

PM Modi chairs BJP's poll panel meet to devise Rajya Sabha strategy

Jammu.(Agency)

► **The terms of 11 BJP Rajya Sabha MPs are ending this time, and the party is expected to retain a significant number of these seats.**

A meeting of the BJP's Central Election Committee (CEC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Sunday deliberated on candidates for the Rajya Sabha elections to be held on June 18 for 24 seats across 10 states. The meeting was attended by Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP president Nitin Nabin, and Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha J P Nadda, among others. This will be the second round of Rajya Sabha elections this year, following the first phase held on March 17 for 37 seats in 10 states. A third round is likely to be held in November. The terms of 11 BJP Rajya Sabha MPs are ending this time, and the party is expected to retain a significant number of these seats. According to party estimates, the BJP and its NDA partners are projected to secure 17 of the 24 Rajya



Sabha seats. The BJP expects to win four seats in Gujarat, two of the three seats in MP, three in Rajasthan, one seat in Andhra Pradesh, either through support from the TDP or Jana Sena Party, two in Manipur, one in Arunachal Pradesh, and potentially one seat in Karnataka.

Rajya Sabha elections are scheduled for four seats in Andhra Pradesh, four in Gujarat, two in Jharkhand, three in MP, one in Manipur, one in Meghalaya, three in Rajasthan, four in Karnataka, one in Mizoram and one in Arunachal Pradesh.

The CEC also reviewed candidatures for Legislative Council elections in Bihar and other states. The biennial election for 16 seats of Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC) is set to be held on June 18. After the meeting, the CEC approved the names of candidates for Maharashtra MLC seats from the local authorities' constituencies. In Bihar, the MLC seat became vacant after resignation of former Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

West Bengal cabinet undergoes expansion, 35 BJP MLAs sworn in as ministers

Kolkata.(Agency)

Thirty-five BJP MLAs, including Tapas Roy, Shankar Ghosh and Swapan Dasgupta, took oath as ministers on Monday as part of an expansion of the Suvendu Adhikari-led cabinet in West Bengal. Governor RN Ravi administered the oath to the legislators at a programme at the Lok Bhavan here.

BJP legislators Swapan Dasgupta, Dudh Kumar Mondal, Deepak Burman, Manoj Oraon, Gouri Shankar Ghosh, Arjun Singh, Tapas Roy, Saradwat Mukherjee, Jagannath Chattopadhyay and Shankar Ghosh were sworn in as cabinet ministers in the Suvendu Adhikari government.

Party MLAs Rajesh Mahata, Indranil Khan and Malati Rava Roy took oath as a s M o S (independent charge). BJP legislators Santanu Pramanik, Purnima Chakraborty, Umesh Rai, Joyel



Murmu, Ashok Dinda, Anandamoy Burman, Kaushik Chowdhury, Gargi Das Ghosh, Bhaskar Bhattacharya, Dibakar Gharami and Sumana Sarkar were sworn in as ministers of state. After the induction of the 35 legislators into the council of ministers, the cabinet strength is now 41, three short of the maximum count of ministers that a government can have in the 294-member assembly. The oath-taking ceremony was held three weeks after Adhikari was sworn in as the chief minister on May 9 in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the BJP's central leadership and CMs of NDA-ruled states.

CM Nayab Singh Saini meets with Punjab preacher with eye on solo election battle

This visit has a deep political significance, as the BJP in all likelihood will fight the upcoming 2027 elections solo and is closely aligning with the identical visit by newly appointed Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon.

CHANDIGARH.(Agency)

Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini paid a courtesy visit to Baba Gurinder Singh Dhillon, the chief of the Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB), at the dera headquarters in Beas near Amritsar on Sunday. This visit has a deep political significance, as the BJP in all likelihood will fight the upcoming 2027 assembly elections solo



and is closely aligning with the identical visit by newly appointed Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon.

Dera Beas claims to have millions of followers cutting across religious lines, drawing heavily from both rural and urban Sikhs and Hindus. This high-profile meeting was being described as a goodwill interaction and a courtesy call on the part of the Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini seeking the blessings and guidance of Dhillon.

Saini also interacted with locals and traders of Circular Road Market of Kapurthala. Saini said the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party are working in tandem and share similar ideologies. He also expressed concern about law and order situation during the recently held municipal polls in Punjab.

Dirty Social Media Conspiracy Against Jain Saints Exposed: Alleged Fake Videos and Doctored Images Campaign Comes Under Fire, Mahanagar Metro News Issues Open Challenge

Mahanagar Metro Exclusive

Allegations Surface Against Jagat Parekh, Hardik Hudiya, Vikram Bafna and Kalpesh Singhvi; Jain Community Unites Against Online Defamation and Misinformation

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Mekan

Ahmedabad. A major controversy has erupted over what supporters describe as an organized social media campaign aimed at tarnishing the image of revered Jain monks and the broader Jain community. According to allegations highlighted by Mahanagar Metro News, a series of edited videos, manipulated photographs, and unverified claims have been circulated online with the intent of misleading the public and damaging the reputation of Jain religious leaders. The report alleges that several individuals, including Jagat Parekh, Hardik Hudiya, Vikram Bafna, and Kalpesh Singhvi, are linked to the dissemination of content that critics describe as defamatory and misleading. Supporters of the Jain community claim that these efforts are part of a broader attempt to create confusion, spread distrust, and provoke divisions within society. Questions



Raised Over Credibility of Allegations Community members have questioned the credibility of those making accusations against Jain saints, arguing that individuals who level serious charges must provide verifiable evidence rather than rely on edited social media content. They maintain that Jain monks have long been associated with values of non-violence, truth, self-discipline, and spiritual guidance. Open Challenge for

Evidence Mahanagar Metro News has publicly called on those making allegations to present concrete and verifiable evidence to support their claims. The publication argues that social media should not be used as a platform for character assassination and warns against the spread of misinformation without factual substantiation. Jain Community Shows Unity The controversy has prompted sections of the Jain community to unite in de-

fense of their religious leaders. Community representatives have stated that they will continue to oppose what they consider baseless attacks on their faith, traditions, and spiritual institutions. A Message for Society Religious and cultural institutions form an important part of society's foundation. In the age of viral content and rapid information sharing, citizens are encouraged to verify facts, examine sources carefully, and avoid drawing conclusions based solely on unverified videos, images, or social media posts. Supporters of the Jain community maintain that truth ultimately prevails and that any attempt to spread misinformation against religious institutions should be examined through evidence, transparency, and due process.

60 of 80 TMC MLAs skip Mamata's meet day after attack on nephew Abhishek

► **The Trinamool Congress was forced to call off a legislators' meeting at Mamata Banerjee's residence after only 20 of the party's 80 newly elected MLAs attended.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

A day after Trinamool Congress General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee was attacked, a meeting of the party's newly elected legislators failed to take off as only 20 of the 80 MLAs turned up at Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence. The absence of nearly three-fourths of the legislators raised eyebrows. However, the TMC was quick to dismiss concerns, saying several MLAs were busy organising ground protests against the authorities over alleged political violence and therefore could not attend the meeting. TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said many legislators could not attend the meeting because of developments on the ground



following Saturday's attack on Abhishek Banerjee and the alleged assault on party MP Kalyan Banerjee a day later. Speaking to reporters outside former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence, where the meeting was due to be

held, Ghosh said the party had instead decided to intensify its protest programme over the next 48 hours against the Suvendu Adhikari-led BJP government. He also announced block-level and ward-level rallies on Monday, followed by a day-long sit-in in central Kolkata on Tuesday to be led by Mamata Banerjee. Ghosh said the meeting had been fixed in advance, but the attacks on the party's leaders had led MLAs to organise protests in different areas. He said police action had then been taken against TMC workers, and several legislators who could not attend were occupied with handling the situation locally and helping workers who had been arrested.

According to Ghosh, those MLAs informed the legislative party about the developments and asked whether the meeting could be postponed for the time being. He said the party accepted what he described as a valid request and decided to call off the meeting for now, even though around 20 MLAs had already reached the venue for the 3 pm meeting. He said the meeting would be held later and that the revised details would be communicated to all MLAs. Ghosh added that all the party's legislators had conveyed that they stood firmly with the organisation during this period. Party sources said that despite the low attendance, Mamata Banerjee held informal discussions with those who were present.

News box

Dance on SUV bonnet, loud music, assault on guards: 3 detained for creating ruckus in Gurgaon society

Gurgaon:.(Agency)

Three youths were detained for allegedly creating a disturbance inside a residential society in Sector 92 early Saturday by playing loud music, dancing on the bonnet of an SUV and assaulting security guards who tried to stop them. The incident took place at Sare Homes Society, where two visitors had come to meet a tenant residing in the complex. According to police and RWA members, the trio consumed alcohol inside the flat before coming to the society's common area in the early hours of Saturday. Police said the youths parked a Toyota Fortuner on the society premises and started playing music at high volume around 4.30am. A video of the incident, which later surfaced on social media, showed one of them dancing on the bonnet of the SU while music played from the vehicle. Security guards intervened and asked the youths to stop creating a disturbance and return to the flat. However, the situation escalated and the trio allegedly abused and assaulted the guards, police said.

Residents alerted the police and shared videos of the incident on social media. In a post, a resident alleged that the youths created a nuisance after consuming alcohol and assaulted security staff when confronted. The resident also claimed that repeated calls were made to the police helpline during the incident, but the number remained busy. Acting on a written complaint submitted by the residents' welfare association (RWA) and on the circulated video, police initiated action and seized two vehicles linked to the accused, including the Fortuner. "We have impounded two vehicles and taken action against the three individuals under Section 172 (C) (persons bound to conform to lawful directions of police) of the BNSS," an officer said.

Fire breaks out at commercial building in Gurgaon's DLF-1; no injuries

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A fire broke out at a four-storey building located in DLF-1 on Sunday evening. Fire officials said the cause of the blaze is yet to be ascertained. No injuries were reported in the incident that occurred on the fourth floor of the S+4 commercial building at 6.59pm. Firefighters rushed to the location — opposite MGF Mall on Golf Course Road — after receiving information about the blaze. Three fire tenders were pressed into service to contain the blaze, which — officials said — was soon brought under control, preventing it from spreading to adjoining structures. "After 30 minutes, the fire was brought under control. One fire tender remains stationed at the site to complete documentation and other procedural formalities," a fire officer said. Fire department officials will conduct an assessment to determine the origin of the blaze and the extent of damage caused to the building. Fire at factory: A fire call was received from a factory in the Farukhnagar area around 1.40 am on Sunday. Eight fire tenders from Pataudi, Manesar, Bhim Nagar, Sector 37 and 29 were rushed to the spot. "The fire was doused after a couple of hours. No injuries were reported," a fire officer said.

'Eyes, hands and legs tied': Mumbai tailor stabbed to death over Rs 3 lakh loan; 2 arrested

Noida.(Agency)

Police in Maharashtra's Thane district have solved the murder of a Mumbai-based tailor within 48 hours of the crime, arresting two men allegedly involved in the killing. Investigators said a crucial clue emerged from the manner in which the victim was tied up before being murdered, according to news agency PTI. The victim, identified as 35-year-old Shamshad Ali Warish Ali, was a resident of Kajupada in Mumbai's Kurla West. During the investigation, police found that Ali had allegedly been killed after repeatedly demanding repayment of a Rs 3 lakh loan he had extended to one of the accused. Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Thane District Superintendent of Police Vinay Kumar Rathod said Ali's wife had filed a missing person's complaint at the Sakinaka police station on May 25. Two days later, on May 27, a highly decomposed body bearing multiple stab wounds was discovered in an isolated field near an open plot in Dahagaon under the Vasind police station limits in Thane district.

Police subsequently registered a case under Sections 103(1) (murder) and 238 (causing disappearance of evidence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against unidentified persons. "There was no CCTV camera placed around the isolated crime scene, making it a completely blind case initially. However, a breakthrough was achieved when the victim's wife identified a pair of slippers and clothes found near the decomposed body to be Ali's," Rathod said.

Investigators then relied on technical analysis and intelligence gathering, which led them to suspect Syed Hassan Syed Mehbub Badshah (38), a resident of Mumbra in Thane who worked as a zari artisan, and his associate Sameer Abdul Karim Kalyankar (43), a resident of Mahim in Mumbai. Both men were taken into custody. "Their sustained interrogation brought to light that Ali had lent Rs 3 lakh to Badshah. As the accused failed to repay the loan, the victim continuously demanded his money back. Fed up with his constant pestering, Badshah hatched a plan with Kalyankar to eliminate Ali," the official said.

According to police, the two accused lured Ali to the secluded Dahagaon location, where they tied his hands, legs and eyes before stabbing him to death.

"Considering the fact that the victim's eyes, hands, and legs were tied tightly with cloth provided a vital clue to the police that the murder was the handiwork of someone deeply accustomed to fabric and garment work, which eventually turned out to be completely true," Rathod noted.

HPV vaccination drive at 19% after 3 months, 1.84L girls still uncovered

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Three months after Haryana launched its HPV vaccination campaign for adolescent girls, the state has inoculated only 41,899 of its 2.26 lakh target beneficiaries — covering just 19% of girls aged 14-15 years, with over 1.84 lakh still unvaccinated.

The drive, launched on Feb 28 as a three-month campaign to protect girls against cervical cancer, has progressed slowly despite repeated reviews and intensified outreach. Coverage stood at a mere 6% (13,580 vaccinations) as late as April 23, prompting a high-level review. It inched up to 12% by May 5 and has since climbed to 19%, a gain of just 7% in nearly four weeks. Officials said the drive will continue until targets are met.

District-level data reveals sharp disparities in performance. Karnal leads

the state with 56% coverage, having vaccinated 6,872 of its 12,352 target



girls. Kurukshetra (46%), Kaithal (43%) and Yamunanagar (42%) round out the better-performing districts. A second cluster — including Rewari, Palwal, Panipat, Mahendragarh, Ambala and

Bhiwani — hovers near the state average, between 17% and 20%.

Several districts, however, are significantly behind. Faridabad has reached only 10% coverage despite having the state's second-largest target population of 21,572 girls. Nuh and Rohtak stand at 9%, Hisar at 7%, Sirsa at 6% and Jhajjar at 5%. Jind sits at the bottom with just 410 vaccinations against a target of 10,019 — a coverage rate of 4%. Gurgaon, with a target of 16,014, has vaccinated 2,706 girls, reaching 17%. The pace has also slowed sharply on the ground. On May 29, only 491 doses were administered across the entire state. Kaithal recorded the highest single-day count at 181, followed by Yamunanagar (96) and Kurukshetra (47). Jind, Sirsa and Mahendragarh reported zero vaccinations that day.

Officials have attributed the sluggish rollout to vaccine hesitancy fuelled by misinformation, difficulties in reaching out-of-school girls and weak inter-departmental coordination in the campaign's early phase. Following the state-level review, district administrations were directed to strengthen mobilisation through schools, panchayats, urban local bodies, ASHA workers and anganwadi centres. Teachers have been tasked with identifying eligible girls and securing parental consent, while field workers are focused on out-of-school adolescents.

"Vaccine hesitancy remains a challenge in some areas because of misinformation about the HPV vaccine. We are working with schools, panchayats and community leaders to counter these myths. The vaccine has undergone rigorous safety evaluations and is a critical tool for preventing cervical cancer," a health official said.

Residents seek footpaths, service lanes and drainage overhaul on Dharam Marg in Gurgaon

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Residents of Sushant Lok-3 have flagged inadequate street lighting, damaged footpaths, waterlogging and encroachments along Dharam Marg, a 30-metre-wide road in Sector 57 that connects Golf Course Extension Road with Samaspur Avenue Road. The over 1-km stretch is lined with residential societies, schools, hospitals, commercial establishments, religious places, a govt office and a CNG station, making it one of the key arterial roads in the area. Despite this, residents said several basic infrastructure issues remain unresolved. According to residents, large sections of the road remain poorly lit as streetlights are installed only on one side, leaving several stretches dark after sunset.

Residents also complained that footpaths at multiple locations are broken, overgrown with vegetation or obstructed, forcing

pedestrians to walk on the busy carriageway. They further pointed to the lack of pedestrian crossings and other road safety infrastructure, including traffic



signs and speed breakers.

