron ore and manganese block, both in Sundargarh district.

**Holding their ground : Vasaikars push back against the burial of their ponds**

Mumbai (Agency)

On a blindingly hot morning in Vasai, Ranjeet Vartak leads us down a rutted track in Bhuigaon Village and gestures towards a scene that could be mistaken for a trick of the light—an informal housing settlement sitting solidly on what ought to have been a 3,067 sq m body of water.

Vartak then points to a map in the CIDCO Development Plan Ariel Survey for Vasai-Virar (1998), where the pond continues to exist. "Until a few years ago, this illegally reclaimed pond on revenue land was a public waterbody," he says, "But those asbestos sheds that now occupy it are privately owned and rented out to migrant workers."

In Jasodi Village, a different dirt track leads to another housing project that has planted its feet in an erstwhile pond — only this one comprises upscale villas soon to go on the market. "In this case, the pond was owned by a family who sold it to a builder," he says.



Vartak, a tour coordinator with a prominent travel company, is leading a different kind of tour today — one that exposes the systematic decimation of Vasai's traditional water system: its bavgkhal.

Bavgkhal are centuries-old private and communal ponds—some as large as an acre—scattered across Vasai taluka in Palghar district, a network numbering at least 800. An ongoing survey by the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, combining GIS data and site visits, has mapped 569 bavgkhal in west Vasai alone.

Fed by rainwater and run-off, these waterbodies replenish local aquifers

and are in turn sustained by them, forming an integral part of the region's water supply — particularly in rural areas where civic pipelines, where they exist, run dry.

Vasai's villages—which spearheaded the Pani Andolan of the 1980s and 1990s against the commercial extraction of water by tankers serving the region's growing construction industry and urban water demand—are mobilising once again. This time, however, the struggle is not over the extraction of water but the disappearance of the waterbodies themselves.

"Land in Vasai's villages is selling for Rs 25-50 lakh per guntha. A bavgkhal is typically 2 to 35 gunthas," says Vartak. "Do the math."

As land has come to be valued more highly than water, bavgkhal have been quietly reclaimed and built over, increasing the region's vulnerability to water scarcity, degrading groundwater quality, disrupting local ecosystems and heightening the risk of flooding.

**13 Lion deaths: CDV-Babesia combined infection behind fatalities?**

Ahmedabad (Agency)

The fear of fatal re-pairing of the canine distemper virus and the Babesia parasite — replaying their combined attack in 2018 — has come back to haunt the state forest department as it reels under the death of 10 cubs and three adult lions in the Gir landscape. In 2018, the virus-parasite combination killed 11 lions.

A top forest department source said, "Initial assessments point to high possibility of CDV-Babesiosis infection, a situation similar to the 2018 outbreak in which 11 Asiatic lions died after being infected by both diseases simultaneously."

The source said, "While tick-borne babesiosis infections are periodically reported in the Gir ecosystem, wildlife experts say mortality rises sharply when lions, weakened by the parasitic infection, are also exposed to CDV. Since more lions have died, we are looking into possibility of CDV presence as well."

Gujarat forest and environment minister Arjun Modhwadia said samples from the dead animals have been sent to the Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC) for detailed analysis. "The report is expected by Monday or Tuesday. The GBRC will examine the possibility of CDV and babesiosis simultaneously affecting the lions," Modhwadia said.

The minister said that the deaths of eight lion cubs have been officially recorded from four different locations in the Babrakot area of Amreli district and Gir-Gadhada in Gir Somnath district. Authorities have isolated lions within a 10-km radius of the affected sites and launched intensive de-ticking.

**Andhra to launch mobile app to check real-time fertiliser diversion**

VIJAYAWADA (Agency)

In a major initiative aimed at preventing the diversion of subsidised fertilisers, ensuring fair distribution and improving transparency during the ensuing Kharif season, the Andhra Pradesh government is set to launch a comprehensive mobile application to digitally monitor fertiliser sales and distribution across the State.

The platform is designed to provide end-to-end tracking of fertiliser movement from supply points to retail outlets. It will integrate multiple agricultural databases, including e-Crop, Webland and Crop Cultivator Rights Card records, enabling real-time verification of farmers and monitoring of fertiliser transactions. The move comes even as the Centre is



testing a national fertiliser distribution application in selected districts across the country. In Andhra Pradesh, Krishna and Kakinada districts have been chosen for the pilot implementation of the Central platform. As the national system is still under trial, its effectiveness and operational feasibility will be assessed

over the coming months.

Speaking to TNEI, Joint Director of Agriculture (Fertilisers) Krupadas said the State opted to develop its own integrated platform considering local agricultural conditions, particularly the needs of tenant farmers who form a sizeable section of the farming community.

He said development of the application began in September last year and pilot testing was conducted in a few districts. The app is intended to address long-standing issues such as excessive fertiliser use, diversion of subsidised stocks and the lack of an effective monitoring mechanism.

Once a farmer's Aadhaar number is entered into the system, details such as

landholding extent, crops cultivated and cultivation history will be displayed automatically. Based on these details, the application will recommend suitable quantities and types of fertilisers, including urea, DAP and potash, promoting scientific and balanced nutrient usage.

