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Maharashtra Set to Become India's First Trillion-Dollar State

Mumbai: Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly that Maharashtra is not only the economic engine of India but will soon become the first state in the country with a one trillion dollar economy. While replying to the discussion on the 2026-27 state budget, he presented a detailed report on the state's economic progress. He began his speech by paying tribute to Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj on his sacrifice day and explained with data how Maharashtra's economy compares with those of several countries around the world.

Says Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis

would rank as the 30th largest economy in the world. He added that Maharashtra has already moved ahead of countries such as Austria, Thailand, Norway and Vietnam in economic terms, and the state now aims to surpass Singapore and the United Arab Emirates in the future. He said the state's growth rate is 10.4 percent, which is higher than the national average and shows the strong economic condition of Maharashtra.

Responding to questions raised by opposition parties about state debt, Devendra Fadnavis said that Maharashtra is in a safe financial position when debt is compared with income. He said the state's debt-to-GDP ratio is 18.2 percent, which is well below the prescribed limit. He pointed out that states such as West Bengal, Punjab and Bihar have debt

levels ranging between 30 and 46 percent, while Maharashtra is maintaining financial discipline and continuing development



work. He also said that funds received from the central government have increased five times in the last ten years and have crossed Rs 87,000 crore. The state's capital expenditure has increased from Rs 25,000 crore to Rs 2 lakh crore, and this money is being used for building infrastructure across the state.

Devendra Fadnavis said the government has taken several important decisions for farmers and ordinary citizens. Under the "Magel Tyala Saur Krushi Pump" scheme, Maharashtra is ranked first in the country. Out of 46 lakh agricultural electricity consumers, 33 lakh are now receiving electricity during the daytime. The state has set a target to generate 65 percent of its electricity from solar energy and other renewable sources by the year 2035. He also said that under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, approval has been given for 30 lakh houses in a single year and construction of 15 lakh houses is currently in progress. For farmers, the government has launched the "Mukhyamantri Baliraja Shet Panand Rasta Yojana" and has reserved Rs 1,000 crore for building farm access

roads. Devendra Fadnavis also said that Maharashtra is leading in industrial development as well as in education and sports. The state ranks first in India in startups, unicorn companies and GST collection. For the development of Solapur, the government has provided Rs 500 crore for an IT park, a government engineering college and night landing facilities at the airport. To solve the water issues of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, the government has approved the Poshir, Shilar and Gargai dams and has planned water supply for the next 40 years. He said that with financial discipline, sustainable development and strong infrastructure, Maharashtra will make the biggest contribution to the mission of building a developed India.

Maharashtra could be world's 30th largest economy if it were separate nation

Maharashtra's economy is so strong that if the state were an independent country, it would rank as the 30th largest economy in the world, claimed Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis today.

He said the state has surpassed countries such as Austria, Thailand and Vietnam in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Replying to the budget discussion in the Maharashtra Assembly, Fadnavis highlighted the state's economic progress and said Maharashtra's economy has been expanding rapidly with support from the central government. He also presented data on GDP growth, debt management and other economic

indicators while responding to criticism from the opposition.

According to the Chief Minister, Maharashtra's GDP stood at Rs 16 lakh crore in 2013-14 and has grown to Rs 51 lakh crore over the past decade. The state has recorded a growth rate of 10.4 per cent, which is higher than the national average. Maharashtra contributes 14.7 per cent to India's total GDP. The per capita income of the state is Rs 3.47 lakh, placing Maharashtra fifth in the country, while it ranks second in terms of population.

The Chief Minister also clarified the state's debt situation. In 2013-14, when the GDP was Rs 16 lakh crore, the state's

debt stood at Rs 3 lakh crore. At present, Maharashtra's debt-to-GDP ratio is 18.8 per cent, which is significantly lower than several other states. For instance, the ratio is around 30 per cent in Madhya Pradesh, 38 per cent in Himachal Pradesh, 35 per cent in Bihar, 27 per cent in Jharkhand and 38 per cent in West Bengal.

Capital expenditure in the state has increased significantly from Rs 25,000 crore to Rs 2 lakh crore. While debt has increased, capital investment has grown at a higher pace, he explained, adding that the state's revenue-to-debt ratio stands at around 18 per cent, indicating a stable financial position.

Sharp Hike in Vehicle Gas Prices After Domestic LPG Increase; Autorickshaw Drivers Worried

Mumbai: Following the recent increase in domestic LPG prices, the government has now announced a significant hike in gas prices used for vehicles, triggering concern among autorickshaw drivers and other transport operators.