"The road is surrounded by residential blocks and educational institutions, yet pedestrians have no safe way to cross.

Children, senior citizens and daily commuters are exposed to traffic risks every day," said Sudakshina Laha, general secretary of the Sushant Lok 2 and 3 RWA.

Waterlogging remains another major concern. Residents said adjoining areas get inundated even during moderate rainfall due to an inadequate stormwater drainage network. They also alleged encroachments on land earmarked for service lanes, saying the lack of thorough service roads contributes to traffic conflicts and safety concerns. Green belts along the corridor, residents added, remain partially developed and require maintenance.

"The authority needs to improve street lighting, restore damaged footpaths and strengthen road safety measures," said Pawan Yadav, president of the RWA.

2 missing links force 7km detour to e-way for Vatika commuters

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

More than a decade after Vatika India Next township was launched, two patches — 50m and 15m — of a planned sector road remain incomplete, leaving around 10,000 families without seamless connectivity.

Residents said the missing links are part of a planned 24-metre-wide sector road and have remained undone since they started living in the township in 2013 due to pending land acquisition. Though the unfinished portions are relatively small in length, they have prevented the road network from becoming fully functional. Residents said the road serves as a key access route to Dwarka Expressway and is very crucial for daily commute. "The issue has persisted despite repeated complaints to both the developer and authorities, affecting thousands of families in the area," said Pradip Rahi, RWA president of Vatika G21. Residents

also pointed to recurring waterlogging during the monsoon, saying the incomplete infrastructure aggravates commuting difficulties. "Returning home after dark feels unsafe because the stretch remains poorly lit. This is the main road used by residents of the township as well as people travelling to nearby sectors and societies. Moreover, there is a school in the vicinity and buses from other schools are forced to navigate through the unpaved portion. It provides our most direct connection to the Dwarka Expressway; without it, commuters are forced to take a detour of nearly 7km," said Parul Gupta, a resident of G21. While presenting the state's budget in March, the chief minister announced that the govt will initiate land acquisition to develop a long-pending 24m-wide road in the city's licensed colonies, with the cost to be recovered from builders. Meanwhile, the senior town

planner, Renuka Singh, could not be reached for comment.

Residents also pointed to recurring waterlogging during the monsoon, saying the incomplete infrastructure aggravates commuting difficulties. "Returning home after dark feels unsafe because the stretch remains poorly lit. This is the main road used by residents of the township as well as people travelling to nearby sectors and societies. Moreover, there is a school in the vicinity and buses from other schools are forced to navigate through the unpaved portion. It provides our most direct connection to the Dwarka Expressway; without it, commuters are forced to take a detour of nearly 7km," said Parul Gupta, a resident of G21. While presenting the state's budget in March, the CM announced that the govt will initiate land acquisition to develop long-pending 24m-wide road in the city's licensed colonies.

SC impleads GMDA in pan-India illegal construction case, seeks new compliance affidavits

Gurgaon: .(Agency)

Supreme Court has directed that notice be issued to GMDA as part of an ongoing nationwide case concerning unauthorised constructions, land-use violations and enforcement of building regulations.

A bench of justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and R Mahadevan included GMDA among several NCR authorities, including New Okhla Industrial Development Authority (NOIDA), Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA), Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation and Faridabad Municipal Corporation that have been asked to apprise themselves of the exercise being undertaken in the matter.

A senior GMDA official told TOI that the agency does not grant permission for private construction activities. "It also does not take action against such unauthorised constructions, land use violations of building regularisations," the official said. The case stems from concerns raised before the court over the implementation of building regulations and land-use norms across different parts of the country. The court has been examining whether local and development authorities are effectively enforcing rules against unauthorised constructions and illegal changes in land use. The court's latest directions follow a



submission by court-appointed amicus curiae Ajit Kumar Sinha, who told the bench that affidavits filed by several authorities so far had only documented surveys conducted to verify land-use and property compliance — without specifying what follow-up action was taken. The bench found this insufficient. Merely conducting surveys and reporting their results, the court indicated, does not amount to effective enforcement.

The bench accordingly directed all respondents to file fresh affidavits reflecting actual measures taken after

surveys, including sealing, demolition or other action permissible under law. The court specified that these affidavits be personally affirmed by the heads of the authorities concerned.

In a separate direction, the court asked statutory appellate bodies and quasi-judicial forums dealing with building norm violations and unauthorised construction cases to endeavour to clear pending matters within three months. The order acknowledges that a backlog of such cases before these forums has contributed to delayed enforcement on

the ground.

The ministry of housing and urban affairs was also added as a party respondent to the proceedings. The court noted that the issues before it involve authorities spread across multiple states and Union territories, making the ministry's participation necessary for a comprehensive resolution. The matter will next be heard on Aug 4, when the court is expected to review the compliance reports filed by all authorities, including those newly brought into the proceedings.

As May 31 deadline comes to close, how prepared is Mumbai for monsoons?

With the May 31 target coming to close and southwest monsoon fast approaching, The Indian Express takes stock of the BMC's monsoon preparedness to assess the city's readiness for the upcoming season.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Gearing up for the monsoon, departments across Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) have been at work to implement a slew of measures to prevent flooding in Mumbai this season.

In Mumbai, the official date of monsoon onset is June 11. While the date of onset differs each year, typically May 31 is set as the final deadline for all pre-monsoon preparedness activities in the city ranging from desilting, cleaning to deployment of dewatering machinery as the due date to close civil road construction works like the ongoing concretisation project.

Drawing lessons from the previous year when a historically early onset of monsoon on May 26 caught the administration unaware and

underprepared, the BMC set an early deadline for several works like procurement and deployment of flood mitigation machinery. However, this year too, May 31 was earmarked as the final deadline for completion of pre-monsoon works like tree trimming exercise and desilting of Mumbai's major and minor drains as well as the Mithi river.

With the May 31 target coming to close and southwest monsoon fast approaching, The Indian Express takes stock of the BMC's monsoon preparedness to assess the city's readiness for the upcoming season. An annual exercise, desilting of Mumbai's big and minor storm water drains as well as the Mithi river is carried out by the BMC to increase the holding capacity of the waterbed and prevent



flooding. Of the total target, the civic body aims to extract 80 percent of silt during pre-monsoon period, 10 percent during monsoon and 10 percent during the post-monsoon period.

This year, the BMC had set a May 31 deadline to extract 8.41 lakh metric tonnes of silt as a part

of its pre-monsoon desilting exercise across the city's minor, major drains and Mithi river. However, the civic body has only been able to achieve 69 percent of its total desilting target at Mithi river until Sunday (May 31) morning. In contrast, the BMC has achieved 100 percent of its target for the city's major and minor nullahs.

When contacted, a senior official told The Indian Express, "We are aiming to achieve 75 percent of our target for Mithi river before the onset of monsoon. During the desilting exercise, special focus was laid on clearing silt from the flood prone pockets of the river. While 100 percent of the target would have been ideal, we are confident that even 75 percent of the target conditions of flooding at Mithi river will be mitigated."

Desilting of Mithi river is crucial to avoid overflow of river water and deluge in nearby slum pockets as well as major routes in the vicinity. Last year, for instance, slum pockets of Kranti Nagar were inundated after waters at Mithi river breached the danger levels and overflowed into the streets. Even as desilting of Mithi typically commences on March 1, this year, the work was delayed owing to delayed appointment of contractors over lack of adequate interest from bidders.

Tree trimming and removal of dead trees

With reports of tree collapses amidst gusty winds reported during the monsoon season, the BMC carries out a pre-monsoon tree trimming exercise across the city. This year, the BMC set a target to prune 84,819 trees between April and May 31.

Short news

Release of Godavari water for Kharif likely to be delayed

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

Farmers in the Krishna Delta are likely to face a delay of at least 15 days in the start of Kharif operations this year, with irrigation water scheduled for release only from July 1. The setback is attributed to El Niño concerns, the late onset of the southwest monsoon and negligible inflows into major reservoirs of the Krishna basin.

The government has fixed July 1 as the release date for the 2026-27 water year. Last year, water was released on June 15, while historical records show varying dates: July 10 in 2024, June 7 in 2023, June 10 in 2022 and July 5 in 2021.

The delta, spanning Krishna, NTR, Guntur and Eluru districts, covers nearly 1.3 million acres, with paddy as the principal crop. Timely water release is critical for nursery raising and transplantation.

In 2025, favourable monsoon conditions and strong inflows into reservoirs such as Almatti, Jurala, Srisailem and Nagarjuna Sagar enabled early release on June 15. This year, however, inflows remain negligible, prompting authorities to adopt a cautious approach.

Although water was released to the Godavari Delta on schedule, officials say hydrological conditions do not support advancing the Krishna Delta release. Data from the Prakasam Barrage highlights fluctuations:

194.75 TMC released in 2025-26, compared with 170.55 TMC in 2021, 194.62 TMC in 2022, 117.45 TMC in 2023 and 170.50 TMC in 2024.

Falling prices & rising input costs push Vannamei shrimp farmers into distress

NELLORE. (Agency)

Aqua farmers in the State are reeling under heavy losses following a sharp fall in shrimp prices over the past one month. Farmers say the sudden decline in Vannamei shrimp prices, coupled with rising input costs and disease outbreaks, has pushed cultivation into an unviable zone.

According to farmers, the price of 100-count Vannamei shrimp, which fetched around Rs 270 per kg a month ago, has now dropped to nearly Rs 225 per kg. The decline of nearly Rs 40,000 per tonne has left cultivators worried about sustaining operations during the current crop season. Farmers who harvested their crop earlier managed to secure modest profits, while others with lower yields barely recovered their investments. However, those harvesting now say the current market rates are insufficient even to cover cultivation expenses.

"I had spent nearly Rs 2.5 lakh per tonne for cultivation, but at the present market price, returns are limited to around Rs 2.25 lakh. If this trend continues, it will become impossible to continue shrimp farming," K Ramanaiah, a farmer lamented.

Aquaculture experts point out that Andhra Pradesh remains the country's largest shrimp-producing state, contributing a major share to India's seafood exports. Industry estimates suggest that nearly eight lakh people in the State depend directly or indirectly on aquaculture for their livelihood. Frozen shrimp alone contributes more than two-thirds of India's marine export earnings.

In the district, shrimp cultivation is spread across nearly 20,000 acres, with Vannamei shrimp dominating the sector. Farmers allege that exporters and processing companies have formed syndicates and are collectively reducing procurement prices from Rs 270 to Rs 225 per kg despite stable international demand.

Cyber terror in labour room: Curtains left open, weak passwords, eight hackers, and viral clips

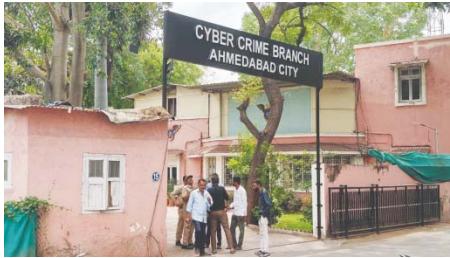
Ahmedabad. (Agency)

February 17, 2025. Around 5 pm, a chilling video began circulating on social media. It showed a nurse administering an injection to a female patient at a private body part.

Police traced the video to a maternity hospital in Rajkot, about 220 km west of Ahmedabad. Over the next five months, they arrested eight men and booked them for cyber terrorism, a section usually applied in cases pertaining to national security and to protect critical national strategic assets from cyber attacks. How did such a video of a patient in a hospital end up online? Police began their probe at the hospital.

Discovery of the crime

The hospital in question is housed in a four-storey commercial building. Couples sit in



joined metal chairs in the waiting room, many with medical reports in their hands. A video playing on a screen shows "success stories" of couples leaving the hospital with new-born babies in their arms.

The hospital administrator recollected the shock of discovering the crime last year. "A patient had just gone into labour, and the staff was busy. In the middle of that, a

reporter approached us and said footage of our hospital was being shown on the Internet. We were horrified... We didn't know," the administrator said.

"We immediately went to the police station. The Rajkot City police told us they were already aware and an FIR had been registered by the Cybercrime Branch in Ahmedabad City. We had no facts, other than knowing that CCTV footage from our labour room was being sold online," he said. But it wasn't just one video, and not just one hospital. Investigators soon found that several clips from CCTV footage of women patients in the labour room were being sold on closed Telegram groups, with "trailer" clips advertised on YouTube for potential "buyers". Prices ranged from Rs 800 to Rs 2,000, depending on the nature of the content.

Pune Crime Files: How a Bangladeshi woman with 2 Aadhaar cards was deported twice from India

Pune. (Agency)

The deportation of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants remains a focal point for law enforcement agencies in India. One recent case highlights the complexity of the issue: a 36-year-old Bangladeshi woman who was deported twice within the last year, first by the Mumbai police and then by the Pimpri-Chinchwad police. The case took a surprising turn when authorities discovered that the woman, identified as Fatima Amjad Akhtar, had obtained two Indian Aadhaar cards under entirely different names.

Acting on a tip-off, the Anti-Terrorist Bureau (ATB) of the Pimpri-Chinchwad police apprehended Fatima in the Bhosari area on November 4, 2025.

During the investigation, officers recovered two Aadhaar cards from her possession. Both featured her photograph, but with different names:



Mala Vitthal Davkhar and Fatima Fahimuddin.

From tourist visa to illegal resident
A subsequent police probe revealed that

Fatima initially travelled from Bangladesh to India on a tourist visa in July 2019, crossing the international border by road through West Bengal. She returned to Bangladesh in October 2019.

However, she re-entered India on another tourist visa on February 25, 2020, and failed to return after her visa expired, the police said. The police suspect that during her illegal stay, she took the help of an agent in Pune to procure an Aadhaar card in the name of Mala Vitthal Davkhar using forged documents. Sometime later, she married a man named Mohammad Fahimuddin from Karnataka and later obtained a second Aadhaar card under the name Fatima Fahimuddin, the police said.

The Heathrow pod taxi company once backed Mumbai's project. Then it walked away

Heathrow pod taxi firm Ultra PRT exited BKC project after fallout with concessionaire; Dutch company 2getthere stepped in through little-known tender clause

Pune. (Agency)

Even before Mumbai's ambitious pod taxi project in Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) has properly taken shape on the ground, the project has already undergone a major behind-the-scenes transformation. The UK company whose technology helped win the bid has quietly left the project, with the concessionaire replacing it with a Dutch firm through a little-known tender clause, The Indian Express has learned.

The company that exited — UK-based Ultra PRT, which runs Heathrow Airport's pod taxi system — was the original technology provider on Sai Green Mobility's winning bid for the project. It has now been replaced by Netherlands-based 2getthere, which was later acquired by Sai Green Mobility. The switch effectively means the technology Mumbai commuters will

eventually use is no longer the same system that helped win the original bid.

The change, which unfolded largely outside public view over the last year, comes even before the project has substantially moved on the ground. With land acquisition issues now nearing resolution, barricades announcing proposed construction were put up near the BKC Metro station mid-May and soil testing work has begun.

When the pod taxi project was announced in September 2024, Ultra PRT was the only technology player involved in the bidding process. In fact, it was the technology partner on both bids submitted for the project — Sai Green Mobility's and that of Refex Industries Ltd. But The Indian Express has learned that the partnership between Ultra PRT and Sai Green Mobility collapsed shortly after the tender



paperwork was completed. Following this, the MMRDA in September 2025 approved Sai Green Mobility's request to replace Ultra PRT with Netherlands-based 2getthere using a little-known tender clause that allowed the technology partner to be changed during implementation. A few months later, in the summer of 2025, Sai Green Mobility acquired 2getthere. Representatives from Sai Green Mobility

refused to comment, directing all questions to MMRDA.

"Ultra PRT parted ways with Sai Green Mobility in July 2024, shortly after the paperwork for the tender process was completed but before the concession agreement was signed," Ranbir Saran Das, chairman and owner of Ultra PRT Ltd, confirmed to The Indian Express, attributing the parting to "business differences". "We were to supply the pods and system at a cost, while Sai Green Mobility would be responsible for all the procedural and civil works, and own the project," he said. As per Das, the technology component accounted for roughly 30 percent of the project cost. More significantly, Ultra PRT's experience of operating a pod taxi system since 2011 helped bidders meet the technical.

Battle of fire and ice at the heart of an empire

A cold war that could soon explode into something far hotter is probably the best way to describe the tension gripping the Tata Trusts and Tata Sons, which control a \$180-billion conglomerate. The sparring has included allegations of broken promises, lawsuits on governance lapses and even the eligibility of the trustees. The battle for control over the trusts has spilled over into the Tata Sons board, bringing into question the continuity of N Chandrasekaran as chairman and the group's new business investments that are haemorrhaging cash.

The root of the issue can be traced to the efforts of Noel Tata, chairman of the Tata Trusts and half-brother of the late Ratan Tata, to establish control over the group that bears the family name and to ensure a clearer line of succession for his children. Ranged against him are a number of Ratan's confidantes—Mehli Mistry, Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh, among others—who were made trustees.

But the battle for control is also shining the spotlight on governance issues plaguing one of the most respected business groups that has long tried to portray itself as a family business with a difference when it comes to ethics and shareholder rights. It has even pitted the Tata Trusts chairman, who has de facto control of Tata Sons, against the second biggest shareholder of Tata Sons—the Shapoorji Pallonji family.

It's the convoluted tale of a huge group with no clear lines of succession and a complex structure that sees a number of philanthropic trusts controlling an unlisted holding company, which in turn controls over two-dozen large listed companies. Corporate governance issues arise because the structure ensures that the Tata Trusts chairman can pull the strings of over 30 listed companies, despite actually owning only a minor stake in personal capacity. Most big business houses in India see succession battles because they have too many claimants to the throne. The House of Tata has faced the reverse—succession has always been an issue because of the lack of eligible scions or sons who were interested in taking charge. A bit of business history is in order.

Jamsetji Tata had founded the group in 1868 and his son Dorabji succeeded him as chairman in 1904. Neither Dorabji nor his brother had a son. So the next chairman was N R Saklatvala, a cousin of the brothers. Saklatvala, in turn, handed over the group to J R D Tata, a member of the clan but not a direct descendant of the group's founder. J R D, who had no children, would eventually pass the baton to Ratan Tata in 1991. Ratan would be the last person to be chairman of both the Tata Trusts as well as Tata Sons. And therein lies the problem. The founder and his two sons, who were philanthropists, had set up a number of trusts. They had also set up Tata Sons as the group's holding company. The trusts controlled about two-thirds of Tata Sons' shares. The second biggest holding belonged to the Shapoorji Pallonji group, which holds about 18.5 percent. The rest of the shareholding is scattered, with a small number of shares belonging to various Tata family members.

Noel's current battle for control is in some ways similar—and in other ways quite different—from the one his half-brother fought to establish his sway. Ratan Tata had to battle the group satraps even though he was J R D's handpicked successor. The problem then was that Tata Sons was a holding company of the group only in name—it was not the majority shareholder in most of them. This would lead to the CEOs and managing directors of the various Tata companies to treat them as their own fiefdoms. They deferred to J R D because of his stature and respect, but saw little reason to do the same with Ratan.

Public transport requires investment, not appeals

Build a public transport policy first. Make it free, or nearly so

On May 10, 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a public rally in Hyderabad. Use the metro, he said. Carpool. Shift goods to rail. Work from home. Reduce petrol and diesel consumption. The appeal was framed as a response to the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, which has sent global oil prices surging and India's import bill spiraling. Crude and petroleum products cost the country \$174.9 billion in 2025-26, nearly a quarter of the total imports. The logic is correct: India's dependence on imported fossil fuels is structurally dangerous and its reduction deserves to be attended. The instruction to use the metro lands differently when one lives in one of the thousands of cities where there is no metro. What about those who live in Chennai, where the bus fleet has shrunk over the last few years even as daily ridership climbed to 3.33 million passengers? Against a current demand for 1,30,000 buses across 127 Indian cities, only 46,000 buses provide formal services and 82% of even that inadequate number operate in megacities alone. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' own recommendation of 40 to 60 buses per 1,00,000 people is a standard that most Indian cities have never come close to meeting.

In 2022, when fuel prices spiked globally, citizens were asked to manage. Now, with the West Asia conflict compressing margins further, citizens are asked to manage again. But this time, they are also asked to use infrastructure that the state has systematically underfunded for two decades.

Between 2011 and 2024, the share of urban households owning a motor vehicle surged from 40% to 68%, a near doubling in just 13 years. This did not happen because Indians suddenly fell in love with cars. It happened because the bus became unreliable, uncomfortable, infrequent, and in many cities simply absent. Two-wheelers and three-wheelers filled the gap because nothing else did. The state created the conditions for private vehicle dependence and is now appealing to citizens to undo it through individual moral choice. Who Already Uses Public Transport?

The working poor of Indian cities -- the construction labourers, domestic workers, street vendors, informal factory hands -- who constitute most of the urban workforce already use public transport. They use it because they have no choice. Hang out in the sun, travel in overcrowded buses and for them, metro fares are beyond their means. The private vehicle user, to whom the PM has appealed, belongs to the middle and upper-middle class. And that class will not shift to public transport through appeals alone. It will shift only when public transport offers comparable comfort, frequency, reliability and safety. That requires investment, not

instruction. It requires planning, not appeals and at the same time, making privately driven cars an uncomfortable choice through selective pricing.

Several states have, in recent years, experimented with free or subsidised bus rides, primarily for women. Delhi's Pink Ticket scheme, Karnataka's Shakti, Tamil Nadu's zero-fare programme, Telangana's Maha Laxmi Scheme - these are genuine steps and their results have been striking. Karnataka's Shakti scheme saw a 47% surge in women passengers within its inaugural month. Delhi's scheme drew over 40 million women passengers in its first nine days. These experiments prove, conclusively, that when public transport is made affordable and accessible, people use it.

The demand must go further: free or near-free universal public transport as an urban right, funded not from welfare allocations but from the same consolidated



funds that currently subsidise roads, flyovers, and urban expressways that serve the private vehicle - and therefore, disproportionately, the middle class and above. The 74th Constitutional Amendment, passed in 1992, promised decentralised urban governance. It listed urban transport among the functions to be transferred to urban local bodies. More than three decades later, that transfer has not happened in any meaningful sense. Urban transport is managed by state departments, state transport corporations, and increasingly special purpose vehicles that bypass elected local governments entirely. The city corporation, the institution closest to the citizen, has no power over the bus route, no control over the fleet, no authority to set fares.

The result is a governance vacuum. Cities cannot plan integrated transport networks because they do not

control the components. They cannot raise dedicated revenues for transport because the fiscal architecture excludes them. They cannot hold transport agencies accountable because those agencies report to state governments, not to city councils. The three Fs that were promised - functions, functionaries and finances - remain concentrated at higher levels of government and urban transport pays the price.

When Modi says, "use the metro," he is instructing citizens to use infrastructure managed by joint Central-state SPVs that have bypassed elected city governments since their inception. The Smart Cities Mission followed the same logic: bypass the ULB, create a parallel delivery structure, call it efficiency. The efficiency may sometimes appear in the ribbon-cutting photograph. It rarely appears in the last-mile bus route that a worker needs to reach the metro station. What genuine policy looks like

The West Asia crisis, for all its human cost, has opened a window for an honest conversation about Indian cities and fuel dependence. That conversation should not be wasted on appeals and optics. It should be used to force a structural reckoning.

A genuine public transport policy for Indian cities would, first, immediately scale up the bus fleet, the most cost-effective and spatially flexible form of urban mass transit. Buses carry up to nine times as many passengers as metro systems in cities that have both, yet metro corridors receive the glamour and the capital. Second, it would devolve transport planning and finance to urban local bodies, giving cities the constitutional authority the 74th Amendment promised but never delivered. Third, it would move toward universally accessible, low-fare or free public transport funded from a dedicated urban transport fund, built from a portion of fuel taxes and road cess that currently disappear into consolidated accounts. Fourth, in hill cities and ecologically sensitive regions, Shimla, Mussoorie, Darjeeling, Gangtok, where the topography makes private vehicle dependence both logistically dangerous and ecologically catastrophic, emergency measures to restrict private vehicles and build alternative mobility systems must be the immediate priority.

he PM is not wrong to worry about India's fuel import bill. He is wrong to address that worry through individual moral appeals while leaving the structural failure of Indian urban transport untouched. Citizens cannot use what does not exist. They cannot walk to a metro that their city doesn't have. They cannot wait for a bus that never comes.

Delayed verdicts: Supreme Court spells out timeline for Hcs

Public confidence in courts depends not only on the quality of judgments but also on their timely delivery.

INVOKING Article 142 of the Constitution with the aim of delivering "complete justice", the Supreme Court has directed all high courts to curb delays in the pronouncement of judgments. The timeline spelt out for verdicts — within three months from the date of reserving the order — is a step in the right direction. The Court has yet again acknowledged a troubling reality: delayed judgments are not merely administrative lapses but a denial of justice itself. It was in the Anil Rai case (2001) that the SC observed the worrisome practice among HC judges of first reserving verdicts and then failing to pronounce judgments for months or even years — or delivering only operative parts of the verdict with a promise to provide detailed reasons later, which in some cases was not done. Litigants suffer when cases are "reserved for judgment" indefinitely. Undertrials continue to languish in jail despite hearings being completed, while victims and their families remain gripped by uncertainty. The Court's insistence that bail orders be

issued on the same day — or at the latest, the next day — is therefore both humane and constitutionally



necessary. The SC's focus on transparency is also welcome. By directing high courts to upload

judgments within 24 hours and disclose timelines relating to reservation, pronouncement and uploading of verdicts, the judiciary is embracing greater accountability. Public confidence in courts depends not only on the quality of judgments but also on their timely delivery. The apex court would also do well to ensure that its own judges don't err on this front.

It's lamentable that the SC has to repeatedly remind high courts to do the needful. The figures are stark: over 64 lakh cases are pending in HCs across the country (around three-fourths are more than a year old). The latest directions are an attempt to institutionalise discipline within the judicial process. At the same time, judicial delays cannot be viewed solely as the failure of individual judges. Timelines must be accompanied by broader reforms, including expedited judicial appointments, better technological support and efficient case management systems.

Poll din gets louder in Punjab

THE GREAT GAME: The next six months are expected to be long and hard in the run-up to Assembly polls

HOLI has come late — or early, depends how you look at it — to Punjab, with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) celebrating its sweep in the Municipal Corporation elections in the state with colour and dhol and sweetmeat. The Congress is a far second, and Independent candidates have fared better than both the BJP and the Akali Dal. With the BJP's state chief, Kewal Dhillon, only 24 hours old, it may not be fair to pronounce a verdict on the party's performance — it has been decimated in Dhillon's own area, Barnala. But what is interesting is that one of the two BJP MLAs in the existing Assembly, Jangi Lal Mahajan from Mukerian, notes my colleague Deepkamal Kaur, openly campaigned for the Akali Dal candidate (who won), although neither party is in alliance.

If this election is, indeed, a dry run to the Assembly elections later this year or early next, it promises to be hotly contested. Some will say the BJP may have left the transition too late — too late for Delhi Lt Governor Taranjit Sandhu to be showcased in Punjab and too late for Kewal Dhillon to take charge. Certainly, there was a lot of lobbying for the post, since Sunil Jakhar announced a year ago that he didn't want the job. But the party will take heart in the fact that it has swept Naya Gaon, a municipal council in Mohali, cheek by jowl with Chandigarh — not far from the Chandigarh Golf Club, with its undulating courses, watering holes, a favourite parking spot for the city elite — while both AAP and Congress have been reduced to one seat each.

This election has also more or less made clear the direction that both AAP and BJP are taking — the former will do everything to protect its turf and the latter will do everything else to break into the state.

It's clear now that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will be



the face of AAP, with the national leadership from Delhi, both Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, in charge but firmly in the background — everyone is keenly aware that Punjabis are outliers, rebels without a pause, and like to take charge of their own fate. Moreover, all the accusations against Mann on his own home turf, Dhuri — faction-fighting, drug usage, an unclean city — have fallen flat, with AAP sweeping the Dhuri municipal council election on Friday.

As for the BJP, it is equally clear the RSS will play a significant role in managing the upcoming contest — its cadres and 'panna pramukhs' (literally, the 'pramukh', or person, who manages the names of every voter on the page, or 'panna') have already been diligently working the ground. However Kewal Dhillon turns out — his

declared net worth is between Rs 200-229 crore, with homes in Delhi's Vasant Vihar, Sector 9 in Chandigarh, in Dubai, and Marbella in Spain — his performance will be a clear measure of the hard work the RSS puts into the state. Question is, what does the Congress want to do? This column has often been disparaging about the grand old party's warring factions, all of them angling for the pure pleasure of the Delhi High Command — which, admittedly, has been busy this week with executing a bloodless transition in Karnataka, with CM-so-far Siddaramaiah handing over the baton to his Number Two man DK Shivakumar without a yelp.

Certainly, many in Punjab will be hopefully looking at Delhi for a repetition of that skilful manoeuvre. In fact, if the Karnataka experiment is anything to go by, it

seems it may have incorporated into its learning curve the damage it did to its own party back in 2021 when Punjab Chief Minister, Capt Amarinder Singh, was changed less than one year before the Assembly election.

The Delhi rumour mill today is rife with speculation that the Congress High Command, flush with the success in Kerala and enamoured with its intervention in Tamil Nadu, is willing to play for high stakes in Punjab in the coming months, in Himachal Pradesh in late 2027 when polls are due and in Rajasthan in late 2028. (This also means that Sachin Pilot may finally have a chance, because, like DK Shivakumar, he did not quit the Congress, unlike several of their colleagues.)

For now, the party's poor showing in the municipal elections became apparent on Friday — it had even lost from the home turf of the state party president Raja Warring. Jalandhar MP Charanjit Channi didn't even campaign in his constituency. Voters have paid no heed to candidates in the belt where Partap Bajwa and Sukhjinder Randhawa reign. And so, as the top leadership plus state leaders huddled to discuss the road ahead in Delhi, it was clear to everyone that if the party wants to remain in the reckoning, it will have to take some tough decisions. The next six months are expected to be long and hard. Every day will count. MLAs will jump ship, some will shift their constituencies. The long shadow of the Enforcement Directorate will hang over the land. AAP minister Sanjeev Arora has been in ED's judicial custody since May 9. Congress leader in charge of Punjab Bhupesh Baghel's son was arrested by the ED last July in two cases linked to an alleged liquor scam, but granted bail by the Chhattisgarh High Court this January.

Share some Kitchen time with Kids this summer

Although it isn't always convenient to invite them into the kitchen to help, it can be a fun activity for both of you as you get together to rustle up some delicious meals. Here are a few options...

Kids of different age groups learn different lessons

Younger children can watch and help out with small tasks, like stirring, shifting or setting the table.

Slightly older ones can be taught to do easy



things like buttering bread, boiling pasta, cracking eggs or mixing ingredients while baking.

Teenagers would like to enhance their cooking skills and take important tips for future. Older

ones will be interested in experimenting with different cuisines.

Beginners can see how the dishes are done and put together.

They can also enhance their math skills while

trying to measure and combine ingredients for recipes. Tip Cooking time can also be

used to talk about issues as well as good nutrition. It can lay the foundation for healthy eating and living for the future

Here's how you can go about it

Take a lot of time Cooking with kids cannot be a hasty affair; it should not be done on a tight time schedule. Involving them while cooking a quick meal is not a great idea.

Set a menu Plan in advance what you'll prepare together. Beginners should consider starting with simple dishes with less than seven ingredients, so that they can remember them easily . A pizza or a mix pasta salad can be a good starter projects.

Do it stepwise Before starting to cook, list the ingredients and the method on a neat piece of paper or a magic board and fix it close to the counter. Discuss the steps that your child can do independently . Make sure you follow the right order of preparation so that your child doesn't get confused with the sequence. Make note of small steps like turning off the fire while adding the cream or keeping boiled potatoes in cold water for five minutes before peeling them, to ensure convenience.

Give it a cookery show feel to it Prepare the ingredients in advance, and set them in separate bowls and containers on the kitchen counter. This will not just make it easy for the child to pick up ingredients while cooking, but also give him/her the feel of being on a cookery show, where chefs always have things laid out in front of them. This will make the exercise even more interesting.

Teach them post-cooking cleaning Kids cannot be counted on to be neat in the kitchen, hence, be prepared for some extra mess while they are at it. However, make sure that you seek their help while clearing up the kitchen after the cooking is done, so that they learn the importance of maintaining hygiene and keeping things in order.

Veggie crunch pizza

Ingredients

- Pizza base -7 inch
Pizza sauce -2 cups
Grated mozzarella cheese -2 cups
Sliced bell peppers (red and yellow) -1 cup
Blanched and diagonally cut baby corn -1 cup
Tomatoes cubed -1 cup
Onion cubes -½ cup
Dry red chilli flakes (paprika) -1½ teaspoon

The kitchen is just the place to help your kids look beyond playing their favourite games through the day during summer vacations. It's also a learning ground, where they can see grown-ups at work, watch the steam rise from pots on the stove, and smell and experience all that goes into the making their daily meals.

Take the pizza base, and spread a layer of pizza sauce evenly on it

Add grated mozzarella cheese on this layer Then add the onions, bell peppers, baby corn, tomatoes, chilli flakes, mixed herbs and salt

Finally , sprinkle the remaining mozzarella cheese evenly over it

Place the pizza on a greased baking tray and bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°C (400°F) for 15 minutes (help them with the microwave settings)

Cut into equal wedges and serve immediately

Mango strawberry smoothie

Ingredients

Ripe mangoes peeled and chopped-3 (substitute with strawberries as per your choice)

Yogurt-5 tablespoons

Chilled milk-3 cups

Ripe mango peeled, and cubed -1

Method

Take the yogurt in a blender

Add mango pieces and milk and blend till smooth

Pour the smoothie into a glass, and add some crushed ice

Garnish with more mango cubes

Mix pasta salad

Ingredients

Macaroni, penne and fusilli -2 cups

Red and green bell peppers chopped

-2 Tomato -1 cup

Olive oil -1 tablespoon

Mayonnaise -1 cup

Mushrooms -1 cup (can be substituted with chicken)

Bean sprouts -½ cup

Oregano mix -1 tablespoon

Method

Boil a large pot of lightly salted water, and add the different pastas to it and cook till they get soft

Drain, and rinse with cold water, and transfer them to a large bowl

Stir in red and green bell peppers , tomato , mushrooms (or chicken),

bean sprouts and olive oil

Mix in mayonnaise, and sprinkle the oregano mix; toss the salad properly

Refrigerate for a few hours before serving

4 popular bedtime

Beverages

After a long day, all you want to do is unwind with a hot cup of steaming coffee. We list down a few delicious alternatives that you can sip on, on a cold wintry night.

Peppermint tea:

This herbal tea has properties that will help your body de-stress, relax and eventually sleep better. It is a great option to calm jittery nerves, reduce nausea and relieve anxiety.

Cocoa:

The most popular bedtime drink in the world, this is a winter favourite because of its delicious taste. Even the ancient Mayans consumed it by roasting the cocoa beans and adding some spice to it.

Chamomile Tea:

Like peppermint tea, it is also another non-milk tea that has soothing qualities. For best results, drink this tea around 30 minutes before your bed time.

Hot toddy:

This traditional alcoholic beverage involves pouring hot boiling water in a little whiskey and adding a twist of honey, lemon and cinnamon stick for flavour. It is good to prevent cold and flu during winter and is very delicious.



Great with kids, this quick and easy recipe is also a great dessert option for summer

11/2 cup assorted fruits

200 grams sugar

300 ml water

3 tbsp gelatin

1 ¼ tbsp citric acid

1 tbsp raspberry red essence

½ tbsp red color

DIRECTIONS

1. Boil 150 ml water and keep separately.

2. Add sugar, citric acid, raspberry essence and red color to remaining 150 ml water and boil till sugar melts.

3. Add gelatin to a cup of water and mix thoroughly.

4. Add mixed gelatin with boiled water and cook till blending of gelatin.

5. Blend this mixture with other mixture thoroughly.

6. Lastly, pour it into a container and add



fruits when it cools. Refrigerate it for 4-5 Hours.

Hot wedding Food trends

Culinary trends take a sophisticated turn at the Great Indian Wedding with tasting stations, vegan, sushi platters and push pops for dessert.

Alavish spread is a thing of the past. This season, you'll dig into larger dessert stations, sit in for a family-style dining experience, or get your culinary fix from food trucks to sushi carts and personalised cocktails at weddings. Modern couples and experimental chefs are coming together to make wedding food fare the most exciting part of D-Day. Here are a few ideas for your nuptials that'll get everyone talking about your wedding day.

GET BRUNCHY

Brunch spreads are perfect for morning weddings. Wedding planner Sonali Thakore says, "Earlier, morning weddings began with breakfast and moved to lunch. These days, brunches are taking over. They are classier, have far more options and are economical since you are cutting one meal out." From pancakes to egg stations, truffle burgers to pancakes, omelette stations to croissants, there's a bevy of options to choose from. And these foods can be enjoyed at any time of the day.

FAMILY STYLE DINING

Buffet is out. Classy family-style dining is in. Cosy, comfortable and more intimate, this dining style echoes a more inclusive atmosphere. No more queues. Your guests have a sit-down comfortable meal. Says chef Michael Swamy, "Fine dine

plating is when a prominent chef's menu is created and exclusively used for the family dinner at weddings. Usually caterers want to put all cuisines on the menu and make a mess of everything. But this season, less is more classy."

TASTING STATIONS

Tasting stations are perfect for creative couples who want to give a different food experience to their guests. A popsicle cocktail station instantly cools you down at a summer wedding. You can have a tandoori tasting station, cheese on

wheels, or a soup shooter station.

THINK FRESH

Farm-to-table is the new slogan. If you haven't gone totally regional and organic, you haven't got it right. The menus include bajra, ragi and jowar and makki-ki-roti served with brown rice and rajma. Says chef Michael Swamy, "You can win the guests' hearts instantly by putting light and 'good-for-stomach' options on the menu, like a green salad or dal-rice. With more people choosing vegan and gluten-free options, wedding food fares are also becoming health-conscious affairs. No more popping antacids before attending a wedding."

SHRINK IT DOWN

Miniature is the buzzword. Mini versions of your favourite meals are making a huge statement. A single meatball topped with spaghetti, a bite-sized pizza or a bite of Amritsari fish, dipped in chutney, are just some of the one-bite options that guests are being served. Says chef Bharat, "Indian weddings now have one or two classy dishes being served rather than 10 usual dishes that people anticipate."

DIM SUM, SUSHI DELIGHTS

Dim sum allows guests to sample different fillings without filling up. Carts of dumplings and sushi can be wheeled around from one corner to the other. Ask your caterer to pair the dim sums with mini sake shots. Food blogger Nikhil Merchant says, "Gone are the days of flash stirfrys and curries. Now, we have steamed

disappointed anyone. Invite a dessert chef to whip up flambe to impress everyone. There's also an option to tell the caterers to create a 'tea party' room, where different flavours of tea (ange pekoe, black tea or green tea) can be served with lemon cakes. Chef Bharat says, "Coffee and tea spaces are getting priority at weddings. Right now, we see top coffee chains of the country put up their stalls at big weddings."

That apart, you can also see a line-up of top dhabas, say from Delhi to Amritsar, created with the same ambience to give an authentic experience. So, you have dancers, the traditional chulha, charpays etc.

GOING RUSTIC

The food served here is usually family style, depending on the region the couple belongs to.

If the bride and the groom belong to different regions, the wedding is the perfect occasion to display their culinary heritage with aplomb. From homemade jams and honey to tribal food, the humble regional dishes get a classy make-over and the guests get a lesson in India's rich history of food.

As the temperature steadily escalates in Nashik and across India, one of the few delightful consolations of this season is the arrival of the king of fruits — mango.

Mango obsession has just begun

From a mango flavoured drink to the modest aamras prepared at home — Nashik is already drooling over the mangoes available in the market. Here's a lowdown on what can be done with this royal fruit.

Mango Silk

Mango silk is a unique dessert and has recently been discovered by Nashikites. It

is an impeccable combination of condensed milk, cream and mangoes with a topping of melted chocolate. Doesn't this sound mouth-watering?

Mango Mastani

The mastani is a famous drink available in the city during summers. Pallavi Pandit, a housewife, said, "I was mesmerised with the dessert-drink because I had never imagined of having something so delicious made up of mangoes. It is so filling that we generally skip our dinner after having it and it is also heavenly to relish the taste before going to bed. I even prepare the same at home with a topping of cashews, cream and strawberry pieces."

Mango Milkshake

Mango milkshake is one of the most sought after milkshake recipe in India. When you are looking to beat the summer heat, mango milkshake with lots of ice is the best anyone can offer you.

Mango Mousse

Mango mousse is made using a quick recipe of mangoes and cream blended together to give a creamy, light and airy texture to it. Mousse can be served with freshly cut pieces of mango to make a delightful dessert using this king of fruits.

Ice-cream

Dig into a scoop of mango ice-cream to regularise your body temperature in the scorching heat of summer. Though mango ice-cream is available throughout the year but it is the most relished during this season.

Aamras

The most famous and mouth-watering delicacy of mangoes is aamras, prepared entirely with mango pulps and with no preservatives so as to improve on the taste. Indulge in the most loved combination of aamras and pooris this summers to take your tastebuds on a delightful journey. Tina Pavan Narang, a homemaker, says "This is quintessentially the most desired delicacy that our guests love. So when summers arrive, this is a must-have item on our food menu."

Panna

Panna is a refreshing raw mango drink renowned for its heat resistant properties. It has a wonderful balance of flavours — sweet, sour and savoury. Poonam Saraf, an architect from the city, says, "It is one of the most delicious drinks I relish during summer. With a dash of cardamom powder, it has the most extraordinary taste. Panna should be served chilled as its coolness adds on to its rich flavour."

Ambadi

Ambadi is a mango barfi that is easily available in city markets. It can also be prepared at home with mangoes and coconut to attain the most desirable taste of it.

Mango cakes

Mango flavoured cakes are a big hit in the summer season and are easily available now. The subtle taste of this cake is what makes people obsess over this dessert in these hot months.

Mango Kulfi

Kulfi in Nashik is not all about malai and gulkand. Come summer and the markets are flooded with the all-time favourite mango kulfi. All the goodness of the juicy alphonso mangoes in a sinfully rich and creamy kulfi gives your tastebuds a treat. Shops even add nuts to give it a fancy look.

Mango Flavoured Drink

This drink, manufactured in Nashik, is made of mango. It is as refreshing as it gets. From being a thirst quenching drink on a summery afternoon to the ideal sipper in parties, the drink has many takers.

Amrakhand

A popular variation of the mango flavoured shrikhand is the amrakhand. It is one of the easiest mango desserts that can be prepared in no time. It is thick, creamy soft, supple, delicious and a total melt-in-your-mouth delicacy.

Mango Juice

Home-made mango juice prepared from organic alphonso mangoes tastes incredibly good. It is most preferred over mango pieces because it naturally gives the factual taste of mangoes.

3 must-try burger recipes

Easy burger recipes you must try!

PESTO BURGER

Ingredients
- Ground meat - 1 kilo
- Salt - ½ tsp
- Pepper - ½ tsp
- Mozzarella cheese - 3 slices
- Pesto - ½ cup
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Roasted red peppers - ½ cup
- Burger buns - 4

Method

Pound the meat, season with salt and pepper and shape it into rounds. Fry them in hot oil until each side cooks really well. Take a bun and add the burger to it, along with a leaf, the cheese. Spread some pesto onto it. Add it to the hot pan and simmer for a minute until the meat is reheated and the cheese gets melted.

Pizza burger

Ingredients
- Ground meat - ½ kilo
- Pizza puree - 2 cups
- Onion - ½, diced
- Capsicum - ½, diced
- Mozzarella cheese - ¼ cup
- Mushrooms, roasted - ½ cup
- Oregano - 1 tsp
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Buns - 4

Method

Heat a skillet and add some oil to it. Cook the meat till it is well done. Add the pizza puree and cook. Add the oregano as well. Also stir fry the

peppers and onion and add it to the meat mixture. Take a bun, add the lettuce leaves to it as well as the cooked meat mixture.

RED BEAN BURGER

Ingredients
- Red beans (rajma), cooked - 1 cup
- Ground zeera - 1 ½ tsp
- Garam masala - a pinch
- Onions - 1, sliced
- Mayonnaise - 3 tbsp
- Dry bread crumbs - ½ cup
- Oregano - ½ tsp
- Pepper - ½ tsp
- Mint leaves - a few, chopped
- Vegetable oil - 2 tbsp
- Buns - 4

Method

Heat oil and saute the onion. Add the garam masala and zeera to it. Add the boiled rajma beans to this and saute. Now blend together the bread crumbs, mayonnaise, pepper and oregano to it. Spoon the mixture into the buns and place the burgers in a skillet. Serve with salsa sauce.



Voluntary sex work not illegal, police can't harass consenting adults: Supreme Court

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court, while analysing the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), observed that the provisions of the 70-year-old law do not empower the police to crack down on adults engaged in voluntary sex work, as the practice itself is not illegal. The court further noted that while running a brothel is illegal, voluntary sex workers found during raids should not be victimised or taken into custody.

Issuing directions to authorities on the rehabilitation of sex workers, a bench comprising Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice R Mahadevan said the police should refrain from harassing adults participating in sex work of their own free will. "Its reasoning was simple; since such women are engaged in prostitution

voluntarily, the question of their 'rescue' does not arise," the bench said, as reported by LiveLaw.

The court also stressed that no sex worker should be rehabilitated against their will and that any rehabilitation process should not be coercive in nature, but voluntary on the part of the sex workers.

"The constitutional right to rehabilitation obligates the State to provide victims with the means and support to pursue rehabilitation. However, it does not authorise the State to impose a rehabilitative process upon her against a victim's will," the court added. In a

landmark ruling aimed at addressing the concerns of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, the



Supreme Court has held that the consent of adult sex workers must be the primary consideration in decisions on rehabilitation, reintegration and

placement in protective homes.

The ruling came while a division bench was hearing a miscellaneous plea seeking guidelines and directions to protect the fundamental rights of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. Accepting a submission by Senior Advocate Aparna Bhat on the preparation of a Victim Protection Plan, the court said victims cannot be treated as passive objects of rescue and rehabilitation and that their choices and autonomy must be respected.

The court also rejected what it described as paternalistic assumptions under the existing framework of Section 17 of the ITPA. It noted that the provision often treats all persons rescued from prostitution-

related situations in the same manner, regardless of whether they were trafficked, coerced, or had voluntarily engaged in sex work.

According to the bench, such a "one-size-fits-all" approach does not take into account the different realities of those produced before magistrates. The court's ruling places emphasis on consent and individual circumstances in matters concerning rehabilitation and protective placement.

The judgment, delivered in the course of proceedings on a plea for safeguards for victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, underscores that decisions affecting adult sex workers must be guided by their consent, autonomy and the specific facts of each case.

Commerical LPG cylinder price hiked by Rs 42; domestic cooking gas rates unchanged

New Delhi.(Agency)

Commercial LPG cylinders used by hotels, restaurants and eateries became costlier from Monday, with oil marketing companies raising prices by Rs 42 per 19-kg cylinder, while leaving domestic cooking gas rates unchanged.

Following the revision, the price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder in Delhi has increased to Rs 3,113.50 from Rs 3,071.50. Similar hikes have been reported across metro cities, with Chennai witnessing a Rs 46 increase and Kolkata seeing the steepest rise of Rs 53.50 per cylinder.

Domestic cylinder rates have largely remained steady in recent months despite repeated revisions in commercial fuel prices.

Commercial LPG prices have witnessed a steep rise since the beginning of the year, significantly increasing operational costs for hotels, restaurants and other food businesses.

In Delhi, the price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder, which stood at Rs 1,691.50 in January, has now surged to Rs 3,113.50 following the latest revision that came into effect on Monday.

The hike follows a series of monthly revisions. Prices were increased by Rs 49 in February and by another Rs 115 in March. The sharpest jump came in April, when commercial LPG rates skyrocketed by Rs 993 per cylinder. After remaining elevated in May, prices have again been raised in June. The latest increase comes amid rising global energy costs and supply concerns linked to geopolitical tensions in West Asia, which have pushed up international fuel prices.

CUET-UG 2026 rescheduled exam conducted smoothly across India and abroad

New Delhi.(Agency)

The rescheduled Common University Entrance Test-Undergraduate (CUET-UG) 2026 was conducted smoothly on Sunday across multiple centres in India and abroad after certain examinations scheduled for May 28 were postponed due to Eid al-Adha.

"The examination was conducted smoothly," a National Testing Agency (NTA) source told news agency PTI, adding that the exam was held in two shifts at centres across the country and overseas.

In Shift-I, the examination was conducted at 334 centres for 70,266 candidates. One foreign centre was operational, with two overseas candidates appearing for the test. No Persons with Disabilities (PwD) candidates were registered in this shift, the source said.

In Shift-II, the exam was held at 358 centres for 80,872 candidates. This shift included three PwD candidates, while two foreign centres accommodated 30 overseas candidates. A total of 54,882 candidates appeared in Shift-II, resulting in an attendance rate of 67.9 per cent, the source told PTI.

Earlier, the National Testing Agency (NTA) had revised the CUET-UG 2026 schedule after postponing certain examinations scheduled for May 28 due to Eid al-Adha. The affected exams were rescheduled for May 31, June 6 and June 7, with admit cards for the May 31 exam already released, while those for the remaining dates will be issued separately. The smooth conduct of the exam comes a day after a technical glitch at some centres delayed the start of Shift-I of CUET-UG 2026. The NTA had also announced a re-examination for 3,765 affected candidates.

"We understand that 3,765 candidates who were present and had completed biometric registration chose to leave before the exam could restart. For these candidates, NTA will hold a rescheduled examination as a one-time measure," the agency said, adding that the new date will be announced separately.

State Assemblies sat less, passed more bills in 2025: Report

New Delhi.(Agency)

State legislatures across India passed more than 600 bills in 2025, their highest tally in recent years, yet assembled for an average of just 24 days and sent fewer than one in twenty bills to committees for scrutiny, according to the PRS Annual Review of State Laws 2025, which covered 27 states and three Union Territories.

The Jharkhand assembly, as shown by this report, functioned for 21 long years without having a deputy speaker. According to Article 178 of the Indian Constitution, all the assemblies are mandated to have a full-time deputy speaker for all the sessions.

Further, this report showed that, in 2025, the different state assemblies met for 24 days on average. Odisha

topped this list, with 43 sitting days. Nagaland assembly, with only 7, was at the bottom of the list. The national average of 24 days is an improvement over 21 days in 2024 and 23 days in



2023 but still falls well short of the targets that states have set for themselves in law or procedure.

Roughly 30 per cent of bills, according to this report, were passed on the day of their introduction onto the floor of

the House. Legislatures of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Puducherry and Punjab passed every bill either on the same day or the next.

Karnataka cleared 17 bills in a single sitting. Similar divergence was observed in the discussion of the budget oversights. Assemblies across the country, on average, debated their budgets for 8 days. Tamil Nadu debated on this for 27 days, while Punjab wrapped it up within two. Goa, Haryana and Tamil Nadu were the states where, in the assembly, 100 per cent of proposed expenditure was placed before the House for discussion. But, in Assam, only 23 per cent of the expenditure plans were put to debate.

No terror-related fatality in J&K in May for the first time in over three decades

New Delhi.(Agency)

The month of May passed off peacefully in Jammu and Kashmir with no fatality due to terror-related incidents, according to data compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), which reflects improvement in security situation in the Union territory.

It is for the first time over three decades ago that May witnessed no loss of life in any terror incident or infiltration attempt. According to SATP data, 12 people have died in terror incidents in J&K this year with three deaths in January, six in February, two in March and one in April. The dead include 10 terrorists and one jawan.

"14 people died in terror-related violence in May in 2025, 7 in 2024,

14 in 2023, 38 in 2022, 16 in 2021, 28 in 2020, 37 each in 2019, 2018 and 2017, 27 in 2016, 16 in 2015, 10 in 2014, 12 in 2013, 13 in 2012, 19 in 2011, 43 in 2010, 27 in 2009, 39 in



2008, 59 in 2007, 140 in 2006, 188 in 2005, 195 in 2004, 241 in 2003, 288 in 2002, 300 in 2001 and 288 in May 2000," reveals SATP data.

According to security experts, May used to see increase in violence in J&K after lull in winter months and re-opening of passes along the Line

of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) due to melting of snow. Security officials said the continued anti-terror operations and strengthening of anti-infiltration grid to prevent intrusion of terrorists have had a positive impact on the ground situation. "The local recruitment by terrorists is at an all-time low and infiltration is also at its lowest," an official said. "All top terror outfit commanders have been killed. The terror infrastructure and support system, including the over ground workers (OGW) network, has been smashed and new recruitment has stopped," he said. Former J&K police chief S P Vaid said, "Security forces and police have worked hard to bring down terrorists' recruitment significantly."

Nagaland, Meghalaya CMs appeal to Centre for release of 20 abducted civilians in Manipur

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio said he held telephonic conversation with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking the immediate release of six Naga men abducted in Manipur.



New Delhi.(Agency)

The chief ministers of Nagaland and Meghalaya have appealed to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Union Home Secretary and the Director of Intelligence Bureau for the early release of six Naga and 14 Kuki civilians who were among those abducted in Manipur following the May 13 killings of three Thadou church leaders in state's Kangpokpi district.

In a letter to the United Naga Council (UNC), Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio said he held telephonic conversation with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking the immediate release of six Naga men abducted in Manipur.

"I requested his personal intervention and urged that all possible efforts be made by the Government of India to trace the six abducted persons, secure their release and bring the perpetrators to justice," Rio wrote.

Rio said Shah assured him that the matter would be accorded the highest priority and that all necessary measures would be taken by the concerned agencies to trace the abducted persons, identify those responsible for the abduction, and ensure that the law takes its course.

Meghalaya CM Conrad K Sangma said he is deeply pained by the continued captivity of the civilians in violence-hit Manipur.

"The abduction of civilians who have no role in any conflict inflicts unbearable pain and deepens divisions within our society. Mothers, children, and elders are living in fear and uncertainty. Such acts only widen the gap between communities that have lived together for generations," Sangma wrote in a letter addressed.

Upset by animal sacrifice on Bakrid, Muslim man embraces Hinduism in Madhya Pradesh

New Delhi.(Agency)

A young man recently left Islam and embraced Hinduism in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district, admittedly after feeling distressed over the practice of sacrificing animals on Eid al-Adha (also known as Bakra Eid or Bakrid). Bilal, who is now Vishal, has been employed by a man named Rajesh Sarang since a very early age.

He said that he has always been treated like a family member by his employer. Vishal admitted that the family-like affection caused him to become influenced by Hindu customs and traditions. Speaking about his decision to leave Islam, Vishal said that he was particularly influenced by the principle of "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" (May all beings be happy), which promotes compassion toward all living creatures.



He said that he expressed his desire to Sarang about converting to Hinduism and requested him to take him to a temple in Khandwa that is known for

facilitating "ghar wapsi" (conversion) of non-Hindus. As part of the ceremony to embrace Hinduism, Bilal worshipped Lord Shiva, and participated in a yajna

(fire ritual) at the temple, and had his head shaved. He was also made to undergo ten forms of ritual bathing, including with Ganga water, cow milk, panchamrit (a sacred mixture of five ingredients), cow urine, cow dung, tulsi dust, fruits, metals, panchagavya (a traditional mixture derived from cow products), and other ritualistic substances. After completing the rituals, the man adopted the name "Vishal" and pledged to regularly read the Ramcharitmanas, a copy of which he also placed on his forehead as a mark of reverence. "I love Sanatan Dharma very much; I was destined to join it. I have been following its practices from the beginning. On Bakra Eid, I could not bear to see what was happening to the innocent animals," he said. Vishal said that he has felt attached.

Sensex gains nearly 300 points, Nifty above 23,600; IndiGo jumps 5%

New Delhi..(Agency)

Domestic stock markets opened higher on Monday, recovering from last week's decline, with benchmark indices gaining in early trade. The BSE Sensex was up 312.44 points, or 0.42%, at 75,088.18 at 9:20 am, while the NSE Nifty50 rose 86.20 points, or 0.37%, to 23,633.95. Shares of InterGlobe Aviation, the parent company of IndiGo, jumped around 5% in early trade, emerging as one of the top gainers on the benchmarks. Buying interest was also seen across select banking, auto and capital goods stocks. Market experts said investors are closely watching global crude oil prices, domestic auto sales data and the upcoming RBI monetary policy decision for further direction. According to Dr V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, there are no major triggers for the market at the start of the week despite continued uncertainty over a possible US-Iran deal and Brent crude trading near \$93 a barrel. He noted that a key trend since the start of the West Asia conflict in late February has been the strong performance of the broader market, supported by better-than-expected March quarter earnings. Mid-cap and small-cap stocks have continued to outperform, driven by expectations of strong corporate results, while foreign portfolio investors have remained sellers in large-cap stocks. This has widened the valuation gap between large-cap stocks and the broader market. Vijayakumar said large-cap stocks are now fairly valued, with banking stocks appearing particularly attractive from a valuation perspective. However, he cautioned that gains in the segment may take time and could test investors' patience.

He also pointed out that the sharp 1.5% fall in the Sensex and Nifty on Friday was largely linked to MSCI index rebalancing and the resulting passive fund outflows, rather than a change in the underlying market trend.

Commercial LPG cylinders become costlier from today, Delhi price up by Rs 42

BENGALURU .(Agency)

The price of 19 kg commercial LPG cylinders has been increased by Rs 42 in Delhi, taking the retail price to Rs 3,113.5 per cylinder with effect from June 1, according to sources. The revision also affects other cities, with the price of a 19 kg commercial LPG



cylinder in Kolkata rising by Rs 53.5 to Rs 3,255.5. In addition, the price of 5 kg Free Trade LPG (FTL) cylinders has been increased by Rs 11, bringing the cost to Rs 821.5 in Delhi, news agency ANI reported. Sources clarified that there has been no change in the price of domestic LPG cylinders used by households. This is the second hike since May 1, when the oil companies increased prices by Rs 993 per cylinder amid disruptions to global LPG supplies due to tensions in the Middle East. The price revision comes as the government continues efforts to strengthen the country's fuel security and maintain adequate reserves of petroleum products and cooking gas. Speaking at an inter-ministerial briefing on Friday, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said the government is working to build strategic reserves and has directed oil marketing companies to maintain a minimum 30-day LPG reserve.

Imports drive up GST collection by 3.2% to Rs 1.94 lakh crore in May 2026; domestic collection falls

New Delhi..(Agency)

While total gross GST revenue collection in May rose by 3.2% to Rs 1.94 lakh crore, gross domestic collection in May fell by 2.6% to 1.34 lakh crore, as per the data released by the Finance Ministry on Monday. As per the data released by the Finance Ministry on Monday, the gross GST revenue collection of Rs 1.88 lakh crore in May 2025 included around Rs.10,000 crore of one-time payment made by a telecom operator for spectrum allocation. However, with no one-time payment in May 2026, adjusted growth is therefore the right measure to evaluate the GST performance for the Month. The domestic collection comprised Rs 37,397 crore in CGST, Rs 45,143 crore in SGST and Rs 51,990 crore in IGST. After accounting for all refunds, the total net GST revenue for the month stood at Rs 1.66 lakh crore, reflecting a 3.3% increase over Rs 1.61 lakh crore collected in the same month of the previous year.

In contrast, revenue from imports recorded robust growth, with gross import revenue from IGST reaching Rs 59,654 crore, a 19.1% increase over Rs 50,070 crore collected in May 2025. As per the sources from the Ministry of Finance, "The bulk of this import growth is driven by raw materials and intermediate inputs that feed India's industrial production chain. A granular review of the 1st-25th May 2026 data at the CTH level confirms that the surge is driven overwhelmingly by industrial raw materials and energy inputs.

Have retail investors become the real gatekeepers of India's IPO market?

New Delhi..(Agency)

The Indian IPO market has long run on a simple assumption: if QIBs subscribe and the grey market premium holds, retail investors will follow. That assumption has been breaking down across FY26, and promoters and bankers who have not updated their deal structuring frameworks are finding out the hard way. Retail investors are no longer the last link in the demand chain. In several FY26 issuances, they have effectively become an independent pricing verdict, and the verdict has not always been favourable.

The investor base behind this shift is substantial. According to the Economic Survey 2026, 235 lakh new demat accounts were added between April and December 2025 alone, taking the total past 21.6 crore, a six-fold rise from the 3.6 crore accounts recorded in 2019. Monthly additions have continued into the current year. These are not passive holders, they track post-listing prices, compare sector valuations, and share

allocation data in communities that did not exist five years ago. Meanwhile, the primary market has not slowed down. IPO activity in Q3 FY26 remained strong with 39 new listings raising nearly INR 984 billion, taking cumulative fundraising to nearly INR 1.6 trillion from over 90 listings by December 2025. Reliance Jio, NSE, and PhonePe are expected to list through the year. Supply is not the issue. What has changed is the terms on which retail investors are willing to show up. The subscription data reflects this. KPMG's Q3 FY26 IPO analysis, compiled from Sebi, NSE, and BSE data, shows average total IPO subscription moderated to 34 times in the October-December 2025 quarter, with levels softening progressively across investor categories through the year. In 2025, over 45 mainboard IPOs crossed the ten-times retail subscription mark.

In 2026, far fewer have reached that threshold. The moderation is not

uniform, well-priced issues with credible growth narratives still draw retail interest. What retail investors have stopped doing is subscribing



indiscriminately. That reflex has faded. Post-listing returns have done much of the teaching. 52 of 112 mainboard IPOs in FY26, or 46 per cent, were trading below their issue price as of April-end, a sharp reversal from the consistent positive

returns of prior years. The old read that strong oversubscription predicts a healthy debut has stopped holding. Several IPOs that crossed 30 times subscription still listed at a discount. Retail investors have registered this. The cautious application behaviour of 2026 did not arrive without reason. Sebi has moved alongside this shift. Sebi notified the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2026 on 13 March, introducing a graduated public offer structure for large issuers in place of the earlier flat minimum dilution thresholds. The same month, Sebi's ICDR amendments introduced abridged prospectuses with QR codes linking to full offer documents, an acknowledgement that most retail investors engage with IPO documentation on a phone rather than a printed prospectus.

IndiGo shares rise despite Q4 loss. What's driving the rally?

New Delhi..(Agency)

Shares of InterGlobe Aviation, the parent company of IndiGo, rose as much as 5% on Monday before trimming some gains. At around 10:10 am, the stock was still trading higher at Rs 4,528, up 2.79% or Rs 123 on the National Stock Exchange (BSE). The rally came despite IndiGo reporting a consolidated net loss of Rs 2,537 crore for the March quarter, compared with a profit of Rs 3,068 crore in the same period last year. So why are investors cheering a loss-making quarter? The answer lies in what caused the loss and how the market is interpreting it. A major part of IndiGo's quarterly loss came from foreign exchange losses linked to the sharp depreciation of the rupee. The airline reported a massive forex hit during the quarter, which significantly impacted its bottom line.

Analysts believe this was largely an accounting and currency-related impact rather than a reflection of weakness in the airline's core business. Operationally, the picture was

stronger than the headline profit number suggests. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 22,438 crore, while capacity continued to expand despite disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict and higher fuel costs. The



airline also maintained its dominant position in the domestic aviation market. Investors are also focusing on IndiGo's long-term growth plans rather than a single weak quarter. The airline recently approved a plan to deploy up to \$450 million towards acquiring aircraft, engines and aviation assets,

signalling continued confidence in future expansion. Another factor supporting sentiment is the company's aggressive international expansion strategy. IndiGo has been increasing overseas routes, adding destinations and expanding fleet capacity as it looks to strengthen its position beyond the domestic market. Brokerages also remain largely constructive on the stock despite near-term pressures from fuel prices, currency volatility and geopolitical disruptions. Several analysts believe demand for air travel remains strong and expect earnings to improve once forex-related pressures ease. In short, investors appear to be looking past the March-quarter loss and focusing on IndiGo's market leadership, expansion plans and the belief that the biggest drag on earnings came from temporary external factors rather than a deterioration in demand.

US tightens curbs on Nvidia AI chip shipments to Chinese firms operating overseas

New Delhi..(Agency)

The US Department of Commerce on Sunday moved to close a potential loophole that may have led companies to export the world's most advanced chips - like Nvidia's most sophisticated Blackwell processors - to subsidiaries of Chinese companies located outside China. The unexpected guidance suggests that the United States' best AI chips may have been making their way to the subsidiaries of Chinese AI firms based in places such as Malaysia despite broader US efforts to starve Chinese firms of semiconductors needed to develop critical AI capabilities. The new guidance was posted on the Commerce Department's website on Sunday after a paper about the loophole circulated in Washington, according to people familiar with the matter. The paper, a copy of which was seen by Reuters, says "the floodgates

have quietly opened." It is unclear how many of the chips have been exported in the year that the Trump administration left the door open. One chip industry source with deep supply-



chain knowledge estimated it was in the hundreds of thousands.

In the unusual weekend guidance, the department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) said it would enforce license requirements for advanced chips to entities headquartered in China when the entities were located

outside China. "BIS issued guidance clarifying export license requirements that have been in place since 2023," a bureau spokesperson said. "BIS will continue to enforce export controls rigorously to safeguard critical American technology." The new guidance does not change anything for Nvidia, a company official said, adding that it could not ship the chips because the Commerce Department had clearly imposed a license requirement on Nvidia in a letter.

AMD, another big producer of sought-after AI chips, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Commerce Department created the opening when it announced in May 2025 that it would not be enforcing the AI Diffusion rule issued in the last days of the Biden administration. The rule had licensing requirements governing global access to AI chips.

India, US begin latest round of talks to finalise details of interim trade pact

The visit, scheduled from June 1 to 4 in New Delhi, will follow recent diplomatic mobility between India and the US and build on the Indian delegation's visit to Washington in April this year.

New Delhi..(Agency)

A high-level delegation from the United States is set to begin its four-day visit to India today (Monday), with the aim of finalising the details of the interim trade pact and taking forward negotiations under the broader India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA). While the US team is being led by its chief negotiator, Brendan Lynch, the Indian delegation is headed by Darpan Jain, Additional Secretary at the Department of Commerce. The two sides are "proposed to finalise the details of the interim agreement and take forward the negotiations under the broader BTA on

multiple areas such as market access, non-tariff measures, customs and trade facilitation, investment promotion, and economic security alignment," said the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement last week. The visit, scheduled from June 1 to 4 in New Delhi, will follow recent diplomatic mobility between India and the US and build on the Indian delegation's visit to Washington in April this year.

The engagements stem from the February 7 joint statement wherein both the countries agreed on a framework of the first phase of the BTA or an interim trade agreement. The two countries now need to finalise the legal text for that deal. The framework reaffirmed the countries' commitment to the broader India-US BTA negotiations. According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18 per cent from 50 per cent. It had removed the 25 per cent tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and was to cut the remaining 25 per cent to 18 per cent under the pact.

However, days after New Delhi and

Washington issued the joint statement, the US Supreme Court ruled against President Donald Trump's sweeping reciprocal tariffs, which were imposed under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). Following the legal setback, Trump announced the imposition



of 10 per cent tariffs on all countries for 150 days, starting February 24. As the tariff landscape has changed in the US, both sides may like to relook at the framework of the agreement. Under the agreed framework, New Delhi proposed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including

dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.

India has also signalled plans to import US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal worth USD 500 billion over a period of five years. The upcoming series of meetings between the Indian and US delegations will be crucial, as India enjoys a comparative advantage over its competitor countries. Now, with all US trading partners facing a uniform 10 per cent tariff, the pact requires recalibration. The US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, recently indicated that negotiations between the two sides are nearing completion. "Just last week, India had sent a team to Washington DC to finalise the last 1 per cent of that trade deal. Next week we will welcome a US delegation here to continue those talks," he said on Friday while addressing the US-India TRUST Initiative event at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

Short news

Six vehicles seized, FIR filed against illegal garbage dumping in Bengaluru**BENGALURU .(Agency)**

Six vehicles were seized, and an FIR was registered against those who were illegally transporting and dumping solid waste on vacant lands in the Kadugodi jurisdiction, Mahadevapura zone.

Waste was being illegally dumped into the Dakshina Pinakini River adjoining Survey Nos. 130, 131, and 142 near Siddhartha Layout in Kadugodi. Following public complaints, corporation officials maintained surveillance and initiated a special enforcement operation.

Five waste-laden vehicles that had arrived at the site for illegal dumping were seized on May 29. The drivers fled the scene after noticing officials. Bengaluru East City Corporation (BECC) said on Sunday that a sixth vehicle was seized at the same location on May 30.

Eco Sphere Waste Solutions Company was authorised by the corporation to collect and dispose of bulk waste generated from various commercial establishments and residential apartments within its jurisdiction. However, a group led by Naushad and others allegedly used fake identification cards in the name of the company and illegally collected bulk waste from different areas.

Two teens die in separate accidents in Bengaluru, police may book parents, bike owner**BENGALURU. (Agency)**

Two minor boys were killed in two road accidents in the city on Saturday night. In a hit-and-run case, a 16-year-old boy died and his friend sustained injuries after a tractor allegedly brushed against their scooter on RTO Road in the Mico Layout traffic police limits.

The deceased, Suraj Kumar (16), was a resident of 1st Main Road, Sarvabhouma Nagar. He was studying in 10th standard. His friend, Pushkar Ram Lohar, and Kumar's classmate, both 16 years old, escaped with injuries.

The police said that at 8.45 pm, Kumar was riding a scooter with Lohar on pillion. They were heading home after refuelling at a petrol bunk near Vijaya Bank Layout Circle.

A tractor passing on their left side was allegedly being driven at high speeds.

The trailer of the tractor hit the scooter's left handlebar when the tractor driver braked suddenly. Both boys fell onto the road, and the rear wheel of the carriage ran over Suraj's head, killing him on the spot. Lohar sustained minor injuries and was rushed to a nearby hospital.

The tractor driver fled the scene. A case is registered against the driver, and the police are analysing CCTV footage to trace him. Police said a case would also be registered against the parents for allowing a minor to ride a scooter.

Head-on collision

A 15-year-old boy riding a motorcycle died after colliding with a scooter near SMVT Railway Station in JB Nagar traffic police limits on Saturday night.

Twice-rebuilt Chembumukku school road remains unfinished as monsoon, reopening nears**KOCHI.(Agency)**

A narrow lane near St Michael's Church in Chembumukku, which once served as a crucial shortcut for students heading to Assisi Vidyanketan Public School, has been rebuilt twice in three years after repeatedly collapsing into an adjoining canal. Yet, with the monsoon arriving and schools set to reopen, concerns linger over whether the stretch will be fully ready in time.

The lane, which connects the church area to the school, first gave way in 2022 when a portion sank into the nearby Edappally Canal, rendering it unusable.

Former councillor K X Simon, said the municipality floated a tender and assigned a contractor to reconstruct the road. Though the work was completed by February 2024, relief proved short-lived. "Within a few months, cracks began appearing on the road, and during the monsoon, the stretch was destroyed again. This time, completely," Simon said.

Shobha Philip, a local resident, recalled the incident. "It happened early in the morning, thus evading a major incident. But the road's collapse was hugely inconvenient to nearly a dozen families on this stretch," she said.

Former councillor Shaji Varghese, who represented the ward where the road is located, said the collapse worsened after the cleaning of Edappally Canal. "The work loosened the soil around the stretch, eventually leading to its collapse," Shaji said.

Vizhinjam port races to two million TEUs amid geopolitical instabilities**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)**

Vizhinjam is making big waves. Within just 18 months of operations, the seaport has achieved a milestone by handling 2-million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) — making it the fastest Indian port to cross both the 1-million and 2-million TEU marks.

Since its launch, the facility has successfully handled over 950 vessels. This includes 67 ultra-large container vessels measuring nearly 400m in length, such as the MSC Irina, the world's largest container ship, and the MSC Verona, one of the deepest-draft vessels to ever call at an Indian port.

This comes at a time when global shipping lines and major economies are prioritising resilient maritime infrastructure and diversified trade routes amid evolving geopolitical uncertainties across West Asia. To capitalise on this momentum, the

port is undergoing its phase-two expansion. Backed by an investment of approximately Rs 16,000 crore and slated for completion by 2028, the next phase aims to significantly boost the port's total container



handling capacity and facilitate full-scale international trade, building upon the official customs clearances received in November last year to handle export-import (Exim) cargo. However, the rapid growth in transshipment volumes stands in stark

contrast to the severe bottlenecks plaguing Exim cargo movements. Despite possessing state-of-the-art maritime infrastructure, the lack of crucial land-side logistics facilities — such as robust road and rail connectivity, container yards, and warehouses — is severely hindering seamless cargo flow.

Local entrepreneurs and officials warn that the lack of a supporting ecosystem and skyrocketing real-estate prices are stunting regional trade potential. This delay has already allowed neighbouring Tamil Nadu to capitalise on the opportunity by developing industrial parks near the border.

To address these critical infrastructure gaps, Vizhinjam International Seaport Ltd (VISL) has partnered with three major central PSUs: Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, Container Corporation of India, and Central Warehousing Corporation. Together, they have launched a comprehensive '2,000 crore logistics master plan at the seaport.

After decades-long wait, South Coast Railway set to begin operations from Visakhapatnam on June 1**VISAKHAPATNAM. (Agency)**

After years of anticipation and nearly four decades of sustained demand, the South Coast Railway (SCoR) Zone will formally commence operations from Visakhapatnam on Monday, marking a major restructuring of Indian Railways.

The zone, the 18th in the country, positions Visakhapatnam as a key administrative hub for railway operations in Andhra Pradesh.

The new zone brings under its jurisdiction the Vijayawada, Guntur and Guntakal divisions, which were earlier part of South Central Railway, along with a restructured Waltair Division of the East Coast Railway (ECoR).

The Waltair Division has been bifurcated, with its southern portion forming the Visakhapatnam Division under SCoR,



while the northern section becomes the Rayagada Division under ECoR.

In total, the SCoR Zone will manage 3,532 route kilometres, covering 6,454 kilometres of track, including multiple lines, and oversee 385 stations across Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring regions.

The Visakhapatnam Division will handle key routes, including Ichchapuram-Visakhapatnam-Duvvada, Vizianagaram-Kureru, Naupada-Paralakhemundi and Bobbili-Salur stretches, all critical to

passenger movement and freight connectivity along the eastern corridor.

According to reports, the zone will be supported by an estimated workforce of nearly 62,000 employees across its divisions. At the zonal headquarters, around 128 gazetted officers and over 1,100 non-gazetted staff will manage administrative and operational functions.

The new structure is expected to streamline decision-making, improve coordination between divisions, and accelerate infrastructure planning and execution.

The zone is projected to handle close to 100 million tonnes of freight annually, driven by mineral transport, industrial corridors, and port-linked cargo movement. Annual revenue is estimated to be generated through both freight and passenger services including key commodities like coal, iron ore, petroleum products and fertilisers.

‘Defying govt orders’: 40 booked for namaz on road during Bakrid in UP’s Bijnor**Lucknow.(Agency)**

Forty people have been booked in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor for allegedly offering namaz on a road during Bakrid on May 28, in violation of government directives prohibiting prayers on public roads.

According to police, the complainant in the case, Inspector Rahul Singh, said Eid prayers were scheduled to be held at the Eidgah on Jalilpur Road and adequate police personnel had been deployed to maintain law and order and ensure security arrangements during prayers.

Police said while prayers commenced at 6.45 am, a group of 30-40 people, who arrived later, allegedly sat down to offer prayers in a public area, occupying the space from the Eidgah gate to one side of the adjoining road. The complainant stated that police

officers informed the group about guidelines issued by the government and apprised them of prohibitory orders in force under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which had been promulgated by the District Magistrate



of Bijnor.

The complaint claimed that despite repeated instructions and warnings, the accused allegedly disregarded the directions of the police and proceeded

to offer prayers in the public area.

Based on the complaint, police said a case has been registered at Chandpur police station against 15 named individuals and 25 unidentified persons under BNS section 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).

In a statement in the run-up to the festival last month, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had warned that no namaz on the road would be allowed and told devotees to pray in shifts. In a veiled remark, he had also asked devotees to control their “numbers (population)”. Warning against “any form of

anarchy”, the CM had said people should offer namaz in shifts if they have limited space and not on roads, as public spaces cannot be blocked in the name of religious activities.

Bawa White House—Airport Link Road nears completion**Mohali.(Agency)**

The much-awaited link road connecting Bawa White House in Phase 11 to Airport Road is inching closer to completion, but commuters may have to exercise caution for a few more days as portions of the project remain under construction.

Although traffic is currently being allowed through a temporary one-way passage, several stretches of the road are still unpaved. A section of the bridge under construction is yet to be completed, with concrete slab work continuing at the site. Vehicles are presently navigating through temporary dirt tracks on either side of the bridge.

Contrary to concerns about a prolonged delay, GMADA officials say the remaining work is expected to be completed shortly. Speaking to The Indian Express, Amit Garg, Superintending Engineer, GMADA, said, “The remaining bridge work and road construction will be completed within the next 10 days. After that, the road will be opened for two-way traffic.”

Recent rainfall has further complicated construction activity, creating muddy conditions in the area. With the monsoon season approaching, concerns remain that adverse weather could impact the pace of work if the remaining construction is not completed on schedule.

People using route at their own risk

Workers at the construction site said the road is not yet ready for regular public use and that motorists are using the route at their own risk. Akhilesh Kumar, a worker at the site, said warning boards and plastic

384 structures to be demolished: BMC begins demolition drive in Mulund for GMLR project**Mumbai.(Agency)**

Paving the way for the construction of Goregaon Mulund Link Road (GMLR) project's twin tunnels, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Sunday launched a demolition drive of 150 structures across Mulund's Amar Nagar and Khindipada. With a total of 384 structures identified along the project alignment, 234 more residential and commercial structures are slated to be razed in the upcoming week.

Pegged at a cost of Rs. 6500 crore, the GMLR is an ambitious

project which aims to alleviate congestion by linking Goregaon in the western suburbs to Mulund in the eastern suburbs. While the entire project comprises of four phases, a crucial segment of the project entails the 6.65-km long TBM twin tunnels which will commence from the Film City in the western suburbs, run beneath the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) and open near Mulund's Amar Nagar, which currently houses a huge slum belt.

At the Mulund exit of the tunnel, the BMC has identified 384 structures sprawled across Amar Nagar and Khindipada along the



project alignment. Of the total structures, records from the BMC show that 351 are residential structures,

including 275 eligible structures while the remaining are commercial establishments. On Sunday, the BMC's T ward staff

Illegal adoption angle, medical links emerge in Bareilly child trafficking probe, nurse among 6 held**Lucknow .(Agency)**

An alleged child trafficking racket unearthed by Bareilly police during the investigation into the abduction of an 18-month-old child from the district's Aonla area has led investigators to a larger illegal adoption racket.

Six people, including a government health facility nurse from Bareilly, have been arrested so far, with police claiming the network has been active for nearly a year.

The investigation began after the 18-month-old boy, Rishabh, was abducted from Manauna Dham in Aonla on May 24 while playing with two other children. Police registered a case of kidnapping and, on May 27, arrested Yogesh Kaziya and Pawan Chandel during an encounter, rescuing the child and reuniting him with his family.

During the course of the investigation, police traced the alleged involvement of Uttam Vajpayee, who was arrested and sent to jail on May 29. His interrogation subsequently led investigators to what they describe as a larger child trafficking network, resulting in the arrest of Sanjay Kumar Vishwas, Keshavram alias Manjesh and Seeta on May 30.

The police said in a press statement that the accused told investigators that they had been involved in taking and selling children through Uttam Vajpayee and other members of the network.

Bareilly Additional Superintendent of Police (South) Anshika Verma, who led the investigation, said the accused were connected through Uttam, who acted as a mediator between kidnappers and people working in the medical field.

NEWS BOX

GT players evacuated as short circuit causes team bus breakdown after IPL final

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Gujarat Titans endured a frightening end to their IPL 2026 campaign after players and support staff were forced to evacuate their team bus following a short circuit on Sunday night in Ahmedabad. According to PTI, the incident occurred while the team was travelling back to their hotel after suffering a five-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL final at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Smoke reportedly spread inside the bus after the short circuit caused the vehicle to break down, prompting an immediate evacuation.

Fortunately, all players and support staff escaped unharmed. The squad was left waiting by the roadside for a brief period before an alternate bus was arranged to transport them safely to the hotel.

The incident capped a disappointing and exhausting night for the Titans, who fell short



in their bid to win a second IPL title. Gujarat managed only 155 for 8 in the final before RCB chased down the target with five wickets to spare, successfully defending their crown.

TRAVEL WOES ADD TO DIFFICULT FINAL WEEK

The travel disruption was the latest challenge in what had been a demanding few days for the franchise. Gujarat travelled from Dharamsala to Mullanpur on May 27 ahead of Qualifier 2 against Rajasthan Royals on May 29. Their scheduled departure to Ahmedabad on May 30 was delayed significantly due to poor weather conditions in Mullanpur, forcing the team to reach Ahmedabad only late on Saturday evening.

The hectic itinerary fuelled speculation over whether fatigue may have played a role in Gujarat's subdued performance in the title clash.

GT NOT MAKING EXCUSES

However, Director of Cricket Vikram Solanki refused to use the team's packed schedule as an excuse for the defeat. "I don't want to take away from the fact that RCB have won by simply stating that we've had this number of games in these short days and we're fatigued and that's not really what we're about," Solanki said during the post-match press conference.

MS Dhoni, Rohit Sharma, Rajat Patidar: The IPL's most unlikely trilogy



New Delhi. (Agency)

On a sweltering Saturday evening in Ahmedabad, Rajat Patidar walked into the press conference room with the slow, deliberate stride of a man looking for a quiet corner to have a cup of tea. Even by the hyper-managed standards of modern cricketing diplomacy, this did not feel like the eve of an IPL final. There was no theatrical tension. No calculated bravado. He calmly walked in, nodded a 'thank you' to the journalists who offered their early congratulations, and sat down to field questions. The room had a particular thickness to it. That specific atmosphere of high occasion, broadcast cameras and shuffling chairs, journalists mentally drafting their lines. Outside the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad was doing what Ahmedabad does on nights like this: loud, restless, convinced Sunday would be historic. Inside, Rajat Patidar sat in the centre of it and simply settled. He just sat there. Still. Present. For the reporters in the room, it was an exercise in beautiful frustration. It is the job of sports journalists to mine headlines from a captain's mouth on the threshold of history, but Rajat gives you nothing flashy. He speaks with an absolute, almost mathematical economy of language. It will never be one word extra; it will never be one word less. The room had a particular thickness to it. That specific atmosphere of high occasion, broadcast cameras and shuffling chairs, journalists mentally drafting their lines. Outside the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad was doing what Ahmedabad does on nights like this: loud, restless, convinced Sunday would be historic. Inside, Rajat Patidar sat in the centre of it and simply settled. He just sat there. Still. Present. For the reporters in the room, it was an exercise in beautiful frustration. It is the job of sports journalists to mine headlines from a captain's mouth on the threshold of history, but Rajat gives you nothing flashy. He speaks with an absolute, almost mathematical economy of language. It will never be one word extra; it will never be one word less.

Roland Garros ushers in new faces beyond Alcaraz, Sinner as U21 trio scripts history

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)

The French Open 2026 has turned into a showcase for the next generation of men's tennis, with three players under the age of 21 reaching the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam for the first time this century. Brazil's Joao Fonseca, Czech Republic's Jakub Mensik and Spain's Rafael Nadal have all secured places in the last eight at Roland Garros, highlighting a major shift in the sport's landscape. The achievement is particularly



significant because it marks the first time since the 2005 French Open that three men aged 20 or younger have reached the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam tournament. More than two decades ago, a teenage Rafael Nadal led a new wave of young stars in Paris. 21 years later, another group of teenagers has announced its arrival on one of tennis's biggest stages. Fonseca and Nadal became just the 12th pair of teenagers to reach the men's quarterfinals at the same Grand Slam in the Open Era. Remarkably, no two

teenagers have ever gone on to reach the men's singles semifinals at the same Grand Slam during the Open Era.

DJOKOVIC-SLAYER FONSECA KEEPS RISING

Fonseca has emerged as one of the breakout stars of the tournament. The 19-year-old Brazilian stunned Novak Djokovic in the third round before defeating two-time French Open finalist Casper Ruud in four sets to reach his maiden Grand Slam quarterfinal. Widely regarded as one of the

brightest prospects in men's tennis, Fonseca has impressed with his fearless shot-making and composure under pressure. 20-year-old Mensik has continued his rapid rise with a series of impressive performances in Paris. The Czech youngster battled past Andrey Rublev in a gruelling five-set contest to reach the quarterfinals of a major for the first time in his career. His powerful serve and aggressive baseline game have made him one of the most exciting young players on the ATP Tour.

JODAR CONTINUES DREAM RUN

Jodar completed the teenage trio in dramatic fashion. The Spaniard recovered from two sets down against former World No. 10 Pablo Carreno Busta, winning 4-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 to book a quarterfinal clash with Alexander Zverev. The comeback victory further enhanced the 19-year-old's growing reputation as one of the best young clay-court players in the game. Their success reflects a changing era in men's tennis. With defending champion Carlos Alcaraz missing the tournament through injury and several established stars exiting early, the door opened for younger players to make a statement.

French Open Day 9 Schedule: Aryna Sabalenka, Naomi Osaka face off in blockbuster clash

French Open 2026 Day 9: Aryna Sabalenka and Naomi Osaka are set to square off in a blockbuster fourth-round clash during the night session, while India's N. Sriram Balaji, Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi and Aryan Paparkar will also be in action at Roland-Garros.

MIAMI. (Agency)

Day 9 of the French Open 2026 promises a packed schedule at Roland-Garros, with several fourth-round clashes set to shape the men's and women's quarterfinal line-ups. The spotlight will firmly be on Court Philippe-Chatrier, where world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka faces four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka in the night session. The blockbuster clash marks the first women's singles match to headline a Roland Garros night session since 2023 and comes at a time when the women's draw has been blown wide open following

the exits of Coco Gauff and four-time champion Iga Swiatek. The action on Philippe-Chatrier begins with Flavio Cobolli taking on Zachary Svajda, followed



by French hope Diane Parry's encounter against Maja Chwalinska. Later, fourth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime will look to reach his maiden Roland-Garros quarterfinal when he faces Chile's Alejandro Tabilo. Court Suzanne-Lenglen also features a strong line-up. Madison Keys meets Diana Shnaider in a battle

between two dangerous hitters, while Frances Tiafoe takes on Matteo Arnaldi after surviving a dramatic third-round contest. Matteo Berrettini's clash against

Juan Manuel Cerndolo is another match to watch after both players endured marathon encounters in the previous round. There will be significant Indian interest throughout the day. N. Sriram Balaji and Brazilian partner Marcelo Demoliner face German sixth seeds Kevin Krawietz and Tim Ptz in the men's doubles third round on Court 14. Indian junior Arnay Paparkar has a demanding schedule ahead. He first faces 15th seed Kuan-Shou Chen in the boys' singles second round on Court 2 before returning for boys' doubles action on Court 8 alongside Thailand's Kunanan Pantaratorn. Meanwhile, Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi will continue her girls' singles campaign on Court 11 against eighth seed Mariia Makarova. The teenager has emerged as one of India's most promising junior talents and will be aiming for another upset on the Paris clay.

RCB's back-to-back titles built on foundations set by IPL mega-auction

BUDAPEST. (Agency)

For eighteen long years, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) chased a singular, elusive dream. Throughout that era, they were famously top-heavy, brilliant in flashes, but notoriously brittle under pressure. They possessed the glamour, the screaming fan base, and the individual superstars, but lacked the foundational grit required to conquer the league. Yet, in the span of just twelve months, they have completely rewritten their legacy. Standing tall as back-to-back IPL Champions, they have finally shed their tag of perennial underachievers. While the celebratory fireworks are still settling over the skies of Ahmedabad, the real story of this burgeoning cricket dynasty was not written on the boundary ropes. It was engineered in the boardroom during the IPL mega-auction. By prioritising brutal squad depth over a glamorous, fragile starting XI, RCB's management built a

bulletproof machine capable of surviving the grueling marathon of the modern IPL. **THE STRATEGY OF 'QUALITY**



REPLACEMENTS'

A tournament as long and demanding as the IPL inevitably tests a franchise's structural integrity. Injuries, fluctuating form, international commitments, and sudden player departures usually derail title charges. For the RCB of old, losing a key

player to injury meant hitting the panic button and watching the entire campaign rapidly unravel. For the modern RCB, however, it simply meant pulling a different lever. Speaking on JioHotstar after the historic defence of their crown, former skipper Dinesh Karthik perfectly captured this philosophical shift: "Like you said, Irfan, a lot of planning goes into it. It's one thing to have a good starting XI or XII, but in a tournament this long, you know there will be injuries, players arriving late, or even personal issues at times. You need to be prepared for all those situations."

"We try our best. Across skill sets, we've had some really good backups. When Salt left, Bethell came in. When Bethell got injured, another player stepped up. When Josh Hazlewood wasn't around, we had Duffy, who was the world No. 1 bowler.

RCB's Lakers era: A dynasty in the making, three-peat in sight

IPL 2026: After an 18-year wait for their maiden title, RCB now have back-to-back IPL crowns. With a winning culture and long-term vision taking shape, are they building the IPL's next great dynasty, much like the LA Lakers in the NBA?

Paris. (Agency)

This was the mindset that helped start a dynasty for the Los Angeles Lakers in the 2000s after years of frustration. The Lakers are one of the most iconic teams in NBA history, dominating the 1980s with the likes of Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

leading the way.

But after 1988, the titles dried up. Despite reaching the NBA Finals in 1989 and 1991, the Lakers went through a 12-year championship drought. They landed Kobe Bryant in 1996 and brought in Shaquille O'Neal the same year, assembling a roster packed with star power. Yet the wait continued until 2000, when all the pieces finally clicked. While Bryant and O'Neal grabbed the headlines, role players like Ron Harper and Robert Horry delivered in the biggest moments to secure the championship. Then came another title. And another. Before long, the Lakers had completed a famous three-peat and established one of the great dynasties in sporting history. Now, you may be wondering why basketball and the Lakers feature in an article about Royal Challengers Bengaluru and their second consecutive IPL title. The

answer is simple. RCB have finally discovered what winning feels like. And now, they want more.

The hunger is no longer about ending a



drought. It is about building a legacy. **NOT A ONE-MAN TEAM ANYMORE** When you look at successful teams across sport, one player can only take you so far.

(a record-obliterating 72 maximums), and Super Striker of the Season, courtesy of a logic-defying strike rate of 237.30. He didn't just break Chris Gayle's or Andre Russell's historical benchmarks; he dismantled them before he was even old enough to apply for a driving license. Yet, listening to the left-hander reflect on a tournament where he scored an unprecedented 521 powerplay runs, you quickly realize the most frightening thing about Vaibhav Sooryavanshi isn't his batsmanship. It's his perspective.

"I have learned a lot from this season," Sooryavanshi told JioHotstar, showing a level of self-awareness that completely belies his youth. "I have seen a lot on and off the field. I have to work a lot on myself, improve, if I have to play for a long time. I will focus on that."

Beneath the hyper-aggressive, boundary-destroying exterior lies a methodical, goal-oriented mind. While the rest of the cricketing world was losing its collective head over his 36-ball century against Sunrisers Hyderabad or his brutal 97 off 29 in the Eliminator, the boy from Bihar was quietly checking off a literal digital bucket list. "I had made notes on my phone," he revealed with a grin. "I wrote that I wanted to score 700 runs this IPL season. After every match, I noted down my score against each team." That digital ledger now reads 776—mission accomplished, with room to spare.

Since we're talking basketball, take the example of Allen Iverson and the Philadelphia 76ers. Iverson was their superstar and carried the team all the way to the 2001 NBA Finals, only to run into the Lakers juggernaut.

For years, RCB found themselves in a similar position. Virat Kohli often carried the burden of expectations. Even when the franchise had stars like Chris Gayle and AB de Villiers, there were long stretches when the team appeared overly dependent on one man.

As Kohli himself said, he doesn't need to do everything anymore. "Just to have a group of guys where you feel like you're stepping onto the ground, you don't need to be the one to step up every time. There are guys behind you, around you, who can win games of cricket for you. We have so many Man of the Match awards cranked throughout the group as well," said Kohli.

Taapsee Pannu

Calls Out Obsession With Flat Midriff: 'Don't Torture Yourself For Instagram-Perfect Photos'

Bollywood actress Taapsee Pannu, who was recently seen in 'Assi', has spoken up on the obsession with a flat midriff. On Sunday, the actress took to the Stories section of Instagram, and spoke about how the lower belly fat or water retention is actually healthy to have as it protects the organs in that part of the body. She said, "I had to speak about this obsession of having a flat midriff. I remember I had this obsession because while growing up I was extremely fit but I never understood why the lower belly fat always stayed. I worked out intensely almost to an extent that



I over pushed myself and rightly said over pushing rings an alarm in your brain that your body needs protection. So, instead of actually losing water retention the body starts retaining it and then that lower belly fat, which is actually might not just be fat, it's also water retention, it stays and it increases by over working out which I really believe people should not do".

The actress further mentioned that every girl has a different body, and their every day is different because of hormonal changes. So, they should not expect their midriff to look the same every day for everybody. She continued, "it cannot look like any other girl so you need to accept this. I accepted it very late after really torturing myself and then I realized that there are some days it happens and there are some days it doesn't happen. My nutritionist Munmun Ganerwal explained it to me how it's actually important to have that little bit of fat, a little bit of water retention under the belly

because that's where your reproductive organs are and they need protection and by virtue of being a woman you need that protection". "It is healthy for you so just to get those picture-perfect Instagram pictures please don't torture yourself. It's supposed to be healthy to have that bulge and to have that little bit of fat there. Please don't torture yourself", she added.



'Can't Get This Film Out Of My Head': Ananya Panday Gives A Huge Shout-Out To Horror Drama Obsession



Ananya Panday has joined the list of celebrities praising the horror film Obsession. The actress recently took to social media to share her review of the film, revealing that she has been obsessed by the story. Obsession has been steadily gaining attention among audiences for its unique blend of psychological horror and drama. Taking to her Instagram stories, Ananya Panday shared the poster and wrote, "I can't get this film out of my head. Safe to say I am obsessed." Earlier, Kartik Aaryan also praised the film and wrote, "One of the best horror films after a very long time! what a movie!! absolutely obsessed with #obsession!! Don't miss this one". Obsession, starring Michael Johnston and Inde Navarrette in the lead roles, released in India on May 29, 2026.

The film had earlier premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 5, 2025, before arriving in the United States on May 15, 2026. The story follows Baron "Bear" Bailey, who secretly has feelings for his co-worker and friend Nikki Freeman. After the death of his cat, Bear purchases a mystical object called the "One Wish Willow," which is believed to grant one wish when broken. In a vulnerable moment, Bear wishes that Nikki would love him more than anyone else in the world. Soon after, Nikki becomes obsessively attached to him, and the two begin a relationship. However, her affection quickly turns unsettling, violent and dangerous. Bear eventually discovers that Nikki's emotions and memories have been distorted by the wish. As her obsession grows more terrifying, he learns that the curse can only end if either he or Nikki dies. His attempts to undo the wish only lead to more tragic and gruesome consequences. In the climax, Bear tries to end the nightmare and free Nikki from the curse. But before he can do so, Nikki uses another wish to make him love her back. Though Bear finally reciprocates, he collapses moments later due to the pills he had consumed.

'We Were Wearing Garbage Bags': Farah Khan Recalls BTS Moment from Kuch Kuch Hota Hai Shoot In Scotland



Filmmaker and choreographer Farah Khan recently took a nostalgic trip down memory lane as she recalled her experience shooting for the iconic film Kuch Kuch Hota Hai in Scotland. During a conversation with actress Tanishaa Mukerji, Farah shared a behind-the-scenes incident from the film's title track shoot and revealed how the team battled extreme cold weather during filming.

Recalling an old memory during meeting with Tanishaa, Farah Khan revealed how Tanishaa had accompanied Kajol who was the lead in the movie. "You came with Kajol and it was freezing cold. We were all freezing to death over there. And we were all wearing garbage bags. For some strange reason, someone said if you tie this plastic, you won't feel cold."

Released in 1998, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai became an instant hit, redefining romance for an entire generation. The film's unforgettable dialogues, soulful music, and stylish portrayal of friendship and love continue to hold a special place in fans' hearts. Farah recently shared that her triplets — Diva, Anya and Czar — have officially graduated from high school, and her social media post quickly turned into a wholesome celebration filled with love from friends, family and fans. The filmmaker posted a carousel featuring moments from the graduation ceremony, including pictures and videos with her children. Some of the photos also showed the trio posing with businesswoman Nita Ambani and badminton star PV Sindhu, alongside candid family moments with Farah herself. Farah Khan married filmmaker Shirish Kunder in 2004 after the two worked together on Main Hoon Na. Over the years, the couple collaborated on several projects including Jaan-E-Mann, Om Shanti Om and Tees Maar Khan. The filmmaker welcomed her triplets in February 2008 through IVF, and over the years, fans have occasionally seen glimpses of them on social media and even on screen. Interestingly, the children had also made a special appearance during the closing credits of Tees Maar Khan back in 2010.

Madhuri Dixit

Defends Aishwarya Rai Against Trolling Over Cannes Look: 'She Has Made Whole Country Proud'

Madhuri Dixit has spoken out strongly against online trolling directed at Aishwarya Rai Bachchan over her appearance at the Cannes Film Festival 2026. She called out the harsh culture of constant judgement on social media. She said that while people have always made remarks, earlier there were limited platforms for such opinions, whereas now social media gives everyone an immediate outlet to comment freely. Defending her Devdas co-star, Madhuri said that Aishwarya has represented India globally for over two decades at Cannes, and that she cannot be reduced to a number on the scale.

Madhuri Dixit Defends Aishwarya Rai Bachchan

While speaking to PTI, Madhuri Dixit was asked about the judgement and trolling faced by actors Ananya Panday and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, and whether the world has become harsher towards celebrities today. She replied, "I feel there were such people earlier too, and there are still such people today who comment. Earlier they didn't have a way (platform) to comment, but today they have got that means (platform).""Especially Aishwarya, when she went to Cannes, she has a legacy. She has been going there for 20 years. She has made the whole country proud. She is a global star. You cannot reduce her to a number on a scale or a number on the dress or the size or a number on the calendar years. You cannot reduce her to that. She is beautiful. She looks beautiful but she is beautiful inside. I have worked with her. I think people have to realise that. When you do these kind of comments, what kind of message are you sending to the youngsters today? That your worth is on how you look, not on your achievements? I think this is a completely wrong message being sent," she said.

Triptii Dimri Reacts

Meanwhile, Triptii Dimri also weighed in on the discussion, highlighting how easy it is for people to comment from the comfort of their homes without understanding the effort and struggle behind public success.



NEWS BOX

Suspected WWII ordnance explodes in Indonesia, five dead

JAKARTA. (Agency)

A suspected shell left over from World War II exploded under a stilt house in an Indonesian fishing village, killing five people and wounding nearly 20, police said Monday. The blast in Indonesia's restive eastern Papua region startled locals with a thunderous boom on Sunday afternoon, emitting a ball of flames followed by a thick smoke column, according to footage broadcast on Kompas TV.

Nine homes were destroyed.

"The source of the explosion is strongly suspected to have been a bomb or mortar left over from World War II," Papua police spokesman Cahyo Sukarnito told AFP. Three people are still recorded as missing, but Cahyo said several body parts have yet to be identified.

At least 19 people were treated for minor injuries, he added. "We will provide further updates once the search for victims and the investigation have been completed," said Cahyo.

Last year, nine civilians were among 13 people killed in West Java province when an explosion occurred as Indonesian troops attempted to dispose of rejected munitions by detonating them in a pit.

Indonesia was a major battle zone during WWII when Japanese forces occupied what was then the Dutch East Indies, and Allied forces fought to retake control.

Five killed, two injured in explosion at South Korean aerospace plant



SEOUL. (Agency)

An explosion at a plant run by South Korean defence firm Hanwha Aerospace killed five people on Monday, local fire authorities said. The explosion was reported to authorities at around 11:00 am (0200 GMT) at Hanwha's plant in Daejeon, about 150 kilometres south of Seoul. A representative of the Daejeon Fire Headquarters told AFP that five people have died and two others were injured, without providing further details.

The blast is believed to have happened inside the factory according to authorities speaking with Yonhap news agency. Hanwha Aerospace is a major South Korean defence manufacturer which produces weapons, artillery systems and aerospace components. Its Daejeon facility focuses on research and development, including advanced weapons technologies and space-related systems.

A Hanwha representative told AFP "the exact circumstances and extent of the damage have not yet been fully determined. The fire has not yet been completely extinguished". President Lee Jae Myung instructed officials to mobilise all available resources to bring the fire under control, his office said.

Did Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian Resign Over Disagreement With IRGC? A Fact Check

Tehran. (Agency)

Iranian authorities have dismissed a report claiming Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian has sought to step down in protest over the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) unchecked dominance in Tehran's wartime decision-making. The rebuttal came after UK-based Iran International reported that Pezeshkian had submitted his resignation to Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, saying that the elected government has effectively been excluded from vital decision-making processes in the country and that the vacuum created by this situation has enabled headline factions within the IRGC to take control of affairs.

Citing an informed government source, the IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency reported that the president has not resigned and continues to carry out his duties. Follow Live Updates Separately, Seyed Mehdi Tabatabaei, deputy head of communications and information at the president's office, also dismissed the Iran International report in a post on X, and said that Pezeshkian would not step back from serving the people. "The rumour-mongering by the disreputable foreign network is a continuation of previous ridiculous media games. They have published their own wishful thinking in place of reality," Tabatabaei's post read. "President Pezeshkian will not retreat from serving the people, just as the Iranian nation will not step back from the path of solidarity and resistance. They will take their wish to shatter the unity of the Iranian nation to the grave," it added. Iran International, citing sources, claimed that Pezeshkian has submitted an official letter of resignation to the Office of the Supreme Leader, in which he claimed that under the IRGC's dominance in decision-making, he was unable to run the government and carry out his legal responsibilities, and for that reason, he was requesting to step down immediately. This added to months of reports claiming tensions between the government and the Islamic Republic's military-security institutions.

Pro-Trump candidate pulls ahead in Colombia presidential vote as ruling party sows doubt in results

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.

BOGOTÁ. (Agency)

WTough-on-crime outsider Aberaldo de la Espriella took the lead in Colombia's presidential race in the first round of voting Sunday night, setting up a runoff with Iván Cepeda, an ally of Colombia's outgoing President Gustavo Petro who questioned the results of the election. With no candidate taking an outright majority of the vote, the election will head to a second round in June. But Cepeda and Petro sowed doubt in the results of the first round, that hundreds of thousands of votes were manipulated and that foreign actors manipulated the results of the election.

Cepeda said he was waiting for electoral authorities to scrutinize the results before

accepting the election. "Only when the vote-counting commissions have fully clarified what happened will we comment on tonight's results," Cepeda said, though he acknowledged the vote was likely going to a second round. Cepeda won 41% of the vote, while de la Espriella won 44% of the votes, with 99.98% of the results counted by electoral authorities. Cepeda is a progressive senator who has promised to carry on a fraught plan to achieve "total peace" by negotiating peace pacts with guerrillas and criminal gangs. He was consistently leading polls in the run up to the Sunday vote, but in the weeks leading up to the election de la Espriella rapidly gained support with a promise that he would crack down on armed groups.

The neck-and-neck results likely spell trouble for Cepeda in the run-off election, as de la Espriella is expected to scoop up support from voters who threw their support behind another conservative candidate in the first round. De la Espriella — a newcomer known as El Tigre, or "The Tiger" — has sought to portray himself as a supporter of U.S. President Donald Trump.

"Let the United States of America and democratic parties monitor this runoff election. I will lead this battle; I will be Colombia's best warrior," de la Espriella said in an impassioned speech Sunday



night, pounding his chest behind bullet-proof glass in front of supporters.

Colombian voters are weighing peace deals or a crackdown. Voters across Latin America are increasingly ditching leaders that pitched progressive policies aimed at addressing the root issues of conflict, such as lack of opportunities for young people and corruption. Instead, voters have

increasingly turned to candidates promising heavy-handed security crackdowns. The polarized vote comes as the Trump administration is playing a more aggressive role in Latin America than any US government in decades, placing mounting pressure on countries like Colombia, Mexico, and Ecuador to crack down on crime.

The election has also underscored two sharply diverging visions for the future of peace in a country marked by years of conflict. On one side, Cepeda has promised to continue Petro's progressive agenda and a largely failed effort to negotiate peace pacts with armed groups, following a plan that's likely to sharply contrast with

Trump's vision for Latin America.

On the other side, de la Espriella has promised to fiercely crack down on criminal groups and build 10 mega-prisons, echoing the war on gangs policy of El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, which has driven down homicide rates but fueled accusations of human rights abuses.

Malaysia enforces ban on social media accounts for children younger than 16

Other countries including Australia, Brazil and Indonesia have introduced or announced age-based restrictions or requirements for children's access to social media.

KUALA LUMPUR. (Agency)

Malaysia on Monday began enforcing rules barring millions of children younger than 16 from owning social media accounts, joining a global effort to tighten online safety protections for young users. The rules require social media platforms to implement age-verification systems and block users under 16 from creating accounts. They apply to platforms with at least 8

million users, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube.

Companies that fail to comply could face penalties of up to 10 million ringgit (\$2.5 million). But parents whose children manage to bypass the law will not be penalized. The government said the measures are aimed at protecting children from harmful content, cyberbullying and platform features designed to encourage excessive use.

Other countries including Australia, Brazil and Indonesia have introduced or announced age-based restrictions or requirements for children's access to social media. Countries including Britain, France, Spain, Denmark, Thailand and South Korea are also studying or developing similar approaches. Malaysia's Communications and Multimedia Commission said the rules are not intended to prevent children from accessing the internet or digital

technology. Instead it set expectations for service providers to address online harms and ensure age-appropriate safeguards are in place.

"These measures help strengthen the protection of children in the online environment, while providing added reassurance to parents in navigating increasingly complex digital risks," the regulator said in a statement last month. Platforms will be required to introduce safety-by-design features, including protections against manipulative design that encourages compulsive use, and take action against underage accounts and harmful content. Technology companies have yet to detail how they will comply with Malaysia's new requirements.

The regulator said a grace period will be given for platforms to complete implementation of age-verification systems.

Hezbollah needs to cease attacks first: US official



WASHINGTON. (Agency)

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the ongoing diplomatic negotiations, a senior US official told AFP Sunday, asserting that Hezbollah must be the first to cease its attacks.

"To advance those talks, the United

States proposed a clear sequence: Hezbollah must stop all attacks on Israel. In return, Israel would refrain from escalation in Beirut," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, about the conversations between the three leaders.

Netanyahu vowed Sunday to push Israeli forces deeper into Lebanon, with France prompting the United Nations

Security Council to hold an emergency meeting Monday over the expanding offensive. The US official said Aoun attempted to advance the proposal submitted by Washington, but speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon Nabih Berri's "response was evasive and disappointing." Berri is considered an ally of Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Hezbollah for its part says Israel must cease its hostilities first.

"Hezbollah is following Tehran's lead. It clearly has no interest in the welfare of the Lebanese people," the US official said. "The fastest way to de-escalate and protect civilians on all sides is for Hezbollah to stop firing immediately," the official added. The US official's remarks come as another meeting between Israel and Lebanon, which do not have diplomatic relations, are scheduled to take place June 2 and 3 in Washington.

Lebanon's health ministry says Israeli attacks have killed more than 3,412 people since early March, with over a million others displaced.

Malaysia Enforces Social Media Ban For Under-16, Platforms Must Verify Age

World. (Agency)

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The regulator said a grace period will be given for platforms to complete implementation of age-verification systems. Clara Koh, Meta's director of public policy for Southeast Asia, had cautioned in April that Malaysia's blanket under-16 ban could backfire by driving teenagers away from protected apps and into unregulated corners of the internet.

She said Meta has launched "teen accounts" for those under 18 that limits contact, screen time and exposure to inappropriate content. Malaysia's curbs come as

governments face growing pressure to address concerns about social media's impact on children's mental health and online safety. In March, a US jury ordered Meta and YouTube to pay millions of dollars in damages in a case alleging that platform design features contributed to harm suffered by a young user.

Despite support from many parents, Malaysia's move has also raised concerns over data privacy. "It is very much following the trend but in a way that is raising alarms due to requiring a government ID for age verification," said Benjamin Loh, social science lecturer at Monash University in Malaysia.

Loh said experiences elsewhere suggest age-based restrictions have yet to prove consistently effective. Without parent penalties, he said families can easily bypass the law by creating accounts for their children. "This is a major gap that unless regulators are willing to fix, will result in the law having little effect.

in stopping children from using social media," he added.

What To Know As Israel's Lebanon Incursion In 25 Years Complicates Iran Deal

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

Israeli forces are making their deepest incursion inside Lebanon since they withdrew from the country over a quarter-century ago, despite a nominal US-brokered ceasefire and the first direct talks between the countries in decades. The Israeli advance presents a challenge in the emerging deal to extend the Iran war ceasefire as Tehran wants any agreement to end fighting in Lebanon, too. Qatar called it a "dangerous escalation." Germany's foreign minister said it was cause for serious concern, according to German press agency dpa. There was no comment by the United States. On Sunday, Israeli forces seized a symbolic fort in southern Lebanon that offers commanding views across Lebanon and into northern Israel. The last time they seized it, they held it for 18 years.

Israel says it is targeting the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group, which has a strong political presence in southern Lebanon and has launched thousands of missiles and drones at Israeli soldiers there and in northern Israel. Israel has warned Lebanese civilians across the south to evacuate or risk being in the line of fire. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam on Saturday accused Israel of "implementing a policy of total destruction of cities and towns."

Over 3,300 people, including dozens of children, have been killed in Lebanon since the fighting began March 2, two days after the Iran war started. About 1 million people have been displaced. At least 25 Israeli soldiers and a defense contractor have been killed in Lebanon or northern Israel, along with two civilians in northern Israel.

Here's what to know:

Israeli forces seized Beaufort, also called Al-Shaqif, which was built as a Crusader castle around the 12th century and later used by Saladin's Jerusalem army, Mamluks, Ottomans, the French mandate and the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who last week vowed to "increase the blows," noted that Beaufort is "a symbol of a heroic battle for our fighters" but also "a symbol of deep division between us." The fort summons a sense of victory over the Israeli military's seizure of it in 1982, but it also symbolizes the high price of defending it before it was handed over in 2000, said Orna Mizrahi, a former deputy director in the government's National Security Council. The military's return feels like Israel is going in circles, said Mizrahi, now a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies. "There's a feeling of, 'For what?'" Israel likely will relinquish control eventually, she said, even as Defense Minister Israel Katz vows to make Beaufort part of Israel's permanent security zone in southern Lebanon.