



What Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said as minister, sulking over portfolio, quit



Karnataka minister Ramalinga Reddy resigned from the cabinet just two days after taking oath, claiming he had twice been promised the Bengaluru Development portfolio before being assigned the Major and Medium Irrigation department instead.

Bengaluru.(Agency) Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday sought to play down minister Ramalinga Reddy's resignation, saying the matter would be sorted out as they were "close friends". He added that if the resignation was over a portfolio allocation, "that was his wish." Ramalinga Reddy is my colleague. He is a senior leader. The concern he has is that it may not be possible for him to go to villages and carry out work extensively, and he would prefer to be given some other responsibility. That is his wish," he told reporters. Just two days after Shivakumar was sworn in as Karnataka Chief Minister, his cabinet faced its first jolt as Reddy resigned from the Major and Medium Irrigation portfolio on camera, alleging that he had been promised the coveted Bengaluru Development department on two occasions before the cabinet's formation. Speaking to reporters shortly after, Shivakumar reiterated that there is nothing to be worried over the development, saying, "I will discuss the matter with him and sort it out. There is nothing to worry about.

He is a great friend. We are among the closest friends in the Cabinet. We will sort out the issue." Earlier, sources told India Today that Reddy was upset after not being given the Bengaluru Development portfolio. After signing his resignation letter on camera, Reddy told reporters that he had been assured twice that the Bengaluru portfolio would be given to him, but said he was now disappointed and was therefore resigning as a minister. He later said he would continue as an MLA and that he was not upset with either Shivakumar or former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Reddy said Shivakumar had come to his house and told him that once he became Chief Minister, he would give up the ministry and Reddy could take it. He also claimed that when he met Shivakumar a day before the swearing-in ceremony, he was again told that the Bengaluru portfolio would be allotted to him. He said he would not submit his resignation letter in person, but would instead send it to the Chief Minister's Principal Secretary through a supporter.

Allegations of Illegal Nexus Rock Mehsana Police; Questions Raised Over Enforcement

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Makan Mehsana . A fresh controversy has emerged in Mehsana district after serious allegations were made against a police constable, triggering concerns about the alleged protection of illegal activities and the functioning of local law enforcement. According to allegations circulating among local residents and social activists, Constable Tarunsinh Dabhi, posted in the district, is allegedly linked to a network involved in bootlegging, gambling operations, and illegal collections across several areas, including Langhnaj, Nandasan, Kadi and nearby villages. The claims suggest that various illegal activities have continued openly despite re-



Repeated complaints from citizens. Sources allege

that several bootleggers and gambling operators have been functioning without fear of action, raising questions about whether certain individuals are receiving unofficial protection. Allegations also point to an alleged interstate liquor network operating between Rajasthan and Gujarat, though no official confirmation has been issued by investigating agencies. The controversy has intensified after claims surfaced that the constable's name had allegedly appeared in previous complaints related to illegal activities. Critics argue that if such allegations are true, a thorough investigation is necessary to determine whether any misconduct has occurred and whether larger networks

are involved. The matter has also sparked debate over accountability within the police system. Citizens and activists are demanding a transparent inquiry and questioning how illegal operations could allegedly continue for an extended period without strict enforcement action. As of now, the allegations remain unverified, and no court or competent authority has established wrongdoing. However, the issue has generated significant public interest, with demands for an impartial investigation to establish the facts and ensure public confidence in law enforcement. Authorities have not yet released a detailed official response regarding the allegations.

'Adviser' Mamata at centre of cracks in rebel Trinamool camp

Cracks have appeared in the Ritabrata Banerjee-led TMC rebel camp over Mamata Banerjee's role. The dispute has exposed tensions within the bloc as several MLAs insist Mamata remain the supreme leader and not as an 'adviser' as suggested by Ritabrata.

New Delhi.(Agency) Not even 48 hours have passed since 60 rebel MLAs seized control of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) legislature party by defying party chief Mamata Banerjee, but cracks have started to appear in the Ritabrata Banerjee-led camp. At the centre of the dissent is the role of Mamata herself. A section within the rebel camp is unhappy with Ritabrata, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, relegating Mamata to the position of "chief adviser". They want her to remain as the supreme leader. On Wednesday, after being recognised by the Assembly Speaker as the LoP, Ritabrata told reporters that he had no intention of splitting the Trinamool. In fact, in their letter to the Speaker, the rebel group mentioned that Mamata was the party chief. But Ritabrata's suggestion that Mamata function as an "adviser" is what seems to have led to the unease.



Mohali man stabs ex-girlfriend to death in packed office, murder caught on CCTV

The victim was stabbed by her former partner and colleague, Harjinder Singh Mann. The fatal attack was captured on CCTV cameras installed at their workplace.

Chandigarh.(Agency) A 30-year-old woman was stabbed to death by her former boyfriend and colleague inside a private company's office in Punjab's Mohali on Thursday evening, police said. The accused, identified as Harjinder Singh Mann, attacked her in front of coworkers before attempting to take his own life. The incident was captured on CCTV and is under investigation. According to preliminary findings, the two worked together at a private courier company, where their professional association eventually developed into a romantic relationship. However, the couple had ended their relationship some time ago. Police sources indicated that Harjinder was struggling to come to terms with the breakup



and had made repeated attempts to reconcile with Dimple. Investigators believe his efforts were unsuccessful, leaving him emotionally distressed in the weeks leading up to the

incident. The attack reportedly unfolded late Thursday evening at the company office premises in Mohali. Authorities said an argument broke out between the two colleagues, following which Harjinder allegedly attacked Dimple with a knife, stabbing her multiple times as some colleagues tried to intervene and stop the attack, but to no avail. Following the attack on Dimple, Harjinder also stabbed himself and tried to end his life. However, he survived. Employees present at the office were left shocked by the sudden violence and immediately alerted the police. Upon receiving information about the incident around 7:40 pm, a police team rushed to the scene and found both individuals critically injured.

Owaisi questions 2027 Census timing, says Centre risking its credibility

New Delhi.(Agency) All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday sharpened his attack on the Centre over the proposed 2027 Census exercise, questioning its timing and credibility while citing the famous remark: "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics". In a post on X, Owaisi said Census data is critical for delimitation, development schemes and food security, but alleged that the Union government was "putting the integrity of census at risk" to avoid embarrassment.



Census data is essential for delimitation, development schemes and food security. The Modi govt is putting the integrity of census at risk just so that it's not embarrassed,"

Owaisi said. Furthermore, the Hyderabad MP also pointed to the National Family Health Survey, claiming it has stopped collecting information on issues such as open defecation and the use of cooking fuel. "The latest National Family Health Survey has also dropped collecting information on open defecation, use of cooking fuel among other things," he wrote. Owaisi's remarks came at a time when India is preparing to roll out its long-delayed decennial Census exercise. India will count its population by March 1, 2027, in a census to be held after an unprecedented 16-year gap, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs had announced last year. This will be the country's

first digital census, and the first in independent India to include an enumeration of castes as well. The Census process has been initiated with a self-enumeration facility, allowing citizens to submit their details digitally. The Houselisting and Housing Census is also underway as part of the preparatory phase. The full-scale population enumeration, covering over 1.4 billion people, will mark one of the world's largest peacetime administrative exercises involving nearly three million personnel. The Census, originally scheduled for 2021, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The last nationwide Census was conducted in 2011, making this exercise the first major headcount in over a decade.

Asaduddin Owaisi questioned the timing and credibility of the 2027 Census and accused the Centre of risking its integrity. His remarks came as India announced its first digital census with caste enumeration after a 16-year gap.

News box

MCG launches 2-day cleanliness drive in city

Gurgaon.(Agency)

MCG on Thursday carried out a cleanliness drive in four wards of the city ahead of World Environment Day. The activity is a part of a two-day special campaign across all four zones — ward-10 of zone-1, ward-32 of zone-2, ward-4 of zone-3 and ward-22 of zone-4 — launched by the civic body following the directions of the urban local bodies department. Citizens were also made aware of the importance of segregating waste at the source level. People were advised to divide waste into four separate categories — wet, dry, domestic hazardous and sanitary waste — and contribute to making the city clean.

MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya said, "The objective is not only to make the city clean, but also to make citizens aware of environmental protection."

Councillors, ward committee members, RWA representatives and residents took part, conveying the message of strengthening the sanitation system and making citizens aware of cleanliness. Garbage was removed from roads, lanes, public places, vacant plots, garbage vulnerable points (GVPs) and other sensitive areas. Steps were taken for bush cutting, debris disposal and improvement of the sanitation system. Officials and public representatives appealed to citizens to cooperate in maintaining cleanliness not only in their homes but also in surrounding areas. People were given the message not to litter, keep public places clean and motivate others towards cleanliness as well.

Truck driver dies in hit-and-run accident after a week

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 57-year-old truck driver from Punjab died from the injuries he sustained in a hit-and-run accident near Hero Company's premises more than a week ago. Police have registered an FIR against an unidentified vehicle driver for rash driving and causing death by negligence under BNS at the Sadar police station. The deceased, Manohar Singh, was a resident of Ferozpur district in Punjab. According to a complaint filed by his wife, Manohar was working as a driver for a Ludhiana-based truck owner since Dec 2025 and arrived at Hero Company to load goods in his truck. She said that he had been untraceable since then. When she reached Sadar police station on June 3 while searching for him, she learnt that an unidentified man was injured in a road accident on the night of May 24 and later died during treatment at PGI Rohtak on June 1. According to the complaint, Manohar was climbing onto his truck around 12.30am when an unidentified vehicle brushed past him, causing him to fall and suffer serious injuries. "He was initially taken to Civil Hospital in Sector 10 and later referred to PGI Rohtak, where he died during treatment," an officer said. Police said they received information from Civil Hospital on May 25 regarding an unidentified accident victim who was referred to PGI Rohtak. "Despite efforts, his identity could not be established at the time. Following his death on June 1, family members identified the body," the officer added. Based on the complaint, Sadar police registered an FIR and initiated an investigation to trace the vehicle involved in the accident.

"We are trying to ascertain the car details of the accused. As soon as it is clear, the accused will be nabbed and necessary action will be undertaken," the officer said.

No developed plots yet, farmers protest at Noida office

Noida.(Agency)

Nearly 500 farmers on Thursday marched from Harola Community Centre to the Noida Authority office in Sector 6 and staged a protest over their long-pending demand for developed plots. "We have decided to continue our protest until our demands are met," Bhartiya Kisan Parishad president Sukhvir Khalifa said, adding, the Authority acquired land from farmers but "failed" to deliver developed plots to several affected families. "In 2024 too, we protested over this issue. Following that, the state govt formed a high-level committee comprising the director of the revenue department, the divisional commissioner of Meerut and the district magistrate of Gautam Budh Nagar. It has been almost two years, but there is no update on the committee's recommendations," the farmer leader said. Nearly 2,950 farmers' 5% and 10% developed plots are due. Suresh Kumar, a resident of Sarfabad village, said, "Nearly 20 years have passed and we are still waiting." Kumar, whose 32 acres of land were acquired by Noida Authority in 2006, added, "We received compensation for the land, but the developed plots were never allotted. We demand that the govt address our concerns and fulfil its commitments." Led by Khalifa, the farmers reached the Authority office around 1 pm. Accompanied by a DJ sound system, the protesters played music and raised slogans in support of their demands. The police put in place multilayered security arrangements, deploying ropes and iron barricades to prevent the farmers from advancing further towards the Authority premises. The farmers subsequently set up tents outside the Authority's main office and began their protest under the scorching June sun. Prolonged exposure to direct sunlight, coupled with limited shade, led to dehydration and exhaustion among several protesters. Later in the afternoon, rainfall disrupted the demonstration, forcing many of the protesters to disperse and return home. Police personnel and officials of the Noida Authority later held discussions with the farmers.

Kranti Shekhar, officer on special duty (OSD), Noida Authority, said that officials were in talks with the protesting farmers and efforts were being made to resolve their issues. Noida has scheduled a meeting of farmers with Authority CEO Krishna Karunesh on Friday. The protest stems from a long-standing land dispute between farmers and the development authority. Over the years, Noida Authority acquired large tracts of agricultural land for urban development projects. Subsequently, a group of farmers approached Allahabad High Court, which in Oct 2011 ruled in their favour and granted a 64.7% increase in compensation along with 10% developed residential plots. Prior to the judgment, farmers were compensated for their land and were entitled to 5% developed plots. Supreme Court upheld the HC's decision in May 2015. While Noida Authority has largely disbursed the additional compensation awarded to landowners, the allotment of developed plots remains incomplete due to a shortage of available land.

Rs 25k for foetus sex test: Decoy operation by Gurgaon health authorities busts interstate racket

Gurgaon.(Agency)

On Thursday morning, a pregnant woman boarded a bus from Delhi to UP. She had just paid Rs 25,000 to her companion, a woman who promised to tell her whether she was carrying a boy or a girl.

Hours later, a joint team from Haryana and UP stormed a house in Bijnor district and arrested two persons for allegedly being part of an interstate sex determination racket. The pregnant woman had been a plant, part of a carefully planned decoy operation by Gurgaon health authorities under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act.

The plan took shape after Gurgaon authorities received intelligence that many women from the district were going to Bijnor for illegal prenatal sex determination tests. Led by nodal officer Devender Singh Salokhi and medical officer Harish Kumar, the joint operation included Bijnor PCPNDT nodal officer Rajendra Prasad Vishwakarma and nayab tehsildar Ajay

Singh Rana. According to officials, the racket was being run through a woman identified as Renu, who allegedly acted as a middleman and charged between Rs 25,000 and Rs 40,000 to arrange the tests. An official said, "She demanded Rs 25,000 from the decoy, asking her to transfer Rs 5,000 online and bring the remaining Rs 20,000 in cash. Investigators transferred the amount through UPI and arranged marked currency notes." On Thursday morning, the pregnant woman met Renu near New Delhi Railway Station. After taking the cash, Renu took her by bus to Noorpur in Bijnor district. During the journey, she deposited Rs 19,000 in a Bank of India account, officials said. Investigators said Renu contacted a person identified as Sonu, following which a car arrived and took



the women to a house on Chandpur Road. Inside, a man identified as Manoj Kumar allegedly conducted an ultrasound examination using a portable machine and informed the woman about the sex of the fetus. The moment the

decoy gave a signal to the team, who rushed in and arrested Manoj and Renu. During questioning, officials learned that Manoj had studied till Class XII, and was therefore not qualified to perform ultrasound examinations. The house where the procedure was conducted was not registered under PCPNDT Act either. The team seized a portable LOGIQ e ultrasound machine, probe, charger, ultrasound gel and other equipment.

Investigators also found evidence of online transactions and recovered the marked currency notes. Authorities suspect the network may have conducted illegal abortions when the fetus was found to be female.

Ahmedabad Police Employee Faces Allegations of Links to Illegal Activities; Questions Raised Over Enforcement

Local residents and activists demand an independent probe into alleged criminal networks and enforcement failures.

Law Under the Spotlight

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Ahmedabad, Gujarat:

Serious allegations have surfaced against a police employee posted at the University Police Station in Ahmedabad, triggering debate over alleged illegal activities and accountability within the law enforcement system. According to claims made by local sources and activists, the employee, identified as "Giri," is allegedly operating from a private office in the Wadaj area rather than performing regular duties from the police station. Allegations suggest that the office serves as a center for coordinating activities linked to bootlegging, gambling, and other unlawful operations across parts of the city. Local residents have raised concerns regarding alleged illegal liquor sales, gambling dens, and activities operating under the guise of commercial

AHMEDABAD POLICE
'ORGANISED CRIME SYNDICATE'
UNIVERSITY POLICE'S 'GIRI' ALLEGEDLY RUNS
THE CITY'S UNOFFICIAL 'DON'
A private office in Wadaj, where every deal is made and every crime is protected.

WHEN THE PROTECTORS BECOME THE PREDATORS

GULBAI TEKRA: A DEN OF CRIME

- DEADLY LIQUOR TRADE:** Toxic, chemical-laced liquor is being sold, poisoning the poor while police look the other way.
- INTERSTATE LIQUOR SUPPLY CHAIN:** Large containers cross state borders with ease under the protection of the network.
- SEX TRADE BEHIND SPA FACADES:** Immoral trafficking runs freely with police protection and weekly payments.

AGENCIES' POWERLESSNESS OR COMPLICITY?

- ✓ Crime Branch, SMC, PCB - all powerless?
- ✓ Or are they part of the protection racket?
- ✓ Influential connections reaching Gandhinagar corridors.
- ✓ Who is really pulling the strings?

GIRI THE SHADOW BOSS
Operating outside the police station, controlling the underworld.

PI BAVA: GUARDIAN OR SPOKESPERSON?

'I DON'T KNOW!'
Every time questioned about illegal activities, PI Bava has the same answer.
Is it ignorance or a well-planned excuse to protect criminals?

DISPROPORTIONATE WEALTH: THE DARK TRUTH

- Lavish bungalows.
- Luxury cars.
- Benami properties.

A constable's salary, but a billionaire's lifestyle!

establishments in areas such as Gulbai Tekra. Critics claim that these activities have continued despite repeated complaints and public concerns. The allegations further suggest that illegal liquor networks may be operating through interstate supply channels. However, no official investigation findings have been released to

confirm these claims. Questions have also been raised regarding the role of local enforcement officials and whether adequate action has been taken to address complaints. Citizens and social activists are demanding a transparent inquiry into the allegations and seeking greater accountability from the

authorities. The controversy has intensified due to claims regarding the alleged accumulation of assets disproportionate to known sources of income. These allegations have not been independently verified, and no competent authority has established wrongdoing. As of now, the allegations remain unproven, and no court has

issued findings against the individuals named. However, the issue has generated significant public discussion, with calls for an impartial investigation to determine the facts and restore public confidence in law enforcement. Authorities have yet to issue a detailed official response regarding the allegations.

Gurgaon civic body offices, mayor's office evacuated after bomb threat

Gurgaon: (Agency)

MCG received a bomb threat via email on Thursday morning, triggering a massive security scare and the evacuation of all its offices across the city. It was later declared a hoax as no suspicious object or explosive material was found after a thorough search.

The email, which came at 10.06am, mentioned the mayor's office and MCG offices as targets. Authorities evacuated the headquarters in Sector 34, the old MCG office in Civil Lines, and offices in Sectors 29 and 42. It was sent from an address purportedly linked to a pro-Khalistan individual.

The alert caused particular concern at the Sector 34 headquarters, which not only houses MCG's main administrative offices and the mayor's office, but also those of CBSE, Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran and Employees' Provident Fund Organisation. Around 1,000 employees were in the building when the threat was received.

Police teams reached the Sector 34 headquarters around 10.15am and began securing the area. By 10.30am, the evacuation was completed and all

entry and exit points were sealed. The bomb disposal squad, which first sanitised the old MCG office in Civil Lines, arrived at 11.30am.

Police and bomb squad members carried out an extensive search, examining offices, common areas and the surrounding complex. After several hours, they declared the building safe.

Police spokesperson Sandeep Turan said multiple teams went to the spot and determined the bomb threat was a hoax, so there was no reason to panic.

The teams left the Sector 34 headquarters around 1.30pm. Work, however, remained suspended and entry to the public was also restricted. Many residents unaware of the situation continued to turn up at the civic body's offices but were turned away at the gate.

The incident has renewed concerns over

security arrangements at govt offices. MCG offices do not have screening infrastructure at their entrances. Visitors and employees can enter



without going through walk-through metal detectors, baggage scanners or structured access-control checkpoints. Authorities are now planning to strengthen security arrangements. "We are reviewing our security infrastructure and will hold detailed discussions with the police to assess

additional requirements. Any security gaps identified will be addressed on priority," said MCG additional commissioner Ravinder Yadav.

MCG issued an advisory directing all employees to remain vigilant and strictly follow security protocols. Staff members were instructed to immediately report any suspicious person, object or vehicle to senior officials, police personnel and security staff. They were told not to touch any unattended item and to fully comply with directions issued by police and security agencies.

The advisory further urged employees not to spread unverified information on social media. The corporation also ordered stricter verification of visitors.

The email also referred to potential attacks on railway routes and mentioned prominent religious sites in Haryana and Delhi. Security agencies are analysing it to determine the credibility of the threat and trace its origin.

In Maharashtra's cities, the sex ratio at birth is now as skewed as Haryana's

Urban sex ratio at birth fell from 908 to 885 over a decade, even as rural Maharashtra improved. The state's overall ratio stays below the national average, where cities typically outperform villages.

Mumbai. (Agency)
Maharashtra's sex ratio at birth has remained virtually stagnant over the past decade, moving marginally from 896 girls per 1,000 boys in 2012-14 to 899 in 2022-24. The headline number, however, masks a striking divergence. While rural Maharashtra registered a significant improvement from 888 to 910, the urban sex ratio fell sharply from 908 to 885. The decline in cities has effectively offset rural gains, leaving the state's overall gender balance at birth below the national average. According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2024 released last week, Maharashtra recorded a sex ratio at birth of 899 girls for every 1,000 boys during the 2022-24 period, lower than the national

average of 918. The state's urban sex ratio at birth stood at 885 girls per 1,000 boys, compared to 910 in rural Maharashtra. Nationally, the trend is reversed, with urban India recording a higher sex ratio at birth than rural areas.

A comparison with data from a decade ago shows that the decline has been concentrated in cities. Between 2012-14 and 2022-24, Maharashtra's overall sex ratio at birth remained largely unchanged, moving from 896 to 899. During the same period, the rural ratio improved from 888 to 910, while the urban ratio fell from 908 to 885. When compared to other states, Maharashtra stands in stark contrast to the top performers



and finds itself grouped with the historically poorest performers. Maharashtra lags behind the states leading the country in gender parity at birth, namely Chhattisgarh (978) and Kerala (974). Other states maintaining healthy ratios include

Himachal Pradesh (956), Andhra Pradesh (946), and Assam (946). Maharashtra's SRB of 899 places it just slightly above the absolute worst-performing regions in the country. It ranks narrowly ahead of only Bihar (896), Haryana (885), Delhi (876), and Uttarakhand (872).

The most alarming divergence from the national average occurs in Maharashtra's urban centres. Nationally, cities tend to be safer for gender parity at birth, with the all-India urban SRB standing at a healthy 928 (outperforming the national rural average of 914). Conversely, Maharashtra experiences an inverted trend where its urban SRB stands at 885, compared to its rural SRB of 910. To put this

into perspective, Maharashtra's cities have the same sex ratio at birth as Haryana's overall state average (885).

The figures stand out because Maharashtra performs relatively well on several other demographic indicators. This stands in contrast to Maharashtra's performance on several other demographic indicators. The state's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) stands at 1.4 children per woman, well below the national average of 1.9 and among the lowest in India. Only Delhi (1.2) and Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal (1.3 each) report lower fertility rates. Maharashtra's TFR is comparable to Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, and significantly lower than states such as Bihar (2.9) and Uttar Pradesh (2.6).

Short news

Forest dept's move to release Angul tusker in Similipal faces local protest

BARIPADA. (Agency)

The tusker brought from Angul to be released in Similipal forests had to remain stuck in the special vehicle after local villagers opposed the efforts to release the elephant at Satkosia wildlife range office in Karanja division on Thursday. After getting information about the arrival of the tusker, irate locals gathered at the range office in the morning and reportedly did not allow the elephant to leave 'Airabat', the special vehicle in which it was transported from Angul Sadar range.

The agitators claimed the tusker was aggressive and killed several persons in Angul. "Despite being aware of the hostile nature of the elephant, the Forest department has brought the tusker from Angul to release it inside Similipal forest," they alleged.

The locals said thousands of people depend on Similipal forest to sustain their livelihood by collecting minor forest produce. Once the aggressive tusker is released in Similipal, there is a possibility of locals being attacked by the elephant. This would directly affect the livelihood of forest dwellers, they claimed.

"We strongly oppose the decision to release the tusker in Similipal. We requested the Forest department to take the elephant back to its original habitat in Angul," said the villagers. With the agitators not allowing the elephant to get out of Airabat, forest staff provided food and water to the elephant inside the vehicle. Field director of Similipal Tiger Reserve Prakash Chand Goieni said the local forest officials had no information about the release of the tusker in Similipal.

"We came to know about it just after the tusker arrived at Satkosia wildlife range office. Necessary care is being provided to the tusker inside the vehicle as it cannot be brought out due to strong opposition by local people.

No water, no noon meal for students at panchayat school in Krishnagiri's Thalli village

KRISHNAGIRI. (Agency)

A Panchayat Union Middle School in Ulibenda village of Madakkal panchayat in Thalli block failed to provide noon meal for 27 children, citing lack of water supply in the village due to a damaged water pipeline. After visiting the village and informed officials, food was prepared and regular egg supply to the school was ensured on Thursday.

On Thursday afternoon, visited the school and found that noon meal was not prepared till around 12.40 pm. PUMS headmaster I Joseph said the pipeline was damaged in the village and due to the lack of water supply, noon meal was not prepared. He also said noon meal assistant M Manju did not inform him about the inability to cook due to the situation.

Joseph said, "Though water is not available in school, food served under the Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme was prepared on Thursday morning by the cook, who brought water from a nearby area." TNIE took the issue to the notice of Krishnagiri Collector C Dinesh Kumar, who assured to resolve the issue. Subsequently, officials from the rural development, school education and noon meal department began inquiring and meals were served to the students. Cooking assistant Manju said she did not receive the consignment of eggs. Thalli Block Development Officer K Lakshmi, Madakkal panchayat secretary M Vijayakumar visited the school and assured that the school will immediately get water supply, and eggs will be supplied promptly.

Punjab's border bloodshed: Guns, grenades and a trail police can't crack

A string of killings, extortion-linked attacks, weapon snatching and a hospital blast has exposed the resilience of organised crime networks along the border belt.

Amritsar. (Agency)

Shots were fired at the petrol pump of Bharatiya Janata Party district trade cell chief Vijay Soni in Gurdaspur on Wednesday night. Giving details of the incident, Soni said he was sitting at his petrol pump around 10.30 pm when two men arrived on a motorcycle with their faces covered and suddenly opened fire.

It was not an isolated incident. A wave of targeted killings, weapon snatching, extortion-linked attacks and a hospital bombing has exposed the deep roots of organised crime and cross-border smuggling networks in Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ferozpur, even as police struggle to break the chain.

In barely ten days, Punjab's border districts have witnessed a chilling sequence of violence: a police officer shot dead on his morning commute, a Home Guard jawan

attacked and disarmed at a strategic headworks, a grenade detonated inside a hospital emergency ward, and two men — a grocer and a schoolteacher — murdered in separate incidents in broad daylight.



On the night of June 4, the firing at Soni's petrol pump became the latest addition to the growing list of violent incidents that have rattled the border belt. **A policeman's last ride**

On the morning of May 24, Assistant Sub-Inspector Joga Singh, 54, was riding his scooter towards Amritsar when two motorcycle-borne assailants intercepted him on the Fatehgarh Churian-Majitha road, barely a kilometre before Majitha town. They shot him dead and vanished.

A traffic department officer with decades of service, Singh was a resident of Ghaniye village in Gurdaspur district.

The rifle that vanished
Four days later, in the dead of night on May 28, Home Guard jawan Sukhwinder Singh was on sentry duty at the Harike Headworks bridge in Ferozpur district when unknown assailants armed with sharp-edged weapons attacked him. They inflicted serious injuries, overpowered him and fled with his SLR rifle, magazine and ammunition. Singh was rushed to Government Medical College, Faridkot.

Tomato by-products units planned in Andhra Pradesh's Annamayya to turn gluts into golden gains

TIRUPATI. (Agency)

A comprehensive plan to establish tomato by-products manufacturing units in Annamayya district has been submitted to the State government with the twin objectives of stabilising farmer incomes and reducing wastage during the market glut. The initiative focuses on promoting tomato paste, puree and sauce units under public-private partnership (PPP) model, ensuring assured procurement of produce from farmers and creating sustainable value-addition.

These processing units will absorb surplus production during the peak season, thereby preventing price crash that has historically pushed farmers into distress.

By focusing on export-quality processing, branding, packaging and shelf-life enhancement, the government aims to expand the reach of tomatoes from



Annamayya district to both domestic and international markets, officials explained. Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are being encouraged to enter into agreements with food processing companies, which will provide assured marketing channels and reduce dependence on intermediaries. Tomato is a major horticultural crop in the district, particularly in Madanapalle, Punganur, Tamballapalle and Pileru.

According to the District Horticulture Department, tomato crop is raised in about 8,400 hectares in the district, with productivity averaging 55-60 tonnes per hectare.

Annual production is estimated at 4.6-5 lakh tonnes, much of which is marketed through the Madanapalle tomato market - one of the largest trading centres in the country. During peak arrivals, 300 to 500 trucks transport tomatoes daily to major consumption centres across South India and beyond. Despite this scale, tomato farming has long been associated with market volatility and risks. Farmers who invest heavily on inputs, often face sudden price crashes, sometimes forcing them to abandon the crop or sell produce at distress prices. Inadequate cold storage, unpredictable arrivals from neighbouring States and reliance on intermediaries.

2018 terror conspiracy case: NIA court sentences 3 Kashmiri students to 10 years in jail, acquits one

The three have been in judicial custody since October 10, 2018, the day they were arrested following a police raid at an engineering college hostel in

Jalandhar

Mohali. (Agency)

A special NIA court in Mohali on Thursday sentenced three students from Awantipora in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for conspiring to wage war against India and collecting arms and explosives as part of a terror plot linked to the banned outfit Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGH). Police had booked them under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) after they were arrested with arms, ammunition and explosives from the hostel room of an engineering college in Jalandhar in October 2018.

Special Judge Dinesh Kumar Wadhwa announced the quantum of punishment a day after he held Zahid Gulzar, Yasir Rafiq



Bhat and Mohammad Idris Shah guilty under Sections 121-A (conspiracy to wage war against the Government of India), 122 (collecting men, arms or ammunition with the intention of waging war) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC, Sections 18 and 20 of the UAPA for conspiracy, abetment to a terrorist act and membership

of a terrorist organisation, Section 25(A-1) (possession and handling of prohibited arms or ammunition without authorisation) of the Arms Act and Section 5 (possessing explosive substances under suspicious circumstances or for unlawful purposes) of the Explosive Substances Act.

However, the court acquitted another accused, Suhail Ahmed Bhat, holding that the prosecution had failed to establish the charges framed against him beyond reasonable doubt.

Zahid, Yasir and Idris have been in judicial custody since October 10, 2018, the day they were arrested following a police raid at a hostel of CT Institution's Shahpur campus in Jalandhar. Police had recovered an AK-series rifle, two magazines, 54 live

cartridges, a Mauser pistol with two magazines and 31 live rounds, and nearly one kilogram of explosive material. As per the hostel records, the room from where recovery was made was occupied by Zahid and Yasir. The FIR in the matter was registered at Sadar police station in Jalandhar, and later taken over by the National Investigation Agency. According to the prosecution, the accused were associated with the AGH, a banned terrorist outfit, and had been receiving funds to promote the organisation's activities and were attempting to recruit other students from the institution into the outfit. During the course of the investigation, police claimed that Yasir, a relative of former AGH chief Zakir Musa, had played a significant role in procuring.

Two women found dead under mysterious circumstances in Ganjam, Nayagarh; murder suspected



BERHAMPUR. (Agency)

Two women were found dead under mysterious circumstances in separate incidents reported from Ganjam and Nayagarh districts, prompting police to launch investigation into possible murder cases. In Ganjam, the body of 37-year-old Ritu Pradhan was recovered from an agriculture field near Khandadeuli village under Aska police limits on Thursday. Following the discovery, police rushed to the spot and began an investigation. Police said preliminary investigation suggested that the woman was murdered.

It is suspected that Ritu may have been killed elsewhere and her body dumped in the field. Aska SDPO Sourav Ranjan Pradhan said the woman's husband Anuj Pradhan has been detained for questioning. Investigation is underway to determine the circumstances leading to her death.

Similarly, a 40-year-old woman, identified as Nirupama Swain, was found dead in Gholahandi village under Daspalla police limits in Nayagarh district on the day. Local residents alleged that she may have been raped and murdered. Police sources said Nirupama lived with her 60-year-old widowed mother Chaina Swain. On Wednesday evening, she attended a birthday celebration near her house before visiting a nearby mandap at around 8.30 pm.

She reportedly left the mandap shortly afterwards and was not seen again. After discovering the woman's body on Thursday, villagers informed police. Additional SP Subas Panda and Daspalla IIC Binaya Ranjan Parida reached the spot and launched an investigation. A dog squad was deployed and a scientific team roped in to assist with evidence collection.

Police said the victim's mobile phone records and WhatsApp communications are being scrutinised. Investigators are examining multiple leads. Forensic and scientific evidence are awaited to determine the exact cause of the woman's death.

Quad and the middle powers' shared dilemma

The US Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, outlined the approach of the Trump administration towards the Indo-Pacific in the following terms: "...the era of the United States subsidising the defence of wealthy nations is over. We need partners, not protectorates. We seek alliances built on shared responsibility, not dependency... Alliances only work when they are true partnerships. It is a two-way street. You don't have a strong alliance unless everyone has skin in the game. No freeloading. Alliances are not judged by the number of flags, but by the number of formations. We don't need more conferences. We need more combat power. I'm sorry to say this here: less Shangri-La, more ships, more subs".

The question, therefore, is where does it leave the Quad given that a new Anglo-Saxon military alliance called AUKUS exists concurrently?

It was the German geopolitician Karl Haushofer who first gave cartographic coherence to the Indo-Pacific in the 1920s, though his vision-one in which Japan, China, and India, liberated from colonial domination, would align with Germany against Anglo-American imperialism. It bears no resemblance to the contemporary Quad. The current construct was christened, if not conceptualised, by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Within eleven months of assuming the premiership in September 2006, during an address 'Confluence of Two Seas' to the Indian Parliament, he mooted the idea of the Indian and Pacific Oceans being a single, interlocking strategic space where freedom and prosperity would be mutually reinforcing. That vision became the philosophical load-bearing beam upon which Quadrilateral Security Dialogue would be constructed. Quad's first iteration collapsed as early as 2008 itself. Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith undercut the grouping during a visit to Beijing in February 2008. The Kevin Rudd government also withdrew from Malabar naval exercise, a decision that would not be reversed until 2020. The decades that followed saw Beijing's belligerence exacerbate not only in the high Himalayas but also in the South China Sea. The expansion of its naval reach into the Indian Ocean, coupled with the Belt and Road Initiative as an instrument of geo-economic dominance, fundamentally altered the strategic calculus of all four Quad members. The grouping reconvened on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Manila in 2017, although the four nations issued separate press releases rather than a joint statement. Two years later, on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, Quad held its first ministerial-level meeting. Australia rejoined the Malabar exercise. In March 2021, Quad leaders met virtually at the first leaders' summit and issued a joint statement titled 'The Spirit of the Quad'. Since then, there have been three leaders' summits and multiple ministerial meetings. At the 2026 meeting in New Delhi, the Quad foreign ministers agreed substantively to augment regional maritime domain awareness through the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration, a mechanism that appears to be the most operationally tangible initiative the Quad has produced so far. To understand what Quad is requires a willingness to resist both the overclaiming of its proponents and the casual dismissal of its detractors. When Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi likened Quad to "sea foam," suggesting it would dissipate as quickly as it had appeared, he was perhaps engaging in performative posturing. The sea foam has not evaporated. But it would be equally misleading to characterise Quad as a nascent Asian Nato. The paradox at the heart of Quad is that it seeks to uphold a rules-based order through a need-based, preference-driven form of engagement. Quad operates through convergence rather than obligation. It can facilitate, coordinate, and signal, but it cannot compel or guarantee.

Subsidy alert on the fertiliser front

Diversification of sources is a long-term remedy, besides building up buffer stocks

AN inkling of the storm brewing around fertilisers came to the fore in mid-May when Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to farmers to use less chemical fertilisers. Subsequently, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman flagged three critical Fs — fuel, foreign exchange and fertilisers. Initially, the focus had been on fuel and foreign exchange. This was inevitable as crude oil and natural gas prices were soaring, while rapid rupee depreciation sparked concerns over the widening of the current account deficit. Fertilisers had seemed a secondary issue in comparison to the energy shock and the plummeting rupee. That's no longer the case.

The outlook for the fertiliser sector has been worrisome ever since the US and Israel launched an attack on Iran in late February. A major concern is the skyrocketing of fertiliser prices in world markets over the past three months of the conflict. This includes urea, diammonium phosphate (DAP) and muriate of potash (MOP). Urea is the most widely used fertiliser in this country with an annual consumption of roughly 40 million tonnes. Imports comprise about 25 per cent of the usage.

In the case of DAP, imports meet about half of the annual demand; for MOP, the entire requirement comes from abroad. Of these imports, nearly half are supplied from West Asia. The cost of domestic manufacturing is going up at the same time. This is due to enhanced global prices of natural gas, which serves as the feedstock for most indigenous fertiliser plants. As much as 85 per cent of natural gas used as feedstock is sourced through imports. Natural gas prices have nearly doubled from \$10-11 per mmbtu (metric million British thermal units) to around \$18 per mmbtu during the war in West Asia. Other raw materials and intermediates needed by domestic fertiliser plants, including sulphur and ammonia, are mostly sourced from the Gulf region. Here, too, prices have risen by over 80 per cent. Availability may not be a problem for the time being as fertiliser stocks are currently sufficient to meet about 50 per cent of the projected kharif demand. About 20 million tonnes are available as against the expected requirement of 39 million tonnes during the season. Going forward, much will depend on how soon the Strait of Hormuz is opened up and supplies from West Asia reach this country in time and in sufficient quantity. The immediate worry, however, is a rapidly rising fertiliser subsidy bill, which

could lead to a widening of the fiscal deficit in the current financial year. The budgetary allocation for fertiliser subsidy had been kept at Rs 1.7 lakh crore for 2026-27. With prices of imported fertilisers having risen by as much as 120 per cent over the past three months, projections are that the subsidy bill could virtually double to Rs 3.5 lakh crore.

This is not just on account of higher prices for imported fertilisers. With rising gas prices, the cost of

been on track with GST (Goods and Services Tax) inflows sustaining growth in April and May. These will have to be accompanied by robust direct tax revenues in the coming months. Even this may not be sufficient to keep the deficit under control unless the West Asia war concludes and the Strait of Hormuz is reopened soon. It will still take a few months thereafter to normalise the situation in regard to both energy and fertilisers.

In the long run, however, a strategy must be evolved to ensure that the crisis like the current one is managed without putting an enormous strain on the exchequer. The need to ensure that fertilisers as well as other inputs are provided at subsidised prices to farmers has been the bedrock of existing policies in this sector. The problem is that the policy has brought about an imbalance in the usage of nutrients, with urea being the most widely used fertiliser. A shift to a direct benefit transfer system could be a solution as it would provide income support directly to the farmer. Prices of various types of fertilisers would then become more realistic, which would, in turn, enable a more balanced use of these nutrients.

The heavy import dependency on natural gas for domestic fertiliser plants also needs to be dealt with to avoid supply disruptions. One way is to build larger LNG storage and regasification facilities. Alternative feedstocks like naphtha should also be available in case of natural gas shortages. Diversification is equally needed in sourcing fertilisers and their raw materials rather than relying heavily on Gulf countries. Building up fertiliser buffer stocks can be another long-term remedy. The ballooning of the fertiliser subsidy to unsustainable levels indicates that structural changes are needed in the system governing farm inputs. This includes expanding the role of more environment-friendly nutrients and reducing that of chemical fertilisers. But this is a process that needs to be carried out in collaboration with farmers, who have for decades relied on chemical fertilisers to achieve higher productivity. Reforms in the system of providing agricultural inputs must be carried out not only by educating farmers but also by ensuring adequate income and infrastructure support.



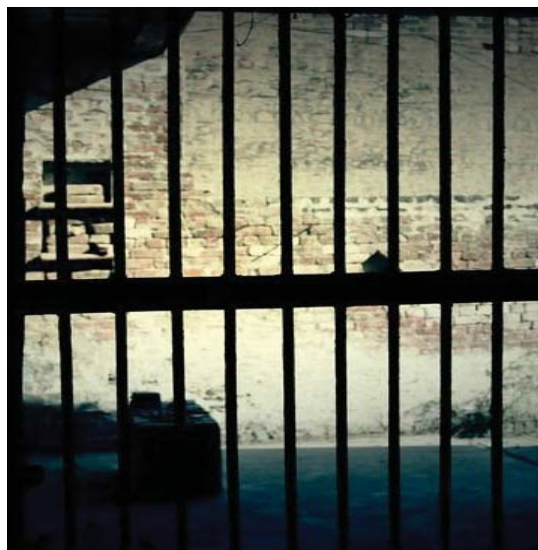
indigenously produced fertilisers will also rise substantially. Under the current subsidy system, prices of this crucial input are kept low to reduce the burden on farmers, and the fertiliser industry is given compensation. The situation is compounded by the rupee's depreciation, which has accelerated over the last few months. It has raised import costs across the board and fertilisers are no exception. The overall subsidy bill is also likely to go beyond budgetary estimates. Petroleum subsidy, for instance, has been kept at

Rs 12,085 crore, which will not be enough, given the losses being incurred by oil companies due to high global crude prices in recent months. Even last year, the subsidy outgo was as high as Rs 28,000 crore. Food subsidy has been pegged at Rs 2.3 lakh crore. The expansion of the subsidy bill will constrain efforts to contain the fiscal deficit at 4.5 per cent of GDP. Revenue collections have so far

Custodial torture : There must be no compromise on accountability

When the protectors of the law become violators of rights, the very foundation of the rule of law is endangered

THE death of a daily-wage labourer in police custody is a blot on the image of Odisha, a state renowned for good governance. The victim, Sushant Sahu, was detained on the charge of being part of a group which attacked a police team during a raid on an illegal stone quarry in Ganjam district. He was allegedly tortured to death by cops; as per his family, they thrashed him and poured boiling water on his body. Last week, an inspector was suspended after a woman and her son claimed that they were tortured at a police station in Odisha's Kendrapara district. Both incidents raise serious questions about custodial violence and the accountability of law enforcement officials. Similar allegations have surfaced recently in Haryana, Assam and even within Central agencies such as the Narcotics Control Bureau. These cases reveal a troubling pattern: individuals in custody have accused officials of physical abuse and violation of human rights. The Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21. Custodial torture



is a direct assault on these guarantees and undermines public faith in the justice delivery system. Police custody should facilitate lawful interrogation and investigation, not become a space where constitutional protections are suspended.

The Haryana Human Rights Commission's emphasis on preserving CCTV footage of police stations and enforcing the Supreme Court's directives is an important step forward. In a 2021 verdict, the Court ordered the installation of CCTV cameras with audio and video recording facilities in police stations, lock-ups, interrogation rooms and all custodial areas to ensure transparency, accountability and protection of human rights. However, technology alone cannot solve the problem. Respect for human dignity must be inculcated in law enforcement officials. When the protectors of the law become violators of rights, the very foundation of the rule of law is endangered. A democratic society must not tolerate custodial excesses at any cost.

Erosion of empathy amid policing pressures

Public display of levity amid tragedy robs the criminal justice process of the solemn assurance it owes to ordinary people

The recent controversy surrounding the conduct of police officials at a press conference held to share details of the gruesome murder of a 10-year-old girl in Coimbatore has once again exposed a disturbing aspect of contemporary policing — the visible erosion of empathy. Images of officials laughing casually and a policewoman reportedly rubbing her nails while interacting with the media, created widespread public outrage. The issue was not merely one of optics; it reflected a deeper institutional problem. When representatives of the law appear emotionally detached from human suffering, public confidence in the criminal justice system begins to weaken. This is not an isolated occurrence. One recalls the outrage in the US after a police officer's recorded remarks and laughter came to light following the death of an Indian-origin student in an accident involving a police vehicle. In India too, citizens often narrate insensitive experiences — policemen asking for tea in homes where a dead body lies, or officers at reporting desks chewing paan and spitting casually while listening to complaints about murder, rape, suicide or fatal accidents. Such conduct may seem routine to hardened officials, but for victims and families these moments become unforgettable symbols of institutional indifference.

Yet the matter requires balanced understanding rather than mere condemnation. Policemen daily confront gruesome realities — mutilated bodies, suicides, domestic violence, fatal accidents and crimes of shocking brutality. Constant exposure to trauma often produces emotional hardening. Psychologists describe this condition as 'compassion fatigue' or 'secondary traumatic stress'. Doctors in emergency wards, soldiers in combat zones and disaster-response personnel experience similar emotional numbing. It becomes a coping mechanism necessary for survival.

Indian policing, however, rarely acknowledges this psychological burden. Long and uncertain duty hours, lack of weekly offs, constant political and public pressure, poor living conditions and continuous exposure to conflict gradually reduce sensitivity. Many policemen work under severe fatigue and emotional exhaustion. A policeman who appears indifferent may often be psychologically drained rather than naturally insensitive. But even then, some semblance of fellow feeling is essential. Citizens encounter the police during the darkest moments of their lives. The manner in which an officer speaks, behaves or even appears during such moments profoundly shapes public trust in the justice system. Public display of levity amid tragedy robs the criminal justice process of the solemn assurance it owes to ordinary people. The roots of this problem also lie in the colonial legacy of policing in India. Police stations were historically designed more as intimidating centres of authority than as citizen-friendly service institutions. Even today, many police buildings remain architecturally forbidding — dark rooms, harsh barricades, stained walls and an atmosphere of fear. A victim entering such premises already feels vulnerable. Behavioural insensitivity further deepens alienation.

Some encouraging efforts have nevertheless emerged. Haryana's initiative of 'Samvedi Police' sought to emphasise humane behaviour, victim-sensitive communication and respectful public interaction. Such approaches recognise an important truth: policing is not merely enforcement of law; it is management of human distress. A police official is often the first visible representative of the State encountered by grieving citizens. His or her demeanour therefore acquires moral significance. Reforms in police training are urgently needed. Police academies must include behavioural sciences, emotional intelligence, trauma psychology

and victim communication as essential components of professional instruction. Modern policing also demands emotional literacy. Officials should learn how to address bereaved families, conduct themselves during press conferences, and understand how body language influences public confidence. Countries like the UK and Canada increasingly train officials in trauma-informed policing, teaching them how to communicate with victims sensitively and avoid dismissive conduct.



Japan's Koban policing system encourages familiarity and trust between citizens and police personnel. Scandinavian police models similarly emphasise community engagement and humane interaction. India need not imitate these systems mechanically, but their emphasis on dignity and empathy offers valuable lessons. Institutional care for policemen themselves is equally important. Exhausted officers cannot remain compassionate indefinitely. Rationalisation of work hours, mandatory weekly offs, periodic counselling and regular leave for mental rejuvenation should become integral to police administration. Cops, too, are humans carrying emotional burdens. If they are denied opportunities for rest and recovery, emotional burnout

becomes inevitable. Police infrastructure also needs reform. Public rooms in police stations should be welcoming, clean, ventilated and equipped with basic facilities such as seating, drinking water and separate washrooms for women. Even safe homes meant for runaway couples or vulnerable women often lack proper toilets and minimum dignity-oriented facilities. Such neglect silently communicates institutional disregard for human comfort and sensitivity.

Technology can further assist humane policing. Separate victim-support desks, digital complaint systems, counselling units and citizen facilitation centres can reduce friction between distressed citizens and overburdened officers. Behavioural audits and greater accountability during public interactions may also help improve professionalism. Media interactions require particular caution. Press conferences concerning murder, sexual violence or child deaths should follow clear protocols. Officers appearing before cameras must remember that grieving families may be watching. Casual laughter, irrelevant conversation, or visible relaxation can appear deeply offensive, even if unintended. Institutions must cultivate a culture of solemnity in matters involving human tragedy. Society too bears some responsibility. Popular culture often glorifies aggressive policing and demands instant justice. A force constantly conditioned for confrontation cannot effortlessly transform into a compassionate civic institution. Reform, therefore, has to be structural rather than cosmetic. Yet, one principle remains unquestionable: empathy is indispensable to justice delivery. A grieving mother approaching a police station should not feel she has entered a cold bureaucracy immune to sorrow. Sometimes even a respectful silence, a composed expression or a few words of humane reassurance can restore faith in institutions.

Top 10 crazy Planters for your home

Toiling hard on a balcony garden, filled with the same old clay or plastic pots, can get boring at times. If you want to breathe a bit more life into your greens, just look around.

You will be surprised to find many household objects, unnecessarily occupying space, which can be turned into unique planters. As long as it can support soil and allow proper drainage, you can use almost anything. Container gardens can be the perfect solution for those living in small apartments. So, what are you waiting for? Unleash your crazy, creative side and make the best use of waste. Trust us, you'll love it!

TO THE TEA

Cup planters look just fine on dull window sills.

They are small and can hold a small amount of gravel. But once you see them, you are bound to change your opinion. Tea cups with graphics can add spectacle in the whole scheme of things. If you want to have small plants, this can actually be a very good idea. You can accentuate the beauty of the planter by adding decorative stones around the brim.

BOTTLE'S UP

Wine-bottle planters are really easy to make and look great once done. Start out by cutting off the bottom of the bottle. Since potting soil cannot be used as the planting medium here, use coco peat instead. A wire or small rope tied just below the bottle's threads is all we need to hang these planters. You can also grow various decorative indoor plants in these bottles.

TOY TALE

Succulents are ideal plants to grow in these toy trucks discarded by your kids. They are pretty low-maintenance too. Find something that has a large enough opening to hold the potting mixture and deep enough to allow the roots to grow.

SMUG IN JEANS

This planter is not just a great use of an old pair of jeans, but it's also a sure-shot way to grab eyeballs of every passer-by. So, if you are planning something extraordinary and eccentric this season, try and make at least one jeans container. You need to fill up the legs with pipes and thermocol. Spread a water-resistant plastic bag inside before placing the potted plant. And you are ready to go...

OUT OF THE BOX

Making a planter from a wooden crate or an old suitcase is quite simple. Because of its length, breadth and depth, it is best suited for growing herbs like coriander, lemon grass or mint. Fill it with soil. You can either sprinkle seeds, starting from the scratch, or directly plant saplings. If you are more into flowers, then *Portulaca grandiflora* (commonly called 9 o'clock flowers) can be one of the options. Decorate the case to your heart's content and it can double up as an installation in your balcony.



SPICE OF LIFE

You can hang these old jars on the wall, like spice racks - in the dining room or in the kitchen. These jar planters can be used to grow fresh spices and herbs for cooking at home. Clear your kitchen counter and keep your herbs, fresh in the air. Aromatic, we say!

HATS OFF

Give your tattered old hat a makeover as a unique hanging container for your plant. Pick one of the pots with seasonal flowers in it. Tie a wire around the pot and hang it on the balcony wall. Now, cut a hole in your once-favourite old hat and use it to cover the pot. Mindboggling, isn't it?

HEAD OVER HEELS These old shoes, which had once added to your style quotient, can also make for wonderful planters. Hung on the balcony fence, these coloured boots look great filled with flowering plants. Even high heels and sandals work perfectly well for decorative cacti. Let your imagination run as wild as possible.

BOOK STORE

It doesn't take much to add a little charm to your home or office. Turning an old book into a sassy succulent planter can do wonders. Just select an old book and glue the pages together.

Make sure not to stick the pages to the cover. Let it dry completely. Decide how wide a space you want to fit in your succulent. Leave at least 2 inches around the circumference of the roots to promote growth. Line the box you just cut with a plastic bag, making sure the bottom and sides are covered. Arrange your succulent on top of the plastic bag. Be sure to transfer enough soil from the original planter, along with the plant itself. Trim the excess plastic around the edges, leaving just enough of the liner to keep water from running into the pages of the book when you water it.

AT THE WHEEL

Next time you get your car tyre changed, don't throw the old one away. Paint it instead, and use it as a plant container. This type of arrangement is possible only if you have adequate space in your balcony or on the rooftop.

You can choose colours according to your preference. The advantage in this case is plenty of room, therefore suitable for bigger plants and bushes like rose, hibiscus et al.



Why the time is ripe for a tech-less

Living room

face each other. This seating arrangement encourages talking, sitting, reading and entertaining. You will now probably communicate face to face and reconnect instead of staring at a screen.

2. Rule of thumb

When you say you have a digital-free living



While we are aware that gadgets will continue to rule our lives in many ways, decor experts around the globe reveal that more families are opting to ditch technology in their living rooms in order to facilitate more quality time. With an overdose of screen time throughout the day, people are consciously making a choice to create a room without digital distractions. They want to bond over meaningful conversations, read a book or enjoy a glass of wine, in peace. Says Dr Rajan Bhonsle, relationship counsellor, "The living room is supposed to encourage interaction. Whether it's a television, ipad or laptop - all gadgets are addictive and it's difficult to limit their usage.

Hence, if the whole family decides to eliminate technology from their living space, they will end up bonding on a personal level. That's good news because the lack of eye-to-eye contact over time has made us apathetic and arrogant as human beings."

Who says living rooms can't look chic minus the telly? In fact, this opens up huge opportunities for new designs and creative layouts in decor - you can now use up all the space that was once occupied by a gadget! Here are a few tips:

1. Let all seating face inwards
Arrange all the chairs and sofas in the room to

room, it has to be unplugged in the true sense. To help encourage this, ask your family members to leave their phones, tablets, music player in another room.

They may grumble at first, but with time surely realise that it is very relaxing at the end of the day.

3. Stay away from too many colours

While the idea is to create a space that de-stresses you after a long day, be careful not to incorporate too many colours in a tech-less space. Stick to a neutral colour palette and use soft, soothing colours. Whites, creams, blues, browns, greys - all make for brilliant choices.

Decorate your home with these Indian handicrafts

Decorate your home with Indian handicrafts and boast the beautiful, interesting and intricate handicrafts which are made by rural artisans of the country. Add jute, brass and clay handicrafts to your home, says an expert. Cheenu Gupta, Co-founder of Divinehaat.com, an e-commerce portal of handicraft goods, has shared some ideas:

* **Brass handicrafts:** Brass provides a durable and sturdy decor option. There are so many brass handicrafts and show pieces like vases, table tops, wall art, lamps, ornament boxes, plates, bowls and figurines.

True brass tends to oxidize quickly when exposed to air and hence check that the brass product you are buying has been given a clear coating of lacquer. Any brass product will have to be regularly polished to keep the shine intact and remove any tarnishing.

* **Jute handicrafts:** Give a wow factor to your drawing room with one of the most affordable natural fibers Jute. There is a huge range of jute products which includes bags, rugs, lamps, tables, office stationery, curtains wall-hangings and many more.

Jute products are eco friendly and offer a natural, green way to decorate the house.

* **Clay handicrafts:** Clay pottery is supposed to be one of the most ancient forms of handicrafts in India.

You can choose from lovely terracotta planters or clay serving utensils to beautiful vases to decorate the house. Not only these products look beautiful but food cooked in the pottery is considered good for health.

There are multiple types of clay pottery - terracotta, red, black and grey pottery.

* **Wooden handicrafts:** Decorate your house with wooden furniture, toys, utensils, decorative pieces, jewellery and many more designer household goods like lamp shades, candle stands, vermilion boxes, jewellery boxes, bangle holders. Carved wood furniture is a treasured furniture item in a lot of homes.

* **Dhokra handicrafts:** Dhokra is one of the oldest forms of handicrafts. Dhokra candle



stands, pen stands, ash trays, horses, elephants, peacocks, owls, religious images, measuring bowls and other show pieces give an extra edge to the corner of your house.

Dhokra cast metal and ironware has a rugged vibrancy about it. It looks beautiful in any corner of your home.

* **Marble handicrafts:** To enhance the beauty of your house decorate it with marble decorative vase, marble elephants for the drawing room, pooja thali, idols of god for the spiritual room.

* **Art and metal ware handicrafts:** Wall art designing for living room is a new trend. One can choose from varieties of designs to go in sync with your living room.

Smart storage under Staircase

The space below the staircase can be utilised for storage or as a display area maximising space with smart ideas that are innovative and useful is what homemakers are looking for these days.

However, finding a solution that is utilitarian and attractive becomes an interesting challenge. Most furniture these days is modular, incorporating some storage facility to maximise utility. Beds and sofas come with storage. Wood chests, apart from being decorative, allow you to store trinkets. Study tables come with cubbyholes and shelves for added

storage. Another alternative to maximise storage that will not bring in new furniture is the creation of storage in an odd space in the home, such as the area below the staircase.

ALCOVE

Many home owners are efficiently utilising the space below the staircase and some of the space abutting the staircase to create an alcove. The area beneath the staircase is quite valuable when space is at a premium. There are many ideas on how to make the most of this otherwise lost space.

TVCABINET

We could all use some extra storage space and the space under the stairs could be ideal for a variety of storage needs. This space can be used for concealed storage or for housing a TV cabinet if

need be. Both are extremely practical and good options that are seen in most homes.

BUILT-IN SHELVES

If the staircase has a high intermediate landing, then the space below can be considered for shelving. Built-in storage with shelves and drawers that will take care of the

oddest cranny is the most basic way to utilise the space. For convenience, two cupboards can be built and the one with the highest point can be used to store unwieldy long coats or sports equipment such as golf clubs and cricket bats. All other knickknacks can be stored in the various drawers and shelves in the remaining space. This idea works well when the stairwell runs behind a door or if the staircase is in a small area.

NOOK TO RELAX

Having bookcases under the staircase are a good way to use space that would otherwise be wasted. Besides, you can also consider creating a niche activity space under the stairs. If your staircase faces the living room, you could have a music area or a bar. It can be a small home office, or even a small hobby or craft room.

If your staircase is located close to the utility area, it could serve as a convenient location for a small laundry room. If your staircase runs down into the front hallway, the area beneath could house a shoe rack. If it goes up to the

bedroom, you could have a mini cabinet or a wardrobe under the stairs.

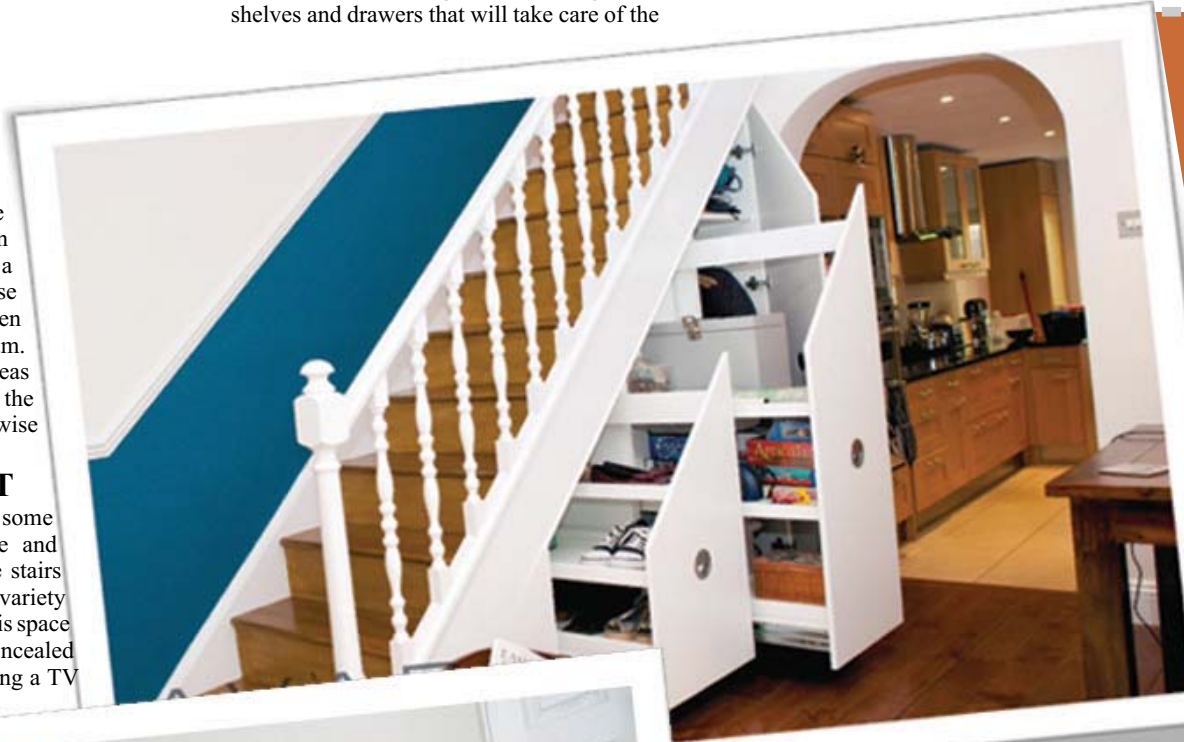
STORAGE FOR TOYS

It could also serve as an efficient toy storage area for your children. For a toy storage area, find baskets, plastic tubs or bins of different sizes and then design shelving of different heights and widths to accommodate them.

Ensure that these storage spaces are both attractive and easy to access. It can be simply shelved out and left open, or covered as a cabinet, or covered as a complete cupboard.

KITCHEN CABINETRY

If the staircase is in the dining room, consider having a superior quality wine storage cabinet below the stairs. Neat wood racks meant for wine bottles along with a temperature control mechanism will occupy little space as opposed to making a separate wine cellar. Smart shutters with glass can let you have a good view of your wine collection.



Choosing the best kitchen

connected to the dining area; some may build a beautiful temple, some may have just an idol; some may like it centrally air conditioned, whereas others may decide how to place it manually.

WOMEN DECIDE

Gone are the times where everything was accepted. The women, today, customise their bedrooms, their verandah, and the kitchen. The kitchen truly is the heart of the home and social gatherings.

THE TEMPLE OF FOOD

Kitchen designs are of various types. The one wall style, which is generally opted in for service or studio apartments, offers to save as much space as possible. The galley style, which is a walk-through kitchen, is designed with two walls opposite to each other utilising every inch of space. The L-shaped kitchen, which

The present-day women choose their kitchens according to their own likes and conveniences, rather than picking what is trending in the market spaces. Interior design is the wishful thinking for a beautiful living.

People spend more than half of our lives indoors. It is said 'home is where heart is'. It definitely is a very true saying. Indoors refer to a house, which can be a bedroom kitchen flat, a studio apartment or a bungalow. The place where we stay is a major asset for us. It provides us security, a sound sleep, area to cook food, and most importantly, peace of mind.

PERCEPTION MATTERS

For every individual, the way of living is distinct, they may be living alone, in a nuclear family or a joint family. The more the number of people in the house, the more diversified is the way and need of living, some may want to apportion the drawing and living rooms, some may want to keep it as an elementary seating. Some may like their kitchens to be closed and walled well, some may like it open and

is designed basically for medium-sized kitchens, offers as much as workspace as possible. Likewise, the horseshoe or the U-shaped kitchen has three walls and the island (platform) in a similar shape, so that more than one person can work comfortably in the kitchen at the same time.

Few housewives who either have redone and renovated their kitchen, or have designed it the way they want it in a newly-bought house, have many common and related ideologies of designing a kitchen as a bright and a well-lit space, have proper ventilation, lots of room for storage. Some of them had Indian conventional style of cooking.

Narendra Kaur Bagga, a housewife, says, "I have seen how trends change, but in my kitchen, I feel connected to the house, talking to my husband becomes easier while I cook and I can serve easily. Also, I can attend guests simultaneously, take a peep on what is going on the television, I do not have a door to my kitchen, it is open."

makes the product not only strong but also makes the product sturdy.

Latest Advances: Technology has come a long way over the last several years. Keeping updated with the latest advances is a great way to save space. Today we have table top ironing boards which are portable to carry even when you're on a vacation! It's light and compact and can be kept inside your suitcase as well. This type of ironing board helps you to re-iron you're already ironed clothes sitting anywhere in your home or even your hotel rooms. Balcony cloth dryers have also become a popular choice today among homemakers for its compact user friendly design that helps in drying your cloths outside/inside your

balcony with ease. To save space, use stackable appliances where possible. New designs for home appliances, such as washers, dryers and iron boards and take up less room in your home.

Avoid Clutter: Once all the initial arrangements in a house are made, it does become difficult after some time to accommodate more items with time. Hence sleek, elegant and compact home utility products are in more demand for their innovative design module. Look for pieces that are multi-functional or adjustable, such as a dining room table with expanding leaves or for two in-one sofa cum bed sets to avoid clutter inside the house.

How to maximize your Space at home

When there is no room to spare, maximizing the potential of every inch becomes critical. Ajit Chellapan, of Gimi, India, shares some tips...



elements are taken into consideration for people whose main focus is the functioning of their home. Apart from that, the clean look of modern interiors make homeowners love this type of concept which is clutter free and stress free. Untapped accommodation space under the staircase, wall mounted cabinets, can also help in storing most of the items which helps in saving space. Using of compact home utility products also provides a perfect solution for making your homes look clutter and stress free.

Role of Technology: Innovation and technology plays a major role. Most of the products available in the market today are driven by innovation and backed with technology. For example, with the advent of Nitrogen technology (originated in Italy) uses Nitrogen that is blown into the pipes/handles of the product at a very low temperature (-20 degrees) during the injection phase to empty the closed cavities from the inside making them exceptionally resistance to bending and twisting making the products long lasting. This type of technology is used in products such as balcony cloth dryer, ironing boards etc. This

Small spaces can be quite cozy, but squeezing-in is often challenging. When you're pressed for space, the "pile" can be your worst enemy. When there is no room to spare, maximizing the potential of every inch becomes critical. This is typically seen in a family setting where it is challenging to find space in a small house or an apartment thus being a major cause of concern. Due to this constraint a lot of things are usually

dropped. The only solution to save space is being 'Creative'.

Most Essential: Since storage space is at a premium in smaller homes, being creative is an important part which will help in designing the minimum space at your home. You can opt for minimalism concept as well. Minimalistic design is softer, more personal and easier to live with. Generally in a minimalist design, only the most essential



Can't be mute spectator: SC gives Gujarat Police 6 weeks in 20-year forgery probe

The Supreme Court has ordered Gujarat Police to finish its long-pending forgery and cheating investigation in six weeks. The bench said delays of this scale and missing records undermine speedy justice and demand court intervention.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Gujarat Police to complete its investigation within six weeks in a 20-year-old criminal complaint involving allegations of forgery and cheating in revenue records. The court observed that constitutional courts cannot remain mute spectators when confronted with cases involving inordinately prolonged investigations.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Augustine George Masih said there had been an inordinate delay in the investigation and observed that the right to a speedy trial is intrinsically linked to Article 21 of the Constitution, reported news agency PTI. The court said the delay in the present case was a matter of serious

concern.

The complaint was filed by a man before the Judicial Magistrate, Bhiloda, against four individuals under Sections 120B, 406, 420 and 463 of the Indian Penal Code, dealing with criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust, cheating and forgery. According to the complaint, the property in question had been self-acquired by him in 1975. He alleged that while he was on Haj pilgrimage from February 5, 2002 to March 21, 2002, the accused forged his signature and prepared a forged partition deed along with a bogus sale deed in relation to the property. On the basis of the alleged forgery, their names were entered in the revenue records. The court noted that in 2014, the police



submitted a report before the judicial magistrate, but it was rejected and further investigation was ordered to be completed within 60 days.

It further recorded that in 2017, the Gujarat High Court directed that the investigation report be prepared within six weeks, while also noting that some material collected

during the investigation had gone missing from the custody of the police station concerned.

In its judgment, the Supreme Court said the high court should have taken note of the inordinate delay in filing the charge sheet and intervened. "In the present factual matrix, nearly two decades have passed since the initiation of the complaint by the original complainant.

"However, it is a matter of serious concern that, despite the lapse of such an inordinate period of time, the investigation is yet to reach any meaningful conclusion," the bench said.

"From a bare perusal of the record, it is evident that the original complainant had run from pillar to post, for filing of a charge

sheet in connection with his complaint, but to no avail," it added.

The bench said it was incumbent upon constitutional courts not to remain mute spectators when such prolonged investigations were brought to their notice. "Therefore, in such peculiar circumstances, the High Court ought to have exercised its extraordinary jurisdiction to intervene in the present matter," it said.

The court also said instances in which case records are lost during an active investigation must be treated with the utmost seriousness, adding that such incidents strike at the very core of the criminal justice system and render bona fide complaints unactionable.

Two firefighters injured in fire at five-storey office building in Delhi's Greater Kailash-I

New Delhi.(Agency)

A fire broke out at a five-storey office building in South Delhi's Greater Kailash-I early Friday, injuring two firefighters during the operation to douse the blaze, officials said.

According to the Delhi Fire Services, the fire erupted in a battery room on the third floor of an office building housing the Tata Communications office, located opposite Savitri Cinema in GK-1.

The DFS received a call about the incident at around 2.47 am, following which 11 fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Officials said the fire remained confined to the battery room, affecting nearly 200 square feet of the



third floor.

Two firefighters suffered burn injuries to their hands while battling the flames and were shifted to Safdarjung Hospital for treatment, officials said.

The blaze was brought under control by around 7 am, after which cooling operations continued to prevent any flare-up. The building comprises a ground floor and five upper floors. No civilian injuries or casualties were reported. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. Further details are awaited, officials said. The incident comes days after a major fire in South Delhi's Malviya Nagar claimed 21 lives and left several injured, prompting renewed scrutiny of fire safety measures across commercial establishments in the national capital.

Delhi hotel fire: In city for treatment of back injury, victim ends up with fractured spine

New Delhi.(Agency)

A day after a fire in a Malviya Nagar hotel claimed 21 lives, survivors and grieving families continued to grapple with its aftermath at Saket's Max Hospital on Thursday.

Among them was Vishal (32) from Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib, who is currently battling serious injuries after jumping from the burning building to save his life. Vishal had arrived in Delhi around eight days ago for treatment of a back injury and was undergoing physiotherapy at Max Hospital. To stay close to the hospital during his treatment, he had checked into the budget hotel where the fire broke out on Wednesday.

His brother Sagar waited outside the hospital anxiously on Thursday, recounting the terrifying moments: "My brother had been staying at the hotel for the last eight to 10 days while receiving treatment at Max Hospital. When the fire spread, he broke a window and jumped from an upper floor to save himself," Sagar said. The fall left Vishal with multiple injuries. According to family members, he suffered a spinal fracture and deep wounds on his hands that required stitches. He remains under treatment at Max Hospital. Meanwhile, his family rushed to Delhi from Ludhiana as soon as they learnt about the incident.

Doctors have estimated his medical expenses at over Rs 90,000 so far. Yet, for the family, the financial burden is secondary to his survival. "We are grateful that he is alive. The hospital bill can be paid. Money comes and goes. What matters most is that he survived," said Vijay Kumar, Vishal's brother-in-law.

He also expressed shock over how a routine medical trip for physiotherapy had turned into a fight for survival for Vishal. As the 32-year-old recovers in a hospital bed, the scale of the tragedy was evident all around him. On Thursday, families were seen waiting outside wards seeking updates.

Lured to Thailand for jobs, Gujarat sisters rescued from Laos after 20 days

New Delhi.(Agency)

Two women from Gujarat who were trapped abroad after being lured with promises of jobs and were allegedly on the verge of being trafficked have been safely rescued from Laos as part of a major international operation involving the Indian Embassy and the country's army.

The two sisters from Anand had travelled to Thailand in search of employment. According to their account, they were illegally taken to Laos under the pretext of being provided jobs in Thailand. Upon reaching Laos, the sisters allegedly fell victim to an international human trafficking network and lost contact with their family for 20 days.

As the family grew increasingly distressed and exhausted all options, they approached Anand MP Mitesh

Patel for help. Recognising the seriousness of the case, Patel immediately stepped in and launched "Operation Mahisagar 2.0".

The mission, dubbed "Operation Mahisagar 2.0", was successfully



carried out through the efforts of Patel and the timely intervention of India's Ministry of External Affairs.

Patel promptly contacted the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Embassy in Laos. Embassy officials, working with local security agencies

in Laos, traced the sisters' location.

After obtaining credible information, and following diplomatic efforts led by the MP and Indian authorities, the Laos Army reportedly raided the location where the women were being held captive.

The sisters were rescued from the alleged traffickers through a joint operation involving the Laos Army and the Indian Embassy. Speaking about the operation, Mitesh Patel said: "Our two daughters were in distress abroad and were on the verge of becoming victims of human trafficking. As soon as the family contacted me, we immediately launched Operation Mahisagar 2.0 with the help of the Indian Embassy and the local army (Laos Army). I am happy that both women are now completely safe and will soon return home."

Operation Sindoor fallout: Pakistan eyes Chinese missiles, Turkish drones

New Delhi.(Agency)

Pakistan is moving to bolster its air defence capabilities with fresh procurement of medium-and long-range missiles from China and unmanned aerial systems from Turkey, following the use of advanced missiles during Operation Sindoor.

Top intelligence sources told India Today that Pakistan Air Force is acquiring China's HQ-9 long-range surface-to-air missile system along with the HQ-16, HQ-17, and L-17 medium-range air defence missiles. The HQ-9, Beijing's counterpart to the Russian S-400, has an engagement range of up to 250 km and is designed to counter aircraft, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles. On the unmanned front, Pakistan is reportedly purchasing Karayel UAVs



and loitering munitions from Turkey. The Karayel, a medium-altitude long-endurance drone developed by Turkish firm Vestel, is capable of reconnaissance and precision strikes, while Turkish loitering munitions have seen extensive use in recent conflicts for targeting radar sites and air defence systems.

The reported acquisitions come amid efforts by Pakistan to address gaps in

its air defence network exposed during the May 2025 conflict. India's use of BrahMos, Akash, and other stand-off weapons during Operation Sindoor highlighted the need for layered air defence and counter-drone capabilities.

Chinese systems are likely to be deployed along Pakistan's eastern border to counter Indian air operations, while the Turkish drones and loitering munitions could be used for both surveillance and offensive roles along the Line of Control. India has been closely monitoring the developments, with the IAF and MoD focusing on enhancing electronic warfare capabilities and expanding the deployment of indigenous systems like the S-400 'Sudarshan', Akash, and DRDO-developed counter-drone solutions.

Delhi HC declines urgent hearing on plea against Cockroach Janta Party's Jantar Mantar protest

Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke urged supporters and students to participate in the protest in Delhi and also called on followers to gather at the airport on June 6.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Friday declined to urgently hear a plea flagging law and order concerns over a protest called by digital outfit Cockroach Janta Party at Jantar Mantar on June 6, seeking the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged examination-related lapses.

The matter was mentioned for urgent listing by counsel for Save India Foundation before a vacation bench of Justices Saurabh Banerjee and Amit Sharma. The bench, however, refused to take up the case.

Earlier this month, Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke urged supporters and



students to participate in the protest in Delhi and also called on followers to gather at the airport on June 6.

The Cockroach Janta Party, described as a youth-driven social media movement, has gained traction since its formation and has attracted subscriptions from several public figures. In its plea, the petitioner sought deployment of "immediate preventive, regulatory, and crowd-control measures" at the IGI Airport, metro stations, and highway entry points ahead of the planned mobilisation.

The petition also sought directions to authorities to "restrict, regulate, or relocate the scheduled gathering" to ensure public order and prevent disruption to essential services, including hospitals, railway stations, the Delhi High Court, and the Supreme Court.

The PIL alleged that Cockroach Janta Party has turned the youth into an "unregulated contingent" by "utilising overseas-tethered servers to execute a transnational institutional destabilization agenda".

'Halt all illegal constructions': Delhi L-G tells MCD to act tough

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi L-G Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Thursday directed officials of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to come up with a plan to "target, halt and dismantle" unauthorised constructions in the city.

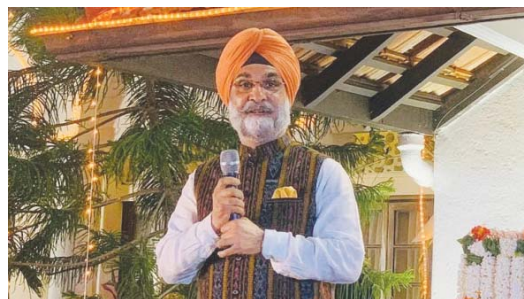
Chairing a high-level review meeting, Sandhu emphasised the need for a comprehensive action plan for stronger urban governance, improved civic infrastructure and enhanced structural safety across the national capital. He called for a regulatory framework that ensures strict enforcement of building bylaws, penalising illegal constructions or expansions and fixes absolute institutional accountability across all municipal zones. The L-G asked the MCD officials to implement a time-

bound strategy to tackle unauthorised constructions decisively. He also reviewed key civic priorities, including the desilting of storm-water drains ahead of the monsoon, road and pavement repairs for dust mitigation and intensified garbage clearance to strengthen sanitation standards.

The action plan to curb and regulate unauthorised constructions will include a high-intensity strategy by the civic body mandating the complete detection and sealing or demolition of all ongoing and existing unauthorised constructions within a strict timeframe.

The MCD will also come up with a stringent plan to identify, process, and

curb illegal residential and commercial vertical expansions that violate the approved building blueprints or



standard safety codes.

Local engineers, technical staff and municipal oversight officers will be directly held accountable for any undetected illegal modifications or

ongoing unauthorised construction within their respective jurisdictions.

Other issues discussed in the meeting included desilting and monsoon preparedness. In view of the forthcoming rainy season, the municipal body presented its comprehensive monsoon action plan, specifically prioritising the desilting and maintenance of storm-water drains ahead of the rain season to prevent local silt accumulation and terminal waterlogging. A status update on intensified garbage clearance and legacy waste remediation across the national capital's landfill sites was also presented in the meeting. Further, the status of focussed dust mitigation measures was reviewed.

Who is Neelkanth Mishra? To represent India at World Bank's Board

New Delhi. (Agency)

In a significant development, seasoned economist Neelkanth Mishra has been appointed as India's Executive Director at the World Bank. The appointment, approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), will be for a tenure of three years at the World Bank headquarters in Washington, DC. Mishra will take charge from Parameswaran Iyer, whose tenure has been extended until Mishra assumes office. He is a part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM). He will represent India at the World Bank's Board, which oversees lending operations, development projects, financial policies and governance decisions. The position is considered one of India's most important economic diplomacy roles, involving discussions on global development financing, infrastructure investment, poverty reduction and economic growth initiatives. Who is Neelkanth Mishra? Currently serving as Chief Economist at Axis Bank and also Head of Global Research and a Whole-Time Director at Axis Capital, he is widely regarded as one of India's most respected economists and market strategists.

Before joining Axis Group in 2023, he spent nearly two decades at Credit Suisse, where he served as Managing Director, India Strategist and Co-Head of Equity Strategy for the Asia-Pacific region.

Mishra also serves as Part-time Chairperson of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and Part-time member of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Mishra has additionally advised several government committees and institutions, including the 15th and 16th Finance Commissions. An alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, he secured an All-India Rank of 4 in the IIT entrance examination. In recognition of his achievements, IIT Kanpur conferred upon him the Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2020.

The hidden inflation nobody is talking about: Transport inflation

MUMBAI. (Agency)

Food inflation has always been at the centre of the inflation debate in India. When tomato prices go up, there are headlines. When onion prices rise, policymakers act. But there is another kind of inflation creeping into the economy at present, which is transport inflation.

In May 2026, India had its 4th fuel price hike in a month. Petrol crossed Rs 102.12 per litre in Delhi, diesel touched Rs 95.20. Petrol prices in Hyderabad reached Rs 115.62 per litre. Transport inflation is not usually as dramatic as food inflation.

THE INVISIBLE INFLATION

About 2.45% of the CPI basket is accounted for by railways, buses, taxis, auto rickshaws, school buses and aviation (transport services). A 5-10% increase in fares may have a further second round effect on headline inflation of 0.1-0.2 percentage points. It may sound trivial. But when diesel prices rise, the cost of transportation increases across the supply chain and those higher costs are ultimately passed on by businesses to consumers. What we get is 'invisible inflation' – an inflationary force that hits almost everything but is rarely talked about in its own right. This 'network inflation' as economists call it, reveals the actual peril of rising transport costs: a 3-rupee increase in diesel prices triggers a domino effect that goes much beyond the petrol pump, leading to a price rise in everything from wholesale vegetables in Azadpur Mandi and life-saving medicines in small towns to school lunches and everyday auto-rickshaw rides. In other words, even a small increase in the price of diesel can have ripple effects across agriculture, manufacturing, retail and services. The May 2026 price revision cycle was also unusual in its speed – Delhi petrol surged from around Rs 94-95 per litre to over Rs 100 in less than two weeks. India has not seen such a steep phase of fuel price revisions since 2022. But macro indicators are deceptively calm.

Cash crunch in ATMs: CATMI writes to Indian Banks Association about non replenishment

Kolkata. (Agency)

ATM services in many states across the country could be affected due to a cash shortage. CATMI, which is an organisation affiliated with the ATM industry, has written to IBA (Indian Banks' Association) alleging that ATMs in many states are not receiving sufficient cash for replenishment. This could particularly impact people in rural and semi-urban areas, where a large number of people rely on cash transactions. Recent reports state that according to CATMI, approximately Rs 94,000 crore was needed to replenish ATMs in March and April and against that figures only Rs 61,000 crore (less than 65%) was available in March and Rs 54,000 crore (57.44%) was available in April. The Reserve Bank of India was also informed of this situation.

ATM operators concerned about rising costs

What is leading to this situation? ATM operators say the current interchange fee isn't sufficient to cover their costs. The interchange fee is the amount one bank pays for using another bank's ATM. Currently, it's at Rs 19. Rising fuel prices, salary increases, and the ever-increasing cost of transporting cash have made operating ATMs more expensive.

Decline in ATM transactions

According to the RBI's May bulletin, ATM transactions have declined by as much as 10.4% over the past year. In April, the number of ATM transactions fell to 44.65 crore from 49.84 crore a year earlier. Value-wise too there was a decline. The total value of transactions also declined from about Rs 2.64 lakh crore to Rs 2.5 lakh crore. The growing adoption of digital transactions is driving people to avoid cash withdrawals. Significantly, the circulation of banknotes is steadily increasing in the country.

Rajesh Exports shares hit 5% lower circuit for second straight day after Sebi order

Rajesh Exports shares hit the 5% lower circuit for a second straight session after Sebi's interim order. The sell-off reflects investor caution as the regulator examines alleged revenue inflation and orders a fresh forensic audit.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Shares of Rajesh Exports remained under heavy selling pressure on Friday, hitting the 5% lower circuit for the second consecutive session as investors continued to react to Sebi's interim order against the company and its promoter-chairman Rajesh Mehta. The stock fell 5% to hit its lower circuit limit, extending losses from Thursday when it had also ended locked at the lower circuit. The

sharp decline comes after market regulator Sebi alleged large-scale financial misrepresentation and questioned revenues worth Rs 15.15 lakh crore attributable to subsidiaries between FY21 and FY25. The latest fall has further eroded investor wealth and pushed the company's market capitalisation to around Rs 1,334 crore. The sell-off marks a dramatic turn for a company that once reported annual revenues running into several lakh crore rupees and owns Valcambi in Switzerland, widely regarded as the world's largest gold refinery.

WHAT TRIGGERED THE FALL?

Investor sentiment was hit after Sebi issued a 109-page interim order earlier this week, restraining Rajesh Mehta from accessing the securities market and ordering a fresh forensic audit. The regulator's action followed a forensic review that stemmed from a shareholder complaint regarding the company's financial disclosures and large

outstanding receivables.

In its order, Sebi alleged that revenues worth Rs 15.15 lakh crore attributable to subsidiaries between FY21 and FY25 may have been inflated. The regulator



also noted that between 97% and 99% of Rajesh Exports' consolidated income during the period came from subsidiaries and branches. Sebi said detailed financial information and transaction-level records relating to certain overseas entities were not made available despite repeated requests during the audit process.

The findings are preliminary and the investigation is continuing.

A COMPANY OF EXTRAORDINARY SCALE

The market reaction has drawn fresh attention to Rajesh Exports, one of India's most unusual listed companies. Founded by Rajesh Mehta and headquartered in Bengaluru, the company operates across refining, jewellery manufacturing, exports and retail. Its biggest asset is Valcambi, the Switzerland-based precious metals refinery that Rajesh Exports acquired in a \$400 million deal in 2015. The company also operates jewellery stores under the SHUBH Jewellers brand and has often said it has a presence across the entire gold value chain. What made Rajesh Exports stand out was the scale of its reported revenues. According to figures cited in Sebi's order, the company reported consolidated revenue of nearly Rs 7.78 lakh crore in FY26, up from about Rs 4.23 lakh crore in FY25.

RBI rolls out multiple measures to attract more dollars amid rupee weakness

New Delhi. (Agency)

With the rupee under pressure from rising crude oil prices and heavy foreign investor outflows, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a series of steps aimed at bringing more dollars into the country and improving foreign currency liquidity.

The measures come at a time when the Indian currency has fallen to record lows against the US dollar. Higher oil prices following the conflict in West Asia have increased India's import bill, while foreign investors have pulled billions of dollars out of Indian equities this year. While keeping the repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, the RBI also unveiled a package of liquidity and investment-related measures designed to encourage foreign inflows and support the domestic currency. Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the central bank had decided to introduce a number of temporary and structural measures to improve the availability of foreign exchange and make Indian debt markets more accessible to overseas

MORE GOVERNMENT BONDS OPENED TO FOREIGN INVESTORS



investors. One of the biggest announcements relates to government bonds.

The RBI said all new issuances of 15-year, 30-year and 40-year government securities will now be included under the Fully Accessible Route (FAR).

The FAR framework allows foreign investors to invest in eligible government securities without being subject to investment limits. This move

is expected to make Indian government bonds more attractive to global investors, especially because securities under the FAR category are already included in three major global bond indexes. The RBI also announced that investment limits on other government securities will be removed, further opening up the sovereign bond market to foreign capital.

The measures are expected to help attract long-term overseas funds into India's debt market. NRI AND OCI INVESTMENT LIMITS RELAXED

In another step aimed at boosting inflows, the RBI has expanded investment opportunities for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs). The central bank said investment limits for NRIs and OCIs will be increased and the facility will now be extended to all individual persons residing outside India. The move could encourage greater participation from the Indian diaspora and overseas investors in domestic financial markets.

Hyundai to make Tamil Nadu its EV manufacturing hub, launch two new models this year

MUMBAI. (Agency)

Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) has strengthened its commitment to Tamil Nadu's electric mobility ambitions, positioning the state as its flagship electric vehicle manufacturing hub in India while announcing a skill development partnership aimed at creating a future-ready workforce for next-generation automotive technologies. The South Korean automaker, one of Tamil Nadu's largest industrial investors and exporters, said it will launch two new models from its Chennai plant this year, including its first mass-market dedicated electric vehicle, underlining the state's growing importance in India's transition to cleaner mobility. This comes after Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay met Tarun Garg, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of HMIL, Chief Manufacturing Officer

Gopalakrishnan C S and other Hyundai officials at the Secretariat on Wednesday. As part of an exclusive collaboration with the Tamil Nadu government, Hyundai will train students and job seekers in emerging technologies such as electric mobility, hydrogen-powered transportation, robotics, automation, AI-enabled manufacturing and smart factory systems. The programme is expected to commence operations in December 2027. Under the partnership, the state government will facilitate collaborations with industrial training institutes, polytechnics, engineering colleges and skill development centres across Tamil Nadu. The programme will also focus on workplace communication and language training to improve employability in domestic and overseas markets. Highlighting Hyundai's export performance, Tarun

Garg, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of HMIL, said more than 3.9 million vehicles manufactured in Tamil Nadu have been exported to over 150 countries. "This is a testament to Hyundai's 'Born in Tamil Nadu, Made for the World' vision," he said, adding that the state's manufacturing ecosystem is playing an increasingly important role in positioning India as a global automotive hub. Beyond vehicle manufacturing, Hyundai has been steadily expanding the electric mobility ecosystem in the state. The company has established Tamil Nadu's first battery sub-assembly plant for EV powertrains and is localising critical components, including power electronics, to reduce import dependence and strengthen the domestic EV supply chain. The company is also deepening localisation across both electric vehicle and

RBI keeps repo rate unchanged at 5.25%: What it means for your home loan and EMI

For millions of home loan borrowers, the RBI's repo rate decision is closely watched because it can influence borrowing costs. With the central bank keeping the repo rate steady at 5.25%, should you expect any change in your monthly EMI?

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, offering relief to existing home loan borrowers who were worried about a possible rise in their monthly repayments.

Announcing the decision, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously voted to keep the policy repo rate unchanged and continue with its 'neutral' stance. The decision comes at a time when global uncertainties, including the conflict in the Middle East and concerns over the impact of El Nino on India's monsoon, continue to pose risks to economic growth and

DECISION WHAT DOES THE RBI'S DECISION MEAN FOR HOME LOAN BORROWERS?

The repo rate is the interest rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks.

When the repo rate changes, banks often adjust their lending and deposit rates accordingly. Since the repo rate has remained unchanged, home loan borrowers are unlikely to see any immediate change in their Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs).

For those with floating-rate home loans, monthly repayments are expected to stay stable unless banks make independent changes to lending rates. The decision also provides some certainty to people planning to buy a house, as borrowing costs are not expected to rise in the near term. RATE CUT HOPES REMAIN ALIVE

While the RBI has chosen to pause for now, many in the real estate sector believe the possibility of future rate cuts remains

open if inflation stays under control.

Mohit Malhotra, Founder and CEO of NeoLiv, said the central bank's decision reflects a balanced approach towards maintaining economic stability while keeping inflation in check.

would make financing more affordable for the mid-segment projects, encouraging more people to own their dream home and fuelling growth."

STABILITY BRINGS CONFIDENCE TO HOMEBUYERS

Industry experts say that even without a rate cut, a stable interest rate environment helps both developers and buyers plan better. Aman Sarin, Director and CEO of Anant Raj Limited, said the decision comes at a crucial time when geopolitical tensions are creating uncertainty across markets. "This is a welcome move by the RBI, especially given the ongoing crisis in West Asia, which continues to put pressure on input costs across sectors. In such an environment, stability in interest rates is important for maintaining overall confidence in the market. A steady rate scenario helps in better financial planning and provides clarity for both businesses and homebuyers."



"The RBI's decision to maintain the repo rate is a strategic approach to ensuring economic stability and controlling inflation. However, the growing chances of a rate cut are promising for the development sector. Lower interest rates

Short news

Liquor suppliers cry foul over discount claims while dues pile up

Hyderabad.(Agency)

Liquor manufacturers supplying the state-run Telangana Beverages Corporation Limited (TGBCL) are raising alarm over what they call a troubling practice: The corporation is claiming cash discounts on fresh payments even as older bills remain unpaid for months.

Under the current framework, suppliers extend discounts based on how quickly TGBCL clears invoices — 2.75% if paid within 15 days, 1.75% between 15-30 days, and 0.75% within 45 days. The system is meant to reward prompt payments and ease supplier cash flows.

Industry representatives point out that discounts are calculated on invoices generated after TGBCL sells liquor supplied by manufacturers. This arrangement is designed to incentivise timely payments and improve cash flows for suppliers.

But suppliers say payments for a large chunk of supplies have been pending for nearly five months. Despite this, the corporation recently released payments for sales made in late May and claimed the maximum 2.75% discount, citing settlement within the 15-day window.

Sources stress that the issue is not the deduction itself — which is part of agreed terms — but the contradiction of claiming discounts on recent transactions while older dues remain stuck.

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation orders all potholes, open trenches filled within a week

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) standing committee on Thursday directed officials to expedite pre-monsoon road safety measures across the city. Standing committee chairman Kamlesh Patel instructed the civic administration to backfill all open trenches and potholes dug for various infrastructure projects within a week. He also issued a strict directive banning any fresh excavation work across the city.

"The monsoon is expected to arrive in Ahmedabad by June 15," Patel said. "Consequently, the municipal commissioner has directed that all existing pits be filled in the coming days. No new excavation permits will be approved from today onwards."

He added, "To ensure smooth traffic flow during the rains, a joint enforcement team has been constituted to clear road bottlenecks. Additionally, the AMC has decided to hire specialised towing cranes and manpower for the estate department through an agency affiliated with the police department. Operating across all zones for a six-month period, these cranes will be hired at a rate of Rs 4,600 per eight-hour shift, at an estimated total expenditure of Rs 1.25 crore."

Meanwhile, a proposal to conduct written exams for vacant Class 1 and Class 2 positions within the AMC was deferred. The proposal aimed to authorise the AMC commissioner to finalise premier educational institutions to conduct the tests and oversee the expenses. The standing committee has postponed its decision on the matter.

Bengaluru Metro Yellow Line usage can improve quality of life: IISc

Kolkata.(Agency)

A study by Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has found that the Namma Metro Yellow Line connecting RV Road and Bommasandra can significantly improve commuters' health and quality of life by encouraging greater physical activity, reducing exposure to air pollution and easing commute stress. The report found strong willingness among commuters to shift to the metro, while highlighting the need for affordable fares, better last-mile connectivity and safer pedestrian infrastructure.

The study by IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab with support from Biocon Foundation, ELCIA and the Bengaluru Science and Technology Cluster (BeST), surveyed 600 commuters and residents along the corridor before and 150 commuters of the 600 respondents after the inauguration of Yellow Line for the public. Researchers examined changes in physical activity, environmental exposure, mental wellbeing, social connectivity and overall quality of life.

According to the findings, 83% of respondents expressed willingness to shift to the Yellow Line. The study highlighted a concerning lack of physical activity among residents, with 58% reporting no regular exercise. Metro use is expected to add 10-15 minutes of walking per commute, contributing up to 75 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.

Banaskantha farmer promised jobs in Luxembourg and Finland, duped of Rs 3 lakh

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

A farmer from Banaskantha was allegedly duped of Rs 3 lakh by three visa consultants who promised to secure work permits for him from Luxembourg and Finland.

Navrangpura police on Wednesday registered a cheating complaint against three office-bearers of an Ahmedabad-based visa consultancy firm, following his complaint.

The farmer, a resident of Deesa taluka, told police that he was introduced to the representatives of DAA Business Consultant Services Pvt Ltd by a friend, who had approached the firm for overseas employment opportunities.

"In April 2024, I visited the company's office near Stadium Circle on CG Road, where the representatives assured me that they could obtain a Luxembourg work visa within six months for Rs 6.5 lakh. They sought an advance amount," the farmer told police.

The complainant transferred Rs 50,000 to the



company's account, signed an agreement appointing the firm as his visa consultant, and completed all necessary formalities. Several months later, the complainant was allegedly shown a job offer letter from Luxembourg and asked to pay an additional Rs 50,000 for medical examination and further visa processing. He complied and also underwent a medical check-up at a private hospital.

However, when the promised visa did not materialise, the consultancy allegedly

advised him to switch his application from Luxembourg to Finland, assuring him that the process would be completed within 60 days at no additional cost. He was later provided with another overseas job offer letter.

The complainant alleged that during meetings at the firm's office in Thalaj, company representatives showed him temporary resident cards of other clients and assured him that his Finnish work permit was in process. Trusting these assurances, he transferred an additional Rs 3 lakh in multiple instalments in Aug 2025.

When no visa was forthcoming, he demanded a refund. According to the complaint, the accused later entered into a settlement agreement promising to return the money within a month. While Rs 1 lakh was eventually refunded in two instalments, the remaining Rs 3 lakh was not returned. Navrangpura police have registered a case against the three office-bearers on charges of cheating and criminal.

Kerala HC order to follow Calcutta HC's child custody guidelines draws applause

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

In a landmark verdict, the Kerala High Court has ordered all family courts in the state to follow for now the Child Access & Custody Guidelines issued by the Calcutta High Court in 2025 while considering custody cases of children whose parents are involved in matrimonial disputes.

The June 1 judgment, coming at a time when Kerala mourns the death of the toddler from Nedumangad who suffered prolonged, brutal physical abuse at the hands of his mother's partner, directed that the Calcutta HC guidelines be followed until a committee constituted to consider a similar plan places its recommendations.

"It is unfortunate to see the child being used as a pawn in the hands of the parents," the HC said while hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by a woman saying her child was illegally removed from her custody by the father, her husband. The HC, which



considered the Calcutta court's guidelines as foundation, ruled in the mother's favour and directed family courts to adhere to the guidelines. The Child Welfare Council applauded the HC directive. "The judgment is relevant in the backdrop of the shocking Nedumangad case. Society should evolve into a space that enquires why a child is crying, irrespective of whether the parents are separated or not. People should come to the realisation that a child is society's collective responsibility," Child Welfare

Council general secretary G L Arun Gopi told.

He said parents not willing to take care of their children properly should opt for government facilities like 'Ammathottil', not wait for a tragedy to react. Adv Navaneeth N Nath, who appeared for the child's mother, said the comprehensive guidelines effectively address matters concerning children's custody. "Since Kerala does not have such a guideline currently, the judgment will be helpful in other cases too," he said.

What does it say

The Child Access & Custody Guidelines 2025 cover various aspects, including norms for the non-custodian guardian's visitation times based on the child's age. The Calcutta HC drafted them to quickly dispose of cases while ensuring the child's rights — to be showered with the love and affection of both parents — are not lost or delayed.

3 sacked Mumbai railway policemen arrested after pre-arrest bail cancelled by Supreme Court

Mumbai.(Agency)

Railway crime branch on Wednesday arrested three sacked Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel for allegedly threatening, assaulting, and extorting money from a Rajasthan-based jeweller in the presence of his minor daughter at Mumbai Central Terminus in August 2025.

The arrests come after Supreme Court cancelled their anticipatory bail granted by Bombay high court last September. "When law enforcers turn extortionists, the citizen looks askance and is left in a dilemma. To confront is to invite instant retaliation and the option is only to succumb meekly to the uniformed authority, even when there is patent abuse," SC judges Sanjay Kumar and K Vinod Chandran had observed in their May 27 order.

Assistant sub-inspector Lalit Jagtap, and constables Rahul Bhosle and Anil Rathod were dismissed from service earlier this year following a departmental inquiry. The incident had



occurred on August 10, 2025, when the jeweller and his eight-year-old daughter, who were visiting Mumbai for Raksha Bandhan, reached Mumbai Central Terminus to board Duronto Express to return home to Rajasthan. The jeweller's brother-in-law accompanied them.

Around 10.30pm, the group reached platform number 5, when a uniformed man stopped them for baggage check. The GRP cop, who wasn't wearing a name tag, found a 14gm gold biscuit wrapped in paper and Rs 31,000 cash

in the luggage. The jeweller explained that he had attended a jewellery exhibition in Mumbai, besides visiting his sister. But the cop was not satisfied and summoned another uniformed colleague, who was also not wearing his name tag. They took the jeweller, his daughter, and brother-in-law outside the terminus through an alley to a room where their "senior" was seated. They allegedly hurled abuses and slapped the jeweller, and threatened to lock him up overnight. The cops allegedly threatened to produce the gold biscuit before a magistrate and asked the jeweller to arrange for a copy of his Aadhaar card over phone. They also allegedly forced him to sign a few blank sheets of paper.

Five minutes before the train was to depart, at 10.55pm, the GRP cops returned his gold, but allegedly kept the cash. When he pleaded, they returned Rs 1,900. The jeweller registered a police complaint in Rajasthan on Aug 17, 2025.

Mumbai watermelon deaths: New forensic test reports find no trace of zinc phosphide in utensils, pulao, and herbal rat repellent

Mumbai.(Agency)

The mystery surrounding the deaths of four members of the Dokadia family further deepened, with new forensic test reports showing no trace of the poisonous zinc phosphide on the knife, plates, rice, chicken pulao, and a herbal rat repellent collected from their Pydhonie home.

The first forensic report had found zinc phosphide in the watermelon as well as in their viscera, pointing to death due to poisoning. Police are trying to trace how the poison, which is commonly used against rats, got into the watermelon. They had hoped the second round of forensic tests could have helped them solve the mystery.

On April 26 morning, Abdullah Dokadia (40), wife Nasreen (35) and two daughters Aayesha (16) and Zainab (13) died in hospital hours after they had chicken pulao for dinner with five other relatives at their home, and watermelon after midnight.

"Police had sent a kitchen knife, three big cooking spoons, four plates, raw rice, chicken pulao, and a bottle of rat repellent spray found from the Pydhonie residence for testing," said a police source. This week, police received the test report which stated zinc phosphide was negative for all these items. Police are now re-probing all four angles: murder, murder and suicide, mass suicide, and accidental death. "Financial angle is also under probe," the officer added. Police are still awaiting Zainab's post-mortem report and the cyber analysis reports of the family members' phones.

Majhi, Pradhan, Naveen & litterateurs offer condolences on JP Das' demise

BHUBANESWAR.(Agency)

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed grief over the demise of eminent poet, writer and playwright Jagannath Prasad Das. The former IAS officer breathed his last at his residence here on Thursday. One of the most distinguished figures in modern Odia literature, Das was celebrated for his remarkable contribution to poetry, fiction, drama, criticism and art history. Born in Puri district in 1936, he emerged as a powerful literary voice during the 1970s and went on to shape contemporary Odia literature through his innovative and deeply humanistic writings.

Das authored several acclaimed collections of poetry, short stories and plays. His



poetry collection 'Ahnik' received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1991, but he did not accept the honour. The Akademi went on to publish it in Hindi, Bengali, Assamese and English. An MA in Political Science and PhD in Art History, Das penned 'Desha, Kala, Patra,' a historical novel that gave a rare view into Odisha's

transition from a traditional society during the colonial rule. Considered his seminal work, it went on to be published in all Indian languages. Apart from literature, Das made significant contributions to the study of Odisha's traditional art and culture through works like 'Puri Paintings' and 'Chitra-Pothi'. He translated several literary works into English and edited important anthologies. His career as an IAS officer was remarkable too. As collector of Kalahandi, he earned praise for his work in the drought-hit district during 1963-1966. After leaving the IAS in 1984, he devoted himself entirely to writing and research. Describing him as a writer of high calibre and also an efficient IAS officer, Majhi said in a post on X that Das

served in several important positions in both the Odisha government and the Centre, dedicating himself to the service of the state and nation. "Das has left a distinct imprint of creativity across every genre of literature, poetry, drama, short story, novel, essay and translation. His passing is an irreparable loss to the literary world," the CM said.

Union Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan said Das' contributions to enriching the world of Odia literature and art were unparalleled. "His works like 'Desha, Kala, Patra' will forever remain memorable in the Odia literary world," he said. Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik also hailed the contribution of Das in enriching Odia literature and the world of theatre.

NEWS BOX

Sri Lanka's fast-bowling dropout Rumesh Pathirage joins 90m javelin club



Rome. (Agency)

Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage stunned the javelin world on Thursday, hurling 92.62m at the Rome Diamond League to announce a new order in the sport. The 23-year-old Sri Lankan became only the fourth Asian to cross the magical 90m mark in men's javelin, joining Chinese Taipei's Cheng Chao-Tsun (91.36m), Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem (92.97m) and India's Neeraj Chopra (90.23m) in rarefied company.

His throw is the 21st best in the history of the event — a list topped by Jan Zelezny, once Neeraj's coach, who hurled 98.48m in 1996. **WHERE RUMESH'S 92.62M THROW STANDS**

- A new Sri Lankan national record
 - World-leading throw of 2026 in men's javelin
 - Rome Diamond League meet record
 - Second-best throw by an Asian in history
 - 21st-best throw in the history of men's javelin
- Rumesh had arrived in Rome with momentum. He had set a world-leading mark of 89.37m in Diyagama in March, and came agonisingly close to the 90m barrier at the Champions Track and Field event at the same venue. In Rome, against a strong ten-man field missing both Arshad and Neeraj, he unleashed the meet record in his second attempt. Four fouls followed, but none of the other nine throwers could reach 85m. Former world champion Anderson Peters finished second with 83.89m. India's Sachin Yadav, fourth at last year's World Championships in Tokyo, had a difficult Diamond League debut, managing 79.18m — well below his personal best of 86.27m.

Vinesh Phogat-WFI battle continues, wrestlers conduct at national trials under lens



The Wrestling Federation of India has indirectly hinted that Vinesh Phogat's conduct at the national trials will come under the scanner after a chaotic tournament.

New Delhi. (Agency)

The battle between Vinesh Phogat and the Wrestling Federation of India is far from over as the governing body is set to review the conduct of the wrestlers during the national trials recently. Vinesh's time in the competition was marred by controversy, especially during her quarterfinal match. The controversy erupted when Vinesh, trailing 0-5 against Nishu, was denied the opportunity to complete a pinfall after the referee stopped the action and awarded her 4 points instead. The decision sparked protests from her camp, with her husband, Somvir Rahee, entering the field of play and throwing a water bottle onto the mat. Vinesh challenged the call and won. Moments later, another disputed decision saw Vinesh awarded 2 points instead of the 4 her camp expected for an arm throw. This time, her challenge was unsuccessful.

The situation escalated when Vinesh and her coaches demanded to see the video footage used in the review, but were not shown the replay. With the review screen reportedly malfunctioning, tensions escalated further, leading to a heated verbal exchange between WFI president Sanjay Singh, his entourage, and Vinesh's support staff, which temporarily halted the trials.

Now, WFI issued a statement revealing that they received a response to the show-cause notice they sent to Vinesh, saying it will be judged according to their rules and procedures. "WFI has received the Respondent's (Vinesh's) reply to the Show Cause Notice, which shall be adjudicated in accordance with WFI's rules and procedures," WFI president Sanjay Kumar Singh said in the statement. The WFI chief also hinted that they will be looking at the conduct of athletes at the national trials, without directly revealing Vinesh's name.

A fairytale in Paris
Maja Chwalinska

turns struggle into stardom at French Open

French Open 2026:

Poland's Maja Chwalinska arrived at Roland Garros as a little-known qualifier ranked outside the top 100, but has produced a fairytale run to reach her first Grand Slam final, defeating multiple top-50 players along the way.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Before the French Open began, if you had said that Maja Chwalinska would be standing in a Grand Slam final, it would have sounded like the opening line of a fairytale rather than a forecast. Most would have smiled politely and asked the same question: who is she? A promising name, perhaps, but not one written into the script of a major final.

She arrived in Paris with only two tour-level wins on clay, carrying more uncertainty than expectation. On any ordinary day, that profile belongs to a player surviving qualifying rounds, not rewriting the story of a Grand Slam. But tennis, like fairytales, rarely follows logic.

Nearly two weeks later, Chwalinska stands at the edge of history. She is one win away from

becoming only the second qualifier in the Open Era, after Emma Raducanu, to lift a Grand Slam trophy. It feels like something stitched together by belief rather than probability.

Just months ago, she was a quiet figure in the background of Polish tennis, even briefly seen holding ice for four-time Roland Garros champion Iga Swiatek during the United Cup, playing a supporting character in someone else's story.

But Paris has changed everything. Like a character stepping out of the shadows, Chwalinska has turned invisibility into immortality, writing a fairytale where she was never meant to be the heroine, but now cannot be anything else.



THE CHANGE IN FORTUNES

Chwalinska's extraordinary run at Roland Garros has turned her life upside down in the most dramatic way. The Polish qualifier arrived in Paris ranked around World No.114, carrying career prize money of roughly \$61,000 accumulated slowly across years on the ITF and Challenger circuits. Her journey to this point had been anything but smooth, repeatedly disrupted by injuries and periods away from the sport

as she battled to rebuild both form and confidence. In Paris, her fortunes have turned. Nine consecutive victories have carried her into her first Grand Slam final, transforming her from a qualifier into one of the tournament's defining stories. In less than two weeks, she is set to earn more than 1.4 million dollars from a single event, more than doubling her career earnings and rewriting the trajectory of her life.

Her rise has also exposed the fragile financial reality beneath professional tennis outside the top ranks. With prize money only distributed after the tournament ends, Chwalinska faced uncertainty over basic costs during her run, including accommodation. Thereafter, Polish company OSHEE stepped in to support her hotel expenses, allowing her to focus entirely on her matches.

Skyfall: Did Suryakumar Yadav deserve to be sacked without a final act?

New Delhi. (Agency)

It is not from long ago, this memory. Suryakumar Yadav, arms raised, trophy aloft, the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad a roaring sea behind him. Three months ago, he was the man who had just led India to an unprecedented back-to-back T20 World Cup title — only the third captain in history, after MS Dhoni and Rohit Sharma, to get his hands on that trophy. On Thursday, June 4, India had moved on. The World Cup-winning captain, sacked.

King one day. Footnote the next.

Consider the arc. Suryakumar did not even make his international debut until he was 30 — an age at which most careers are past their peak. He spent years on Mumbai's domestic circuit, watching others get picked ahead of him, waiting for a door that seemed

permanently shut. When it finally opened, he walked through it and became arguably



the most entertaining T20 batter in the game.

world — No. 1 ranked, two ICC T201 Cricketer of the Year awards, a strike rate that made bowlers look ordinary. And then, in 2024, the captaincy, not to Hardik Pandya, who had been widely tipped as Rohit's natural successor, but to Suryakumar. Gambhir and the selectors backed the late bloomer. At 33, he became captain. At 35, it is apparently all over.

Sources confirmed Shreyas Iyer will be named his successor when the squads for the Ireland and England T201 series are announced on Saturday. More starkly, Suryakumar is unlikely to be considered for selection at all. A World Cup-winning captain, gone before he could play another

Alexander Zverev eyes final berth; Matteo Arnaldi, Flavio Cobolli carry Italy's hopes



New Delhi. (Agency)

The men's singles draw at Roland-Garros has taken an unexpected shape, but it has also produced one of the most compelling semifinal line-ups in recent memory. With several pre-tournament favourites out of contention, Alexander Zverev finds himself in familiar territory on the Paris clay, while Matteo Arnaldi and Flavio Cobolli have sparked a remarkable Italian surge that guarantees the country a place in the final.

Zverev, still chasing the first Grand Slam title of his career, has once again demonstrated why he remains one of the most consistent performers at Roland-Garros. The German advanced to his fifth French Open semifinal in his last six appearances after defeating Spanish teenager Rafael Nadal in straight sets, strengthening his credentials as the most experienced player left in the draw.

Standing between Zverev and another Paris final is Czech teenager Jakub Mensik, one of the brightest young talents on the ATP Tour. While Mensik has enjoyed a breakthrough fortnight, Zverev's experience in the latter stages of majors could prove decisive as he seeks to go one step further than his runner-up finish two years ago.

Group D Preview: Can hosts USA hold off Turkiye's golden generation?

The United States head into a volatile Group D as co-hosts, with Turkiye, Paraguay and Australia all in contention. A wide-open race, led by a marquee USA-Turkiye clash, could leave qualification undecided until the final matchday.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Group D may not contain a traditional heavyweight, but it could end up being one of the most unpredictable groups at the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The United States arrive as co-hosts and top seeds, buoyed by home support and the optimism that usually follows a Mauricio Pochettino team. Yet their path to the knockout rounds is far from straightforward. Turkiye bring one of the most exciting young squads in the tournament, Paraguay return to the World Cup after a 16-year absence armed with their trademark defensive resilience, while

Australia arrive with the belief that they can once again punch above their weight on football's biggest stage.

That is what makes Group D so intriguing. Every team can make a realistic argument for reaching the knockouts and none would be particularly shocked to find themselves in the Round of 32. The action begins on June 12 when the USA face Paraguay at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, a fixture that could immediately shape the complexion of the entire group. By the time the final round arrives, the battle for qualification could still involve all four nations.



Football fever grips Kerala

fans carry giant Brazil banner ahead of FIFA World Cup

Kerala has welcomed the World Cup with giant banners, flares and rival colours on its streets. In Malappuram, the celebrations have turned anticipation into memory, as fans savour what they call a last dance.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Football fever has officially taken over Kerala as excitement builds for the upcoming FIFA World Cup set to begin on June 12 in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Even though India is not part of the tournament, the global spectacle has sparked massive celebrations among fans in the state, which is widely known for its deep-rooted football culture and passionate supporter base.

In a striking display of support, fans were seen carrying a giant Brazil banner featuring the entire Brazilian squad, parading it across the streets amid yellow flares, drums, and loud celebrations. The viral visuals quickly spread on social media, capturing the scale of anticipation and emotion as supporters turned the buildup to the tournament into a full-fledged festival atmosphere. The scenes also highlighted the intense

football rivalries in the region, with an Argentina banner visible nearby, adding to the colour, energy, and competitive spirit of the fan-driven



celebrations. Supporters of different nations were seen engaging in friendly banter and displays of loyalty, turning public spaces into a vibrant preview of the World Cup atmosphere.

KERALA CELEBRATES FOOTBALL

Earlier, a massive board celebrating what fans called the "last dance" of football greats Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, and Lionel Messi also went viral, marking what many believe could be the final World Cup appearance for the legendary trio. The display has added an emotional layer to the celebrations, with fans already treating the tournament as a historic moment in football history. While some fans placed a life-size cutout of Lionel Messi in the middle of what appeared to be a lake in Kerala.

In Malappuram, often described as Kerala's football heartland, the excitement has reached another level altogether. Roads and neighbourhoods are already lined with the colours of competing nations, as Argentine blue and white flags flutter alongside Brazilian yellow and Portuguese red and green. Banners supporting France, Spain, Germany, and several other footballing nations have also begun appearing across the district, transforming entire areas into unofficial fan zones.

Local communities have been split into rival fan camps, with supporters of Argentina, Portugal, Brazil and other nations trying to outdo each other through larger posters and more elaborate banners. Shops and homes have also embraced the festive spirit, with painted murals, life-size cut-outs of star players, and themed decorations now a common sight across the region.



Anushka Sharma's

Re-Post On Homeopathy Sparks Backlash, The Liver Doc Calls Her 'Illiterate Celeb'

Actor Anushka Sharma's endorsement of homeopathy has sparked a long-running debate around the alternative medical system, drawing strong reactions from both supporters and critics on social media. The discussion began after Anushka Sharma shared a video featuring homeopathic physician Rajan Sankaran in conversation with entrepreneur Namita Thapar. In her post, the actor credited homeopathy and Sankaran with influencing her personal health journey.

"Homeopathy played an important role in my life and Dr Rajan Sankaran has been a key part of that journey. I deeply value his insights on health and mindful living," Sharma wrote. The video focused on the role of homeopathy within modern healthcare and argued for cooperation between different medical systems rather than competition. During the discussion, Sankaran said homeopathy should be viewed as part of a broader treatment ecosystem and acknowledged that every medical system has limitations. "Homeopathy doesn't treat conditions, it treats people. By treating people it heals them. By healing the human, their pathology also heals. Homeopathy can treat everybody. But can it cure everybody? Like every system it has limitations. Because modern medicine does not have long-term solutions, multiple solutions for multiple sclerosis, allergies eczema, so these are all illnesses for which I would say even modern medical doctors refer their patients for homeopathy. We are living in an era of integrated medicine. We are not here to prove the superiority or inferiority. It's not either or anymore. We need to know the strengths and limitations of each system," he said.

Hepatologist Cyriac Abby Philips, widely known online as The Liver Doc, who has been one of homeopathy's most vocal critics, slammed the video shared by Anushka Sharma and took aim at all three public figures associated with it. Referring to Rajan Sankaran, Namita Thapar and Anushka Sharma, he described them as a "triangle of shame." "Supplement Seller - Legalized Quack - Illiterate Celeb," he wrote.

The hepatologist reiterated his long-standing position on homeopathy, arguing that its remedies do not contain active medicinal ingredients. "Homeopathy is 'medicine' made of water, alcohol, and sugar. So you're paying premium prices for fancy sugar pills containing precisely no medicine at all," he wrote.



RJ Mahvash Slams Dating Apps Amid Breakup Rumours With Yuzvendra Chahal: 'Feels Like Shopping'



RJ Mahvash has spoken candidly about her views on modern relationships, months after finding herself at the centre of persistent speculation linking her to cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal. In a recent interview with The Free Press Journal, Mahvash reflected on dating culture, trust and commitment, making it clear that she still believes in traditional forms of romance rather than app-based matchmaking.

When asked about love, Mahvash said, "A little adjustment is necessary in every relationship. Nowadays, people are treating relationships like shopping - swiping left and right on Tinder as if humans are products, and I don't agree with that at all. I still believe that when you meet someone in real life, maybe at a party or somewhere naturally, the connection feels much stronger. Personally, I also find it difficult to trust someone who uses dating apps in such situations because you keep thinking, 'This person is probably swiping right on five other people too, so how can I trust them?' It feels like dating becomes a routine for them, like they are constantly meeting someone new. I still believe in old-school love - where affection is expressed through small gestures. That, for me, is what real love truly is."

Her comments come after a period of intense public scrutiny. Over the past few years, Mahvash's name was frequently dragged into conversations surrounding Chahal's personal life, with social media users speculating that the two were in a relationship while he was still married to choreographer and influencer Dhanashree Verma. Mahvash was labelled a "homewrecker" by some online users, who accused her of contributing to problems in Chahal and Dhanashree's marriage. Despite the chatter, neither Mahvash nor Chahal publicly confirmed that they were dating.

Yuzvendra Chahal and Dhanashree Verma got married in December 2020 after meeting during the Covid-19 lockdown. The couple often shared photos and videos together on social media and became fan favourites. However, reports of trouble in their relationship surfaced over time, and they eventually divorced in 2025 after reportedly living separately for a while.

Palak Tiwari Steps Out With Ibrahim Ali Khan, Hides From Paps Amid Dating Buzz



Actor Ibrahim Ali Khan, who was last seen in the streaming movie 'Sarazmeen', was spotted in the city catching a movie with his rumoured girlfriend Palak Tiwari. The couple were captured by the shutterbugs as they walked out of the theatre. As Ibrahim was the first to step out, he saw the paparazzi and immediately gestured for the actress to step back. The actress tried to go down the flight of stairs at the establishment; the prying cameras captured her in the lens.

Although reports surrounding Ibrahim Ali Khan and Palak Tiwari being in a relationship have circulated for quite sometime, neither has publicly confirmed being in a relationship. The speculation began after the pair were repeatedly spotted together at restaurants, parties and industry events in Mumbai.

More recently, they have continued to fuel gossip with occasional joint appearances, including being seen leaving social gatherings and celebrity hangouts around the same time, while generally avoiding direct comments on their status.

Earlier in March, Ibrahim Ali Khan gave fans a glimpse into his Eid celebrations, and shared a picture of his younger brother Taimur Ali Khan devouring on a plate of Biryani.

He wrote in the caption, "Eid Mubarak". In the picture, little Taimur is seen seated at his dining table, relishing a plate of Eid special biryani, with his little fingers. Ibrahim's aunt, Saba Pataudi, had also given a sneak peek into her preparations for the festival.

She had shared how the family was gearing up for the celebrations, including the tradition of giving Eidi to the younger members of the Pataudi family, fondly referring to them as 'Pataudi munchkins'.

Talking about the Pataudi family's younger generation, it includes Taimur Ali Khan and Jeh Ali Khan, children of Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan.

Kriti Sanon

Offers Prayers At Tirumala Temple Ahead Of Cocktail 2 Release

Bollywood actor Kriti Sanon visited the sacred Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala on Wednesday, where she offered prayers and sought the blessings of Lord Venkateswara. Dressed in a simple traditional attire, the actress participated in temple rituals amid tight security. Kriti's visit comes at a time when she is looking forward to the release of her upcoming film 'Cocktail 2'. The film's trailer has been unveiled and Kriti is set to share the screen with Shahid Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna.

The almost three-minute trailer of the film features a tale of chaos, confusion and heartbreak between three friends, Kunal (Shahid Kapoor), Diya (Rashmika Mandanna) and Ally (Kriti Sanon).

In the trailer, the lead cast were seen travelling, where the trio explore their friendship and different aspects of their relationship, including a possibility of a threesome. In some sequences of the trailer, Kriti



Sanon is seen flirting with Shahid Kapoor while the actor appears to be in a relationship with Rashmika Mandanna. The situation takes a downturn when the lady duo starts fighting over Shahid Kapoor.

Prior to the trailer, the makers had released the chartbuster songs from the film. Recently, they released the romantic track 'Tujhko', unveiling a soulful duet that brings together celebrated singers Arijit Singh and Sunidhi Chauhan in a deeply emotional musical collaboration. The other tracks from the movie include 'Mashooqa' and 'Jab Talak'. Cocktail 2 (2026) is a standalone spiritual sequel. It is not a direct sequel to the 2012 original Cocktail, which featured Saif Ali Khan, Diana Penty and Deepika Padukone in the lead roles. The movie is directed by Homi Adajania and is written by Tarun Jain and Luv Ranjan. The music of the film is composed by Pritam.

Tarun Jain and Luv Ranjan. The music of the film is composed by Pritam.



NEWS BOX

Russian strikes kill three in Ukraine

KYIV. (Agency)
Russian strikes killed three people in several regions of Ukraine, regional authorities said on Friday. Moscow and Kyiv have been targeting each other with intensifying aerial attacks in recent months as US-led diplomatic efforts to end their war, now in its fifth year, remain stalled. Russian drone strikes on Thursday evening killed a 75-year-old man in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, according to the head of the city's military administration Yaroslav Shanko. A woman was also killed in a drone strike in Zaporizhzhia that wounded 16 others, emergency services said. And Russian drone and artillery attacks killed a woman in the Pavlograd district in Dnipropetrovsk, regional governor Oleksandr Ganzha said on Telegram on Friday. Russia has hit Ukraine with barrages of drones and missiles since 2022 and has occupied swathes of the south and east of the country. In Konotop city in northeastern Ukraine, three children were wounded in Russian



strikes, Mayor Artem Semenikhin wrote on Telegram. Russia's defence ministry said on Friday morning that it had intercepted and destroyed 123 Ukrainian drones in the preceding night over various regions.

UN nuclear watchdog says it's been unable to inspect Iranian facilities

VIENNA. (Agency)
The UN nuclear watchdog has been unable to inspect nuclear facilities in Iran affected by the war last June according to a confidential report by the UN nuclear watchdog circulated to member states and seen Thursday by The Associated Press. The International Atomic Energy Agency reported that it "cannot provide any information on the current size, composition or whereabouts of the stockpile of enriched uranium in Iran or whether Iran has suspended all enrichment-related activities." The IAEA warned that it was "unable to discharge its safeguards responsibilities" that it has under the Safeguards Agreement of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, adding that it is "indispensable and urgent" for Tehran to implement its obligations under that Treaty. The only nuclear facility inspected in Iran by IAEA inspectors since the last report in February has been the Bushehr nuclear power plant, which was visited on June 1-3. The reactor currently running at Bushehr uses uranium from Russia enriched to 4.5%, a low level needed for power generation in such plants. The confidential report come as tensions have flared in the Middle East. Iranian drones heavily damaged a passenger terminal at Kuwait's main airport on Wednesday, killing one person, wounding dozens of others and briefly closing the airfield, the latest in back-and-forth attacks by Iran and the US that test a fragile ceasefire. According to the IAEA, Iran maintains a stockpile of 440.9 kilograms (972 pounds) of uranium enriched up to 60% purity, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. That stockpile could allow Iran to build as many as 10 nuclear bombs, should it decide to weaponize its program, IAEA director general Rafael Grossi warned in a recent AP interview. He added that it doesn't mean that Iran has such a weapon.

House passes bill to aid Ukraine and impose new sanctions on Russia

world. (Agency)
The House passed legislation Thursday that would aid Ukraine and sanction key segments of the Russian economy, overriding objections from Republican leaders who warned the bill would undermine negotiations designed to achieve a comparable but stronger result. The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., seeks to cement U.S. assistance for Ukraine by providing more than \$1 billion in security and reconstruction aid. It would make another \$8 billion available for Ukraine's defense through loans. The 226-195 vote is a sign of impatience with President Donald Trump's approach to the war and represents the House's second major foreign policy break with Trump this week. The day before, the House, for the first time, approved a war powers resolution aimed at halting U.S. military action against Iran. Supporters were able to force action on the Ukraine bill by gathering 218 signatures on a discharge petition, a legislative tool that allows a majority of the House to effectively bypass leadership. Once rarely successful, House members have used the petition tool this Congress to pass bills on releasing the government's files on Jeffrey Epstein and to extend health care subsidies to many of those who get health coverage through the Affordable Care Act, though the latter measure faltered in the Senate. Meeks said the question before the House was simple. Would it help Ukraine negotiate from a position of strength or help Russia outlast American resolve? "We all want this war to end," Meeks said. "The question is how. Will we abandon Ukraine and force it into a terrible deal? That is what Vladimir Putin is counting on. Or will this body live up to the commitments we've made since the start of this war?"

Chinese leader Xi Jinping will travel to North Korea next week in first visit since 2019

BEIJING. (Agency)
Chinese leader Xi Jinping will travel to North Korea next week, both countries announced Friday, in what will be his first visit in nearly seven years. His trip will be the latest in a series of steps by China to reinforce its close ties with its nuclear-armed neighbor, whose leader Kim Jong Un has reached out to Russia in recent years, notably by sending troops and conventional weapons to support its war against Ukraine. Kim has likewise been cozying up again to China, the North's biggest trade partner and aid provider, in the past year. "As North Korea builds closer ties with Russia, China seeks to use Xi's trip to reassert its influence over Pyongyang and safeguard its strategic interests in northeast Asia," said William Yang, an analyst for the International Crisis Group. Xi will make a state visit from Monday to Tuesday, state media from both nations said in brief dispatches. His last visit was in June 2019. The trip will come just weeks after Xi hosted U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in quick succession in

Beijing. North Korea's nuclear weapons program has long been a major concern for the United States, which opposes it. The U.N. has imposed economic sanctions on North Korea because of its nuclear and missile development. The announcement of the trip came a day after North Korea unveiled a new facility to produce the ingredients for nuclear bombs. South Korea's military has assessed the new nuclear facility as a uranium enrichment plant. During a visit to the plant, Kim announced plans to bolster the country's nuclear forces "at an exponential rate." Experts say the plant's disclosure implies that Kim was eager to cement his country's status as a nuclear weapons state ahead of Xi's visit. The experts say Kim wants international recognition as a nuclear state so that he can demand the lifting of the sanctions. They say Kim would ultimately push for arms reductions talks with the U.S. to win concessions in return for a partial surrender of his nuclear capability. Kim has been focusing on expanding his nuclear arsenal since his high-stakes diplomacy with Trump collapsed in 2019.

Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to restore diplomacy with Kim, but the North Korean leader has said the U.S. must first drop its demand for North Korea to denuclearize as a precondition for talks. Xi

Council, have previously frustrated the U.S. and others' efforts to toughen international sanctions on North Korea, despite its banned weapons tests.

At their meeting in Beijing last month, Putin and Xi expressed their opposition to "foreign policy isolation, economic sanctions, military pressure and other methods of creating threats to the security" of North Korea, according to a statement from the Kremlin. Embracing the ideas of a "new Cold War" and a multipolar world, Kim has pushed for a more assertive foreign policy by expanding ties with countries locked in confrontations with the United States.

Xi, who traveled widely in his first years in power, has curtailed his international trips sharply since the COVID-19 pandemic. His last overseas trip was to South Korea last fall for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, where he talked with Trump.



and Kim met in Beijing in September and pledged mutual support and enhanced cooperation. Kim was in the Chinese capital to attend a Chinese military parade alongside other foreign leaders including Putin. Russia and China, both veto-wielding members of the U.N. Security

Pope Leo's visiting Europe's migration hot spots. Catholics hope he'll ease political tensions

Many Catholics and migrants hope the upcoming papal trips will shift focus to solidarity and support, away from divisive political debates splitting the right and deepening divisions with the left.

trips will refocus attention on solidarity and support — and away from divisive political debate that is splitting the right in addition to pitting it against the left. "Stuck in the middle are the migrants," said the Most Rev. José Mazuelos, the bishop of Canarias,



whose diocese includes several of the islands. "So the church says, 'Let's give them a face, because we're talking about people, not numbers.'" Among them is Eslim Jallow, 27. Dreaming of a more prosperous future, Jallow and his younger brother left Gambia and landed in the Canary Islands in 2023. At first, Jallow struggled to adapt, but he quickly learned Spanish, took courses and now earns a living as a programmer and web developer in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. "Perhaps the pope will change the way in which

people here look at immigrants," Jallow said. "Immigrants should be treated with dignity and respect, not ignored." Like most migrants arriving in the islands, he isn't Catholic. But he feels that Leo "speaks for us, he reminds the world we are also human beings." The Catholic Church's ministry to migrants advocating for migrants globally was a priority for Pope Francis. He went to Lampedusa in 2013 on his first pastoral visit outside Rome and, three years later on the Greek island of Lesbos, he brought back with him a dozen Syrian Muslim refugees. Under Leo, the Catholic Church has continued to call for their humane treatment around the world, including decrying mass deportations in his home country, the United States. "Pope Leo is signaling how important immigration is to him by doing these two trips early in his papacy," said Michele Pistone, a Villanova University professor who leads its new center on immigration. In the Canaries, Leo is expected at the port of Arguineguin, on the island of Gran Canaria, on June 11 to pay homage to thousands of migrants who died or disappeared en route.

'If Iran kills US troops, it would be a good reason to restart war': President Donald Trump

SEOUL. (Agency)
US President Donald Trump on Thursday warned that any killing of American troops by Iran would be a "good reason" to restart military action, while slamming a House vote aimed at limiting his war powers. Speaking to reporters at the White House, Trump said the US had significantly weakened Iran's military capabilities and leadership. "If they killed US Troops, it would be a good reason to do so. There is no navy, no air force, we have wiped out their leadership. Then you read in the fake news that they are doing really well in the war, this is unbelievable. They have 159 ships and all of them lie at the bottom of the ocean. We have taken pictures of them down there," Trump said. His remarks came a day after the US House of Representatives

voted to restrict further military action against Iran without congressional



approval. Four Republican lawmakers joined Democrats in backing the measure, which passed 215-208 and now moves to the Senate. The resolution marks the first successful congressional challenge to Trump since the US and Israel jointly launched military strikes against Iran on

February 28, three months ago. However, the measure is expected to face a presidential veto if passed by the Senate. Trump also lashed out at lawmakers who supported the resolution, calling the vote "meaningless" and accusing opponents of undermining ongoing negotiations with Iran. In a post on Truth Social, Trump said, "Yesterday, in a meaningless vote, the House voted, 4 bad Republicans and all of the Democrats, to limit my War Powers, right in the middle of my final negotiations to end the War with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Who would do such an unpatriotic thing. They know where the negotiations stand. The Democrats are fueled by Trump Derangement Syndrome. They would rather have our Country fail than give

US sanctions Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel in latest move to pressure island's leadership

WASHINGTON (Agency)
The United States imposed sanctions Thursday on Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, his wife and three other individuals, in the latest move by the Trump administration to pressure the island's leadership that drew immediate condemnation from Havana. Included in the sanctions are Alejandro Castro Espín, the sole son of former Cuban President Raúl Castro and Vilma Espín. He served as an adviser to Cuba's Defense and National Security Commission and was present when Raúl Castro greeted then-U.S. President Barack Obama in Havana during a historic March 2016 meeting. Castro Espín's son, Raúl Alejandro Castro Calis, also was listed. The new penalties come as U.S. President Donald Trump has been threatening military action in Cuba since ousting Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro in January and then ordering an energy blockade that choked off fuel shipments to Cuba. That has led to severe blackouts, food shortages and an economic collapse across the island. The threats took on additional weight after the U.S. announced

criminal charges against Raúl Castro last month. Thursday's penalties, which follow Trump signing an executive order expanding sanctions against the island, freeze individuals' property and bank accounts in the U.S. But it's unclear how intertwined their finances are with the U.S. financial system. It's "pretty unlikely" Cuba's president and others have assets in the U.S., said Richard Feinberg, former U.S. national security adviser on Latin America and professor emeritus of international political economy at the University of California, San Diego. He said the sanctions "could be seen as preliminary to an intervention or increasing pressure on the regime to cut a deal," adding that the rhetoric of Trump and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio "could take you in either direction." Díaz-Canel accused Trump of making "new threatening statements against Cuba" and said "these measures are aimed at reinforcing the blockade and escalating the conflict between Cuba and the United States." "This political blindness adds to the

coercive measures applied in recent weeks against our country, designed to harm the Cuban people," he wrote on X. "The aggression and perversion of the U.S. government will clash with our resolve to



confront the worst-case scenarios and resist the imperial onslaught." Trump says about Cuba, "We're going to handle that." Asked Thursday if his sanctions were meant to accelerate Cuba's collapse, Trump said, "We just want them to be a nicely run country." "The country is starving and it's got no energy, it's got no oil, it's got no

money, it's got nothing. It's got a beautiful piece of land. You could have beautiful resorts," Trump told reporters at an unrelated event in the Oval Office.

Asked whether Cuba is close to collapsing, he said, "It's sort of collapsed" and added that "we're going to handle that as soon as we've finished" military operations in Iran. "I like to do one thing at a time," Trump said. Trump has ratcheted up talk of regime change in Cuba after pledging to conduct a "friendly takeover" of the country if its leadership did not open its economy to American investment and kick out U.S. adversaries.

Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants who has long taken a hardline against Cuba's socialist leadership, has said Trump's preference is to reach a deal but has said he is doubtful the U.S. can find a diplomatic resolution with the current government. Those "designated today direct or fund the regime and its efforts to mobilize its radical revolutionary movements in the United States and around the world," Rubio said in a statement.