The sharp rise in prices comes amid an emerging gas shortage linked to ongoing conflicts in Gulf countries. The war in the region has reportedly damaged several oil wells and refining facilities, prompting many countries to temporarily shut down production at some projects.

In addition, Iran has halted movement along the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a

major global route for oil transportation. This disruption has created a ripple effect in international



fuel supply, leading to shortages and price increases across several countries.

Against this backdrop,

domestic LPG cylinder prices were recently increased by ₹60 per cylinder. Meanwhile, the supply of

commercial gas has reportedly been halted, causing significant difficulties for hotel and

restaurant operators who rely heavily on such fuel.

The impact has now extended to the transport sector as well. Prices of gas used in vehicles have surged from rupees 62 per litre to rupees 75 per litre — a steep increase of 13 in a single revision.

The hike is expected to hit commuters and drivers alike. Autorickshaw drivers, many of whom opted for gas-powered vehicles due to their cost efficiency, are particularly worried about the sudden increase in operating expenses. With the price advantage of gas narrowing, drivers fear a major impact on their daily earnings.

Confusion in BMC over engineers' transfers despite CM's stay order

Mumbai: Confusion surfaced in the municipal administration after a letter from the Mayor regarding transfer of engineers came to light, even as the Chief Minister's stay order on the transfers remains in effect. Earlier, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had temporarily halted the implementation of the transfer orders following complaints raised during the administrator's tenure. However, Mayor Ritu Tawde has now written to Additional Municipal Commissioner Avinash Dhakane, directing the administration to take action regarding the implementation of the transfer orders.

In the letter, the Mayor referred to a memorandum submitted by the Municipal Engineers' union and instructed officials to take appropriate action in accordance with the rules. The issue of transfers involving Assistant Engineers and Sub-Engineers in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has once again come under discussion. With the Mayor's letter surfacing while the Chief Minister's stay order remains in place, uncertainty has grown within the civic administration about the next course of action regarding the transfer process. Meanwhile, the development could also trigger internal differences within the Bharatiya Janata Party in Mumbai, as Mumbai BJP president Amit Satam had earlier lodged a complaint with the Chief Minister regarding the transfers. Observers are now closely watching what decision will ultimately be taken on the issue.

Congress to protest against LPG price hike across Maharashtra

Mumbai: Taking an aggressive stand against the recent hike in LPG cylinder prices, the Congress party today announced statewide protests.

Acting on the instructions of Maharashtra Congress President Harshvardhan Sapkal, the party will stage demonstrations on Thursday (tomorrow) opposing the Centre's decision to increase gas prices. According to party leaders, protests will be held in

every district against the decision of the central government to raise domestic LPG cylinder prices. The demonstrations at the district level will be led by the respective district presidents of the Congress party.

In a statement issued by the party, it was alleged that the sudden hike in domestic LPG cylinder prices, along with the extension of the cylinder booking period, will adversely affect common

citizens and economically weaker families.

The Congress also criticized the Centre, stating that the government, which had promised "good days" for citizens, has betrayed public trust by increasing the prices of essential commodities such as cooking gas. The party said that memorandums will be submitted to the authorities during the district-level protests to register strong opposition to the decision.

Sanjay Raut urges PM to generate gas from sewage of Mithi River

Mumbai : Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena Rajya Sabha MP and chief Sena spokesperson, Sanjay Raut, today mockingly urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to set up a gas production unit using sewage in Mumbai's polluted Mithi river, to tide over gas shortage due to the ongoing Iran war.

Speaking to media persons here, Sanjay Raut sarcastically said, "Our Prime Minister Modi is a great research scientist. Several years ago, he had discovered that gas can be produced from sewage in nullahs and drains. Can such a gas production project be established on the banks of the Mithi River in Mumbai based on Modi's concept? Devendra Fadnavis and the Mayor of Mumbai should invite Narendra Modi to inaugurate it. Taking inspiration from that, many such industries can be set up all over the country."

"By Modi's grace, we can easily overcome the gas shortage caused by the war. He must inaugurate the first such gas unit on the Mithi River in Mumbai. The Shiv Sena is always ready to arrange the pipes required

for the project. Also, if any subsidy is required for this project, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis should approve it," Sanjay Raut said, targeting Prime Minister Modi.