A key feature of the platform is its ability to track fertiliser purchases across the State. Since all transactions will be digitally recorded, attempts to purchase fertilisers repeatedly from multiple outlets beyond prescribed limits can be identified instantly. The system will also help the Agriculture Department analyse demand, monitor consumption patterns and plan supplies more efficiently.

## NEWS BOX

## Sachin Tendulkar's timeless advice for rising star Sooryavanshi after defeat vs GT

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

The cricketing world is talking about Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. The teenage sensation's six-hitting prowess has been relentlessly knocking on the doors of the Indian selectors, at this point, it is no longer a knock but a forceful push toward a historic India call-up. Amid the growing clamour around the Rajasthan Royals star, Sachin Tendulkar offered a timeless piece of advice for the youngster as he continues his meteoric rise through the ranks. The cricket legend shared his thoughts after Sooryavanshi's record-breaking IPL 2026 campaign, which has propelled the Rajasthan Royals youngster into national-team conversations. "I would tell him just be himself. There is always a first time, and in Test cricket, along with age, he will learn how to deal with various challenges," said Tendulkar at the ESPNcricinfo honours. "He looks like a player who is very confident and very sure of what he wants to do. I wouldn't want to play around with his natural instincts because the way he sees the ball and the way he responds to that is special. If that signal is interrupted by putting a lot of hurdles in between and telling him multiple things, that's where the real challenge would be." The 15-year-old's extraordinary season, highlighted by 776 runs and a string of breathtaking six-hitting displays, has made him one of the most



talked-about young cricketers in the country and earned him a place in the India A squad for the upcoming tri-series in Sri Lanka. Tendulkar further emphasized that the youngster should be allowed to express himself freely at the crease while developing other aspects of his game over time. "I would give him the freedom to go out and bat the way he does. Yes, along with time, he will learn to deal with other things and other challenges of the game," he added. "I'm not a selector, but not just me, everyone would want to see him at some stage. I don't know when that is going to happen, but an exciting talent needs encouragement."

## An IPL champion already, Virat Kohli remains the soul of RCB's title defence



CHENNAI. (Agency)

When Virat Kohli finally broke down on the field after Royal Challengers Bengaluru won their maiden IPL title last year, the tears carried the weight of nearly two decades. For years, the trophy had been the missing piece in a relationship that had come to define the Indian Premier League. Kohli had scored the runs, broken the records, carried the expectations and remained fiercely loyal to a franchise that repeatedly promised much but fell short when it mattered most. The image of Kohli in tears quickly became one of the defining moments of the 2025 IPL season because it represented far more than a title victory. It was relief. It was validation. It was the release of a burden that had followed both player and franchise for years. RCB's six-run victory over Punjab Kings finally ended the questions about whether Kohli would ever lift the IPL trophy in Bengaluru colours. Twelve months later, Kohli returns to an IPL final under very different circumstances. The trophy that once dominated every conversation around his IPL career is already in the cabinet. RCB is no longer chasing a breakthrough moment. They are chasing a second title in as many years. And yet, as Bengaluru prepares for another shot at history in Ahmedabad, there is something familiar about the moment. Kohli remains at the centre of it all. Not because he has unfinished business with the IPL, but because no player has come to represent a franchise quite the way he has represented RCB.

## THE MAN WHO NEVER LEFT

The IPL has changed dramatically since it began in 2008. Teams have been dismantled and rebuilt, superstars have switched franchises, and entire dressing rooms have been transformed through auctions and trades.

## The FIFA World Cup is coming. India still doesn't know where to watch it

**Every four years, the FIFA World Cup turns India into a football-crazy nation, regardless of whether the national team is playing. Yet with kickoff around the corner, millions of fans found themselves waiting not for fixtures, but for a broadcaster.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Not hope of watching India playing in the FIFA World Cup, that dream is sitting separately somewhere. The hope of India enjoying the FIFA World Cup. For one month, the FIFA World Cup turns parts of India into little pockets of the footballing world. Streets fill with flags, jerseys to office after a messed up sleep schedules, everything is granted. Even your uncle who hasn't watched a single minute of club football all

year suddenly becomes a tactical expert. He won't know who's top of La Liga, but he will absolutely ask for the Argentina score, stay up until 3:00 AM for a knockout match, and debate Messi vs. Ronaldo over morning chai. In a cricket-obsessed nation, the World Cup is football's reminder that India may not be part of the tournament, but it absolutely belongs to the audience. Which is why the uncertainty surrounding the FIFA World Cup 2026 broadcast rights has felt so bizarre. And, for many supporters, insulting. Not because Indian fans genuinely believe they will be left without a broadcaster when the tournament kicks off on June 11. Most understand that a deal will eventually happen. In fact, reports suggest Zee is now closing in on an agreement worth around USD 30-35 million, with an announcement potentially arriving within days. The frustration comes from something deeper.

Football fans can see where this story is heading. They know that this whole chapter will leave a mark. They have seen it all before. Almost everyone has started

predicting the implications beyond this World Cup. And once again, the people left waiting are the fans. **WHAT A WORLD CUP MEANS TO INDIA**

Football fandom in India has always been a fascinating contradiction. The country has never played at a FIFA World Cup. The



domestic ecosystem remains terribly fragile along with the national team sitting miles away from football's biggest stage. Yet every four years, India behaves like a country that belongs at the tournament. Kolkata is perhaps the most famous example. During World Cup

season, the city transforms into a football carnival. Entire neighbourhoods split themselves into Argentina and Brazil camps. Giant cut-outs of Messi, Neymar and Cristiano Ronaldo appear on roadsides. Local club rivalries are temporarily paused as supporters rally behind their adopted international teams. Then down in Mallapuram, where Argentina banners already line the roads. All of these examples are also reasons why the current situation feels so strange. Because while fans are preparing for the biggest World Cup in history, the business side of football has spent months arguing over who gets to show it.

**THE NUMBERS WHICH STARTED THE WAR**

The story gets way more frustrating the moment you follow the money.

What should have been a normal corporate paperwork exercise slowly turned into a massive, very public game of boardroom chicken. This mess left one of FIFA's most obsessed markets completely stranded without a confirmed broadcaster just days before the opening match.

## Miami's Haitian community celebrates the country's first World Cup berth in 52 years

MIAMI. (Agency)

Members of Miami's Haitian community pressed against a stage on a rainy Saturday to cheer on forward Duckens Nazon, defender Martin Experience and other members of the country's national soccer team ahead of a pair of friendly matches next week. For a few hours, nothing else mattered for the soccer-loving people of the troubled Caribbean country, which is playing in the World Cup for the first time in 52 years. "We will show that we are united, no matter what," Nazon said in Creole, standing in front of a large Haitian flag commemorating Haitian Heritage Month, which is celebrated every May in the U.S. "I want for this World Cup to be the beginning of a new Haiti," he said. Since qualifying for the World Cup for only the second time in the country's history, players have vowed to represent hope and joy for the nation, which has been beset by crisis and instability. That pride was on display Saturday at an art museum in North Miami, which houses one of the largest Haitian populations in the United States. Fans draped themselves in Haitian flags and

danced to upbeat compas music while children kicked around soccer balls at the small meet-and-greet. Many were in awe at seeing their country reach soccer's biggest stage again. "At my age, I've listened and read about Haiti being in the World Cup in



the 70s but never got a chance to see them play," said 49-year-old Odeline Paul, who has lived in Miami since she was 13. "It is such an amazing event to be here, at least to meet them, and to bring my son to be in this moment." Paul said she won't be able to attend any of Haiti's matches. Tickets are too expensive for her to go in person — a dilemma that many soccer fans are running

into — but she'll attend one of the watch parties happening in Miami.

She brought her son to Saturday's event so he could learn about Haiti and its tense history.

"To teach about the culture, to teach about what it took for us to be in the World Cup.

Now to make it, no words can describe the feeling," Paul said. "We are a people of resilience. It doesn't matter how many times we fall," she added. "We always get up. And that's my country." The euphoria of the historic moment — Haiti's only other World Cup appearance was at the 1974 tournament in West Germany — has been amid the backdrop of the violence, hunger and homelessness that the country is grappling with. Armed gangs control up to 90% of its capital, Port-au-Prince, where the team's home stadium is located, forcing Haiti to play its "home" World Cup qualifiers in the tiny Dutch Caribbean island of Curaçao. And a U.S. visa for the squad's only Haiti-based player has yet to come through as the administration of President Donald Trump continues to expand travel restrictions from countries including Haiti.

## Arne Slot fired as Liverpool manager a year after winning Premier League title

BUDAPEST. (Agency)

Liverpool fired manager Arne Slot on Saturday following a troubled second season in charge, just a year after he won the Premier League title. Fenway Sports Group, the club's American ownership, said it made a "difficult" decision after Liverpool finished fifth and trophy-less in a disappointing title defence.

"We have collectively come to the conclusion that change is necessary in order for the club to keep moving forward," the ownership said in a statement. "Again, it must be stressed that this is not a decision which has been reached lightly, anything but."

Slot replaced club icon Jurgen Klopp in the summer of 2024 and led Liverpool to a record-tying 20th English league title.

Liverpool spent an unprecedented \$570 million to strengthen the squad for his second season but most of the expensive signings, including Florian Wirtz, Jeremie

Frimpong and injury-hit striker Alexander Isak, underwhelmed. The club also was affected by the death of Portugal forward Diogo Jota last summer.



A person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press that the decision did "not sit easily" with Liverpool and "on a human level" did not "feel entirely

fair." The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the club had already issued a public statement. The person said it was increasingly inevitable that a change of

coach was required and it was better to act sooner to avoid disrupting preparations for next season. The process to assess Slot's replacement has begun, with Liverpool seeking a manager who will play a more "aggressive and urgent" style of soccer. Andoni Iraola, the Spanish coach who left Bournemouth at the end of this season, would fit that description and is the frontrunner to come in. Slot, 47, appears to have paid the price for failing to emulate a debut campaign that exceeded expectations.



a World Cup final between India and Australia. Yet, that historic afternoon felt strangely sterile by comparison. National pride is a duty; franchise tribalism, it seems, is a romance. What lingered outside the gates was a profound sense of vindication. For nearly two decades, to wear this red jersey was to invite ridicule, enduring a cruel economy of internet memes as the league's tragic, brittle romantics. Last year's triumph broke that curse, proving that while global popularity is an intoxicating drug, it cannot buy the cold, heavy metal of silverware. But if 2025 was about relief, 2026 is about a coup. The hundreds who painted Ahmedabad red are no longer content with a solitary miracle; they are here to witness an era-defining sequel. They have returned to permanently rewrite their historical DNA, demanding a permanent seat at the high table of the IPL's true aristocracy alongside Chennai and Mumbai. **THE CALM WITHIN THE STORM** While the tarmac outside throbbed with impatient energy, the atmosphere inside the press briefing room felt strangely detached from the looming hysteria.

## Roland Garros Day 8 Order of Play: Djoker-slayer Fonseca back for 4th round and more

**Day 8 of Roland Garros brings massive fourth-round matches to Paris. Top seeds Alexander Zverev and Iga Swiatek look to dominate, while teen star Joao Fonseca faces Casper Ruud under the lights.**

Paris. (Agency)

Day 8 of Roland Garros brings massive fourth-round matches to Paris. Top seeds Alexander Zverev and Iga Swiatek look to dominate, while teen star Joao Fonseca faces Casper Ruud under the lights. The action starts at 2:30 PM IST on Court Philippe-Chatrier



with world No. 3 Iga Swiatek facing a tough challenge from 15th seed Marta Kostyuk. Swiatek wants to control the clay, but Kostyuk's aggressive play makes this an exciting opener. Next on the main court, 7th

seed Elina Svitolina faces the experienced Belinda Bencic in a close battle of top-15 players. The afternoon session ends with second seed Alexander Zverev facing Jesper De Jong, scheduled for not before 3:30 PM

IST. Zverev is a heavy favorite to move forward, but De Jong is playing with great confidence and will look to cause a major upset on the clay. The biggest match of the day happens under the lights, starting not before 8:15 PM IST. Fresh off his stunning upset over Novak Djokovic, teen star and 28th seed Joao Fonseca takes on 15th seed Casper Ruud. Ruud is a proven clay-court specialist and former finalist, but he faces a massive test against Fonseca's fearless, attacking game. Over on Court Suzanne-Lenglen, the future of the women's game takes center stage as 8th seed Mirra Andreeva plays Jil Teichmann. That match is followed by a hard-hitting men's battle between Czech youngster Jakub Mensik and 11th seed Andrey Rublev. Meanwhile, doubles play heats up on Court Simonne-Mathieu. India's Yuki Bhambri partners with Alexander Panov to take on the 4th-seeded mixed doubles team of Desirae Krawczyk and Neal Skupski, aiming for a spot in the next round.



# Poonam Pandey

**Requests All Not To Abuse Her: 'Main Bhi Insaan Hu, Gaali Mat Do Yaar'**

Poonam Pandey has dropped an emotional video on Instagram. On Friday, the controversial personality took to the social media platform and shared a clip in which she was seen talking about the constant judgment and criticism she faces online. She urged everyone not to abuse her and got emotional, saying, 'main bhi insaan hu yaar'.

"I was feeling a little emotional, socha aap se ek choti si request kar lu... I can't take so much. Mein bhi insaan hoon; mein iss industry mein 14 saal pehle aayi thi, kaam maangne aayi thi, kaam dhund rahi thi. Tabhi bhi dhund rahi thi, aaj bhi dhund rahi hoon. I still push myself ki mein aisa kya karu ki log mujhe notice karein aur kaam de. Theatre karti hoon," Poonam said.

"I am pushing myself jitna mera limit bann sake. Just stop judging; agar aapko meri backstory nahi pata hai, at least gaali mat do yaar. Meine kabhi kisi ko gaali di nahi hai, mujhe gaali mat dijiye. Mein aap se request karti hoon," the actress added.

#### Why Is Poonam Pandey Often Trolled?

Over the years, Poonam Pandey has become synonymous with controversies and is often trolled online. Recently, the actress faced criticism after she seemingly soft-launched her boyfriend on social media. She dropped a series of romantic pictures with a mystery man but did not reveal his face. However, soon after the photos were shared, netizens claimed that it must be another of her publicity stunts.

Prior to this, in April, the actress dropped another set of pictures in which she was seen flaunting her baby bump. However, she soon revealed that it was an April Fool's prank. Back then too, Pandey was heavily trolled online.

While talking about Poonam Pandey and trolling, how can one forget about her shocking 2024 fake death stunt? She faked her death to create awareness around cervical cancer. However, she was massively trolled for stooping so low for publicity. Her team claimed she died from cervical cancer via her official Instagram account on February 1, 2024. On February 2, 2024, Poonam said it was a publicity stunt, done for a "good cause" aimed at raising awareness about the disease, which stirred significant controversy.



**Jeena Dil Se Review: A Light-Hearted Entertainer Backed By A Fresh Cast And Feel-Good Moments**



Jeena Dil Se feels like the kind of film that does not try too hard to be complicated. It embraces its colourful, loud, feel-good energy and sticks to what it promises – entertainment. Directed by Adhish Rana, the movie keeps things light, youthful and easy to enjoy, making it the sort of family-friendly entertainer you can simply sit back and have fun with.

What works surprisingly well is the ensemble cast. With around 15 major characters woven into the story, the film could easily have turned messy, but the screenplay keeps things moving smoothly. Almost every character gets a moment to shine, whether through comedy, emotional scenes or dramatic twists, and that helps the film maintain its energy throughout. Despite featuring relatively fresh faces, the cast delivers performances that feel sincere and easy to connect with. Lakshya Handa brings confidence to his role while also handling the emotional moments with restraint. Kunal Chhabra adds much of the film's lighter energy, with his comic timing working naturally in several scenes without feeling overdone. Ruma Sharma stands out particularly in the emotional portions, bringing warmth and sensitivity to her character.

What also works in the film's favour is the chemistry between the characters. Whether in scenes of friendship, romance or group interactions, the performances feel comfortable and believable, which helps the relationships on screen come across organically.

At the same time, the film does stay within a fairly familiar space narratively. Parts of the screenplay feel predictable and the storytelling occasionally maintains the same emotional tone for a little too long.

The film also scores well visually. The bright frames, lively settings and colourful presentation match the upbeat tone perfectly. The humour feels simple and relatable instead of forced, which makes many of the funny moments land naturally. At the same time, the emotional portions.

**'I Used To Roam Around Carrying His Photos': Jackie Shroff Recalls Salman Khan's Debut Journey**



Salman Khan does not need any introduction. The actor continues to rule on fans hearts with his performances and looks. Well, recently Jackie Shroff revealed an interesting story about how he helped Salman Khan land his first film in Bollywood. The actor recalled carrying Salman's photographs to filmmakers and producers long before the actor became one of the biggest stars in the country.

In a conversation with India Today, Jackie Shroff revealed how he helped Salman bag his first film. "I got Sallu Baba his first film, Biwi Ho Toh Aisi. But it was Maine Pyaar Kiya that came later and turned him into a star. I saw his pictures on the sets and thought he was very handsome. So, I took his photo to Subhash Ghai ji, but he said no. Then I took it to KC Bokadia, who told me to show it to his brother-in-law, and that's how Salman got the role. I used to roam around carrying his photos everywhere," the actor said. The actor is all geared up for the release of his upcoming movie The Great Grand Superhero on 29th May. The movie's teaser that released recently hinted at a world where a child's imagination takes the grandfather-grandson relationship to another level with a unique thrill of aliens! At the heart of it is Jackie Shroff, in a role that feels deeply warm and refreshingly different. Directed by National Award-winner Manish Saini, the film brings together an ensemble cast including Prateik Smita Patil, Bhagyashree Dasani, Sharat Saxena, Mihir Godbole, Durgesh Kumar, Saharsh Shukla, Shivansh Chorge, and Kumar Saurabh. 29th May 2026, see you at the movies. For the uninitiated, Jackie Shroff has been a part of Bollywood for over four decades.

The actor will be next seen in Maatrubhumi. Recently, Subhash Ghai shared his first reaction after watching the rough cut of upcoming film, directed by Apoorva Lakhia. The filmmaker praise the emotional war drama and called it a "must watch film." After watching the rough cut, Subhash Ghai took to his X handle and wrote, "so beautiful to see my favourite directors together@food square today to watch a rough cut of a Apoorva lakhia film MATRI BHUMI@ starring #salman khan based on a warm story of indo china soldiers with their respective emotions for their nations n families. A must watch film". He also shared photo with the cast which immediately went viral.



# Kiara Advani

**Reveals How Sidharth Malhotra Helped Her Manage Home After Marriage: 'No One Prepares You...'**

Kiara Advani has opened up about the emotional, physical and deeply personal changes that motherhood has brought into her life. From walking the Met Gala red carpet while seven months pregnant to dealing with postpartum guilt, sleepless nights and the pressure of returning to normalcy after childbirth, the actor says becoming a mother has changed her in ways she could never have fully imagined. In a conversation with Bombay Times, Kiara spoke candidly about the lesser-discussed side of motherhood. The actor, who is seven-and-a-half months postpartum, said that while people often celebrate the joy of having a child, very few truly prepare women for the emotional chaos that follows.

#### Kiara Advani On Motherhood And Postpartum Chaos

Kiara said marriage changed her life overnight, but motherhood has been an even bigger transition. The actor shared that she had lived with her parents until she got married, so managing a home after marriage was a completely new experience for her. She said, "I lived with my parents until I got married, so life changed overnight. Running a home was a completely new responsibility for me. There was no longer a 'Mumma, please make this.' Fortunately, Sid had been living independently for years.

I always joke that I was lucky to have him because he taught me so many things about managing a home and living independently. That was an interesting transition for me. Now, as a mother, it's a whole new ball game. I'm still learning."

Kiara added that nothing truly prepares a woman for the physical and emotional changes that come after childbirth. She said, "I don't think people prepare you for the chaos that comes with motherhood. I am now seven-and-a-half months postpartum and can probably joke about some things with my friends who already have children, saying, 'You didn't prepare me for this' or 'You didn't prepare me for that.' But I think it is such an individual journey. No one talks about the chaos or the guilt you feel." The actor explained that the initial chaos is often internal because the body is going through major biological changes.



NEWS BOX

Trump asked for tougher terms in proposed Iran war deal: US media

WASHINGTON: (Agency) President Donald Trump has sought to change several terms of a proposal to end the Iran war, US media reported Saturday, as a finalized deal remains elusive among the parties. The New York Times reported Trump's changes involved toughening the terms of the deal, and has sent the new framework back to be considered by Iran, according to officials familiar with the proceedings. The report said it was not immediately clear what the changes entailed, but news site Axios reported Trump wanted to reinforce multiple points of the deal that he personally felt were important, such as what is done to Iran's nuclear material. The new tweaks could prolong negotiations between the parties for days before a decision is reached on whether the deal would end the war which began after



the US and Israel launched joint strikes on Iran on February 28. US sources had told AFP that the proposal had been waiting on Trump's sign-off, but he made no decision after a White House Situation Room meeting on Friday. Trump has said his priorities for any deal included Iran agreeing to never develop nuclear weapons and the re-opening of the blockaded Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly 20 percent of the world's oil supply transits.

Meteor Explodes Over US With Force Equal To 300 Tonnes Of TNT, NASA Confirms

World. (Agency) A large meteor streaked through the sky of Massachusetts, US, on Saturday and exploded with the energy of roughly 300 tonnes of TNT, according to NASA and other monitoring data. The space rock, roughly around 3 metres wide, entered Earth's atmosphere at high speed, heating up and glowing brightly. When it exploded, it released an intense flash of light and set off booms that echoed across the region. Users, especially those who live in Boston, flooded the social media platforms with reports of the explosion. Some users even claimed that the sound was so powerful that houses were shaking. Scientists track these events using sensors designed to detect atmospheric explosions. Though it occurred miles above the ground, there was no impact damage. Most meteors burn up completely before reaching the surface. When one of these sizes explodes, it creates a loud boom and a fireball, often mistaken for lightning by people on the ground. This fireball was not associated with any currently active meteor shower, but it was a natural object and not a re-entry of space debris or a satellite. Jennifer Dooren, who is the US space agency's deputy news chief, told news agency in AFP in a statement. "The energy released at breakup is estimated to be equivalent to about 300 tons of TNT, which accounts for the loud booms." According to Dooren, the meteor was travelling at 75,000 miles per hour (more than 120,000 km/h) at an altitude of 40 miles when it exploded. According to the American Meteor Society, the booms heard at about 2:30 pm (local time) were actually caused by a meteor. As quoted by CNN, fire programme monitor Robert Lunsford that they received dozens similar of reports from Delaware to Montreal with people either hearing the double boom,

Indian-origin Disney manager Jugal Daterao gets 2.5-year jail term in Russia over drug case

World. (Agency) An Indian-origin manager at The Walt Disney Company has been sentenced to two-and-a-half years in a Russian prison after being convicted of drug possession and smuggling. The case stemmed from THC-infused gummy candies that were allegedly found in his luggage at a Moscow airport. According to Russian state media TASS, 46-year-old Jugal Daterao was arrested in January 2026 at Sheremetyevo International Airport after arriving on a flight that transited through Qatar. Customs officials allegedly found cannabis-infused gummy sweets during a routine baggage inspection. A court in Russia's Moscow region convicted Daterao of drug possession and smuggling, sentencing him to two years and six months in a medium-security penal colony. He was also fined 30,000 roubles (around \$420). During court proceedings, Daterao argued that the gummies had been legally prescribed in the United States to help manage the long-term effects of brain surgery. However, the court rejected the defence and found him guilty under Russian drug laws. Russian media identified Daterao as an Indian citizen, although it remains unclear whether he also holds US citizenship, Moscow Times reported.

Soaring prices during the Iran war jeopardize travel to tourism-dependent countries in Asia

The region's peak tourist summer season is at risk as elevated jet fuel costs coupled with ceasefire uncertainties prompt flight cancellations and higher ticket prices.

BANGKOK. (Agency) With summer around the corner, soaring prices and other complications from the war with Iran are straining the tourism-dependent economies of countries in Southeast Asia, including Thailand and Vietnam. The region's peak tourist summer season is at risk as elevated jet fuel costs coupled with ceasefire uncertainties prompt flight cancellations and higher ticket prices. Tourism in Asia has yet to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, many countries are coping with the war's repercussions for global energy supplies and prices, which hit Asia first and hardest. Some families are pulling back on travel as visiting gas stations and

grocery stores gets more expensive worldwide. Crowds have thinned at some places once synonymous with travel. "With gasoline prices rising and tourism declining, how can we make money?" asked Siv Pech, a 58-year-old tuk-tuk driver in Siem Reap, home to Cambodia's centuries-old Angkor Wat temple complex.

Tourism is an economic lifeline for many developing nations. It contributes nearly 13% of gross domestic product in Thailand and nearly 9% in Vietnam, and it underpins millions of jobs in Cambodia. Travelers bring in much-needed foreign currency for import-dependent economies such as the Philippines and Nepal. Those tourism dollars are more critical than ever as war-driven spikes in oil prices push up the cost of fuel imports, especially for parts of the world that relied on the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's coast as a conduit for much of their oil and gas. The war will determine which tourism businesses can survive long enough to benefit from the eventual return of travelers, said Jitsai



Santaputra of The Lantau Group, an energy industry consulting firm. "This, happening within five years of each other, first the pandemic and now the war, is horrible for the tourism industry," she said. Iran war raises travel costs Jet fuel shortages and surging costs have led Vietnam Airlines, the Malaysia-based AirAsia group, Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific and other carriers to cut flights or re-adjust schedules. European carriers face a squeeze from similar issues. Airspace closures across the Persian Gulf early in the

war and the intermittent closures of certain Gulf airports cut off key layover locations for Asia-bound flights or forced commercial airplanes to take longer, costlier routes. Airfares have jumped, with airlines like Air India and Cathay Pacific implementing sharp increases in fuel surcharges. Cathay Pacific's fuel surcharge for medium-haul flights has jumped to 633 Hong Kong dollars (\$80) from 264 Hong Kong dollars (\$34) before the war. For long-haul flights, it increased to 1,362 Hong Kong dollars (\$174) from 569 Hong Kong dollars (\$73). Jet fuel prices remain at highly elevated levels and have increased cost pressures, said Lavinia Lau, Cathay's chief customer and commercial officer. Travelers are booking closer to their departure dates, she said, indicating growing unease. Sandra Awodele, a freelance travel writer in the Washington area, often plans year-round international trips and hoped this summer would finally be the one she crossed Asia off her bucket list.

Russia says Ukrainian drone hit Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, Kyiv denies claim

Rosatom said a Ukrainian drone struck the turbine hall of Unit 6 at the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. Ukraine denied the claim as propaganda, renewing concern over military activity around the site.



World. (Agency) Russia's state nuclear energy company Rosatom said on Saturday a Ukrainian drone had struck the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, Europe's largest, causing no damage to

key equipment, but the Kyiv military denied it. Rosatom's head Alexei Likhachev called the incident "deliberate" and said it left a hole in the wall of a turbine hall. "This afternoon, a Ukrainian kamikaze combat drone struck the turbine hall building of Power Unit No. 6, resulting in a subsequent detonation," Likhachev said in a statement. "The explosion caused no damage to the primary equipment; however, it tore a hole in

the turbine hall wall." Ukraine's military denied the Russian claims as "yet another propaganda ploy." It said that the Ukrainian troops did not strike power unit No. 6 at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. "Ukrainian servicemen act strictly within the international humanitarian law and are fully aware of the consequences of any actions targeting nuclear facilities" the military said in a statement.

"At the relevant section of the front line, there was no active fighting during the incident, and no weapons were used." The Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant was captured by Russia in March 2022 and remains close to the frontline in the southeastern Ukrainian Zaporizhzhia region. The plant has occasionally come under fire during the four-year-long war, raising fears of a nuclear accident at the facility.

Japan defence chief takes swipe at China at security meet

SINGAPORE. (Agency) Japan's defence minister took a veiled swipe at China on Sunday, pledging to keep strengthening the military despite Beijing's criticism of Tokyo's increasingly muscular security stance. Under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, Japan has quickened its pivot towards a more proactive defence policy, further shaking off -- with US encouragement -- its pacifist outlook in place since the end of World War II. The change has drawn frequent rebukes from Beijing, which has accused Tokyo of following a reckless policy of "new militarism" that could destabilise the region. Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi hit back on Sunday, saying "nothing could be further from the truth." "Think about it. There is a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers," Koizumi said at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. "Japan has neither of such weapons. And yet, Japan is labelled (as) 'new militarism'. Isn't it strange?" he said, without mentioning China by name. China is thought to possess hundreds of nuclear warheads and has

been rapidly developing its military in recent years. A diplomatic spat between the Asian rivals has been rumbling since Takaichi suggested in November that



Japan might intervene militarily if China were to attempt to seize Taiwan, the self-ruled island that Beijing claims is part of its territory. Koizumi said that China was expanding its military capabilities "without sufficient transparency" and that its military activities were "a matter of serious concern for Japan." Tokyo would "steadily build up its defence capabilities and make continuous updates with a high degree of transparency", including in the fields of artificial intelligence, uncrewed

systems as well as cyber and space defence, he said. "Japan's past as a peace-loving nation has been valued by the region and by international community. This fact will not be shaken by false claims, because it is a fact," he said. In a meeting with his Philippine counterpart Gilberto Teodoro, the two countries confirmed that Japan would aim to transfer Abukuma-class destroyers and TC-90 aircraft to the Southeast Asian nation during Japan's fiscal year 2027, a Philippine statement said. Manila has been eyeing the Abukuma-class vessels -- which are being retired by Japan -- for some time, with the military sending a contingent to examine them in 2025. The countries have been deepening defence ties in the shadow of China's naval ambitions, announcing that they will discuss intelligence sharing and open maritime border talks condemned by Beijing as an "illegal" violation of its expansive territorial claims. The Shangri-La Dialogue is Asia's top defence forum, bringing together security officials and experts from about 45 countries.

US says it struck a commercial ship trying to breach blockade and reach

WASHINGTON. (Agency) The U.S. military stopped a merchant vessel trying to break through its blockade of Iranian ports by firing a missile into its engine room, the U.S. Central Command said on Saturday. The Gambia-flagged cargo ship Lian Star ignored more than 20 warnings from U.S. forces overnight as it tried to enter an Iranian port, the military said. The ship remained adrift in the Gulf of Oman and U.S. forces have not boarded it, said a U.S. official with knowledge of the situation, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations. With the latest action, U.S. military has stopped six ships trying to breach the blockade. One was allowed to proceed. Another 116 ships have been redirected, the military said. The U.S. launched the blockade on April 17 in response to Iran effectively closing the strait after the war in the Middle East began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28. A fragile ceasefire has held since April 7. Now the region awaits word on whether a deal can be reached to extend it by 60 days while talks would be held on Iran's disputed nuclear program. Events in the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway between Iran and Oman, have shaken the global economy. Shipments of significant amounts of oil, natural gas and related supplies like fertilizer are largely stranded, increasing the strain on consumers and food producers. The U.S. blockade seeks to limit Iran's own shipments and further weaken its access to cash, creating more pain for its long-weakened economy. U.S. President Donald Trump met with advisers on Friday but has yet to decide on whether to move ahead with a deal to extend the ceasefire and reopen the strait. Iran has said the deal had not been finalized. Commercial traffic has quietly continued to flow through the strait, despite Iran's assertions that it must approve any transits, though at a much lower volume than before the war. "Any violation of these regulations will place the security of their passage at serious risk," Iran's joint military command said Saturday in a statement carried by state TV, warning that any military vessels trying to interfere with that would be targeted. Iran has even charged tolls for transit as high as \$2 million, which experts have called a violation of a principle of international maritime trade: freedom of peaceful navigation. Qatar's deputy prime minister, Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali Al Thani, said on Saturday said that the Gulf nation opposes charging fees to transit, "but for certain times when they say they are going to use it for mine clearing or some usage of the fees for a temporary time, this is something that is negotiable, and it could be something that will help the transit of the Strait of Hormuz to be back to normal stage."

Calls to ban kirpan spark backlash from British Sikh groups after murder verdict

World. (Agency) Some calls to ban the kirpan in the UK after the murder conviction of a man using a knife he claimed to carry for religious reasons "unfairly" targeted an entire community for the actions of a criminal, British Sikh groups have cautioned. Vickrum Digwa, 23, was found guilty of fatally stabbing Henry Nowak, 18, with a 21-cm dagger last December and his mother, 53-year-old Kiran Kaur, was convicted of assisting an offender at Southampton Crown Court on Thursday. During the trial, Digwa had denied the murder charges and claimed to have used the knife he carried ceremonially in self-defence. The case threw the spotlight on the kirpan, with far-right groups such as the Restore Britain party calling for a ban. Calls to ban the kirpan in response to this murder risk unfairly targeting an entire community for the actions of a single criminal individual," the City Sikhs Foundation said in a statement. "The actions of one individual can never and

should never be used to define an entire faith community. The British Sikh community is one of the most well-integrated and law-abiding communities in the UK, with a proud history in this country spanning more than 160 years. "The kirpan is a symbolic article of faith for Sikhs initiated into the Khalsa tradition. It is a constant reminder to Sikhs of the need to defend the most vulnerable in society, and it has been worn responsibly in Britain for generations," it said. The charity reiterated that it "utterly condemns" the horrific murder of Nowak and the individual responsible for the "appalling act." "We urge unity, calm and responsible public discourse at this very difficult time," it added. The murder trial highlighted the legal parameters around the Sikh community's right to carry a kirpan, with Judge William Mousley noting that under UK law such a bladed item must be for religious or self defence reasons. "This is not a case about Sikhism. This is not a case about racism. This is a case about murder," prosecutor Nicholas Lobbenberg had told

the jury before it found Digwa guilty of murder and possession of a bladed



article. Sikh Federation UK also condemned the "unlawful killing", which it feared had "unnecessarily stirred up community hatred". "We understand in this case the weapon that may have been used was not the normal kirpan worn by fully practising Sikhs. This nuance is critically important and may not have been explained or understood by those asked to give evidence in this case," the group stated. "Now the trial is over we want to

make absolutely clear the law only provides fully practising Sikhs with a defence under the law to wear a kirpan for religious reasons. If a kirpan or a bladed item is used aggressively in an act of violence, the defence under the law for a kirpan does not apply and it is deemed an offensive weapon," it added. The issue was compounded by the actions of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary officers, who are now facing an Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) probe for handcuffing the victim when they first arrived at the scene of the crime. The court heard that Digwa had alleged being racially threatened by Nowak and even denied that any weapon had been used. Once the severity of Nowak's condition became clear, the police removed the handcuffs and an ambulance was called. "I am deeply sorry that in the moments he lost consciousness, he had been handcuffed and arrested," said Robert France, Temporary Deputy Chief Constable of the Constabulary.