"If this experiment is successful, such projects can

also be implemented in the Yamuna river. Currently, the fuel situation in Maharashtra is very critical. If a loan is required to set up such a project, Devendra Fadnavis should approve it immediately. If such a project on Mithi river is large enough, I will personally invite Prime Minister Modi to inaugurate it," Sanjay Raut quipped.

"US President Donald Trump has announced that Reliance Industries will make a major investment in a petroleum refinery project in Texas, USA. This project is said to be the first Indian

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"US President Donald Trump has announced that Reliance Industries will make a major investment in a petroleum refining project to be set up in the US in 50 years. It seems only a few industrialists will benefit from the trade deal with the US. If a major industrialist from India chooses to invest in the US instead of India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have to explain," he said.

being made abroad instead? This is a matter of concern. Why do Indian industrialists feel the need to invest abroad rather than investing in their own country? This is a very unfortunate thing to happen," Sanjay Raut said.

"The biggest issue in the country is the situation caused due to the Iran war. Our country has started feeling a major shortage of gas. The Modi government had said that this war would not have any impact on India, but this assurance given by the government to the people has turned out to be false. In cities like Mumbai, 30 per cent of restaurants and hotels are closed due to gas shortage. The automobile industry has suffered a lot due to the disruption of commercial gas supply. Engineering industries in Satara and Sangli are completely closed. The automobile industry in Chakan is in trouble," the UBT Sena leader continued.

"Prime Minister Modi is fulfilling his dream of taking India back by 100 years. His culture is to destroy science and create gas from drains and nullahs," Sanjay Raut added.

As West Asia war rages, focus shifts to impending global economic tsunami with Strait of Hormuz as center-point

New Delhi: With the West Asia war having entered its second week, focus has now shifted from death and destruction to impending global economic meltdown and inflation tsunami due to the closure of the strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20 per cent of the world's oil trade is carried out.

While military operations and casualties continue, the economic front has become a central concern for world leaders and financial markets. About 25-27 per cent of all oil traded by sea worldwide passes through the Strait. Roughly 20 per cent (one-fifth) of total global oil consumption flows through these waters.

As a result of the blockade, crude prices are experiencing high volatility. The current price is approximately USD 91.14-USD 91.41 per barrel. The crude price was USD 120 per barrel on March 9. As of March 11 (today),

the Strait of Hormuz is experiencing a near-total collapse in commercial traffic. While no formal legal closure has been announced, the waterway is effectively shut for most international shipping due to extreme operational risks and withdrawal of war risk insurance.

Ever since the war began on February 28, multiple tankers have been damaged by drone and missile strikes. On March 6, a UAE-flagged tugboat sank after an explosion, leaving three crew members missing. On March 7, the Maltese-flagged tanker Prima was reportedly struck by an Iranian drone.

France has announced preparations for a "purely defensive" mission to escort vessels once the most intense phase of the war subsides.

Kuwait and Qatar have declared "force majeure" on some energy contracts as tankers are unable to exit the Persian Gulf safely. (Force majeure is a common clause in contracts which

essentially frees both parties from liability or obligation when an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond the control of the parties, such as a war, strike, riot, crime, epidemic, or sudden legal



change, prevents one or both parties from fulfilling their obligations under the contract.)

Tanker traffic through the Strait has dropped by over 90 per cent. The closure affects 20 per cent of global oil and significant volumes of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), particularly from Qatar. Beyond oil, the blockade has halted 30 per cent of global fertiliser exports (urea, ammonia, phosphates), raising fears of worldwide food shortages.

India is particularly vulnerable due to its heavy

reliance on this route for energy and trade. Roughly 85 per cent of India's LPG and 55 per cent of its LNG pass through the Strait of Hormuz. Over 400,000 tonnes of Basmati rice were



reported stuck at ports in March 2026 due to the disruption of trade routes to the Gulf.

The conflict threatens the safety and livelihoods of over 9 million Indian expatriates in the region, who contribute significantly to India's foreign exchange through remittances.

Iran's IRGC claims "complete control" over the Strait of Hormuz. The Strait is closed to Western-aligned commercial traffic. However, some Chinese-flagged vessels have successfully transited by

broadcasting their status via AIS.

According to the US Energy Administration, about 84-89 per cent of the crude oil and 83 per cent of the LNG passing through the Strait is destined for Asia.

With world leaders worrying about the continued closure of the Strait, conflicting reports pour in. Latest US reports said Iran is laying underwater mines in the area to deter ships.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) released video footage of a vessel being destroyed. The footage, however, did not specify if it was about the Strait or anywhere near it. CENTCOM said "the U.S. forces eliminated multiple Iranian naval vessels, March 10, including 16 minelayers near the Strait of Hormuz... US forces are degrading the Iranian regime's ability to project power at sea and harass international shipping."

Reacting to the CENTCOM video, US President Donald Trump

said on Wednesday (today) that the US had hit and destroyed ten inactive mine-laying boats or ships. "I am pleased to report that within the last few hours, we have hit and destroyed 10 inactive mine-laying boats and/or ships, with more to follow," he said.

Trump also warned Iran that if they have put any mines in the Hormuz Strait, they should be immediately removed. He, however, said the US had no reports of them (Iran) doing so. He warned that if Iran has indeed placed such mines and does not remove them, Iran would see military consequences at a level never seen before.

"...and we have no reports of them doing so, we want them removed, IMMEDIATELY! If, for any reason, mines were placed, and they are not removed forthwith, the Military consequences to Iran will be at a level never seen before. If, on the other hand, they remove what may have been placed, it will be a giant step in the right direction!"

On March 10, Trump had said that if Iran does anything that stops the flow of Oil within the Strait of Hormuz, they will be hit by the US "TWENTY TIMES HARDER" than they have been hit thus far. Trump said "Death, Fire, and Fury will reign upon them." He, however, hoped that this did not happen.

There were also reports that the US Navy had escorted an oil tanker through the Strait of Hormuz. US Energy Secretary Chris Wright had reportedly tweeted about it. He later deleted the tweet.

However, in Tehran, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf ridiculed the United States for spreading misinformation to manipulate global oil markets. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also dismissed Wright's post as deliberate misinformation. "US officials are posting fake news to manipulate markets," he wrote on social media. Araghchi warned that global oil markets faced their "biggest shortfall in history."

Kishan Reddy slams Speaker's decision on defections, says democracy being undermined in Telangana

Hyderabad: G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Coal and Mines, on Wednesday criticised the conduct of the Telangana Assembly Speaker over the issue of party defections, alleging that democratic values were being undermined in the state under the rule of the Indian National Congress.

His remarks came after Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Speaker of the Telangana Legislative Assembly, dismissed disqualification petitions filed against two MLAs — Danam Nagender and Kadiyam Srihari.

Reacting to the decision, Kishan Reddy said granting what he described as a "clean chit" to the legislators amounted to disregarding the mandate given by the people during the elections.

According to the Union Minister, the decision raises serious concerns about the functioning of democratic institutions in the state.

He alleged that both the Congress and the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) had followed similar practices in dealing with defections, claiming there was little difference between the two parties in their approach.

Kishan Reddy said such actions weaken public faith in the political



system and send the wrong message about accountability in public life.

He questioned why the Speaker chose to ignore what he described as clear evidence in the matter involving party allegiance.

According to him, one of the MLAs had been elected on a BRS ticket but later changed political allegiance and contested the parliamentary election on a Congress ticket.

The Union Minister said that such developments raised serious

questions about whether the anti-defection provisions were being implemented effectively.

Kishan Reddy also expressed concern that the Speaker, whose constitutional responsibility is to prevent defections, had instead taken a decision that effectively legitimised them.

Describing the development as unfortunate, he called it a "dark chapter" in the history of democracy in the state.

He further alleged that constitu-

tional institutions were being influenced by the ruling party, which he said was damaging the credibility of the democratic framework.

According to the BJP leader, the verdict of the electorate was being treated as a commodity that could be traded for political positions and advantages.

He said that such practices erode the sanctity of the electoral mandate and weaken the trust citizens place in democratic institutions.

Kishan Reddy maintained that safeguarding the Constitution and democratic norms should remain the foremost priority for all public representatives.

The Union Minister also said that the people of Telangana were closely observing the developments surrounding the issue.

He warned that political leaders who undermine the Constitution or disregard the democratic mandate would ultimately be held accountable by the public.

The controversy over defections has continued to generate debate in the state's political circles, with opposition parties questioning the handling of the matter and the implications it could have for democratic governance in Telangana.

Karnataka warns LPG dealers against black marketing, overcharging

Bengaluru: The Government of Karnataka on Wednesday cautioned LPG distributors and refill dealers against engaging in black marketing or attempting to "blackmail" consumers amid concerns over supply and rising public demand.

K H Muniyappa, the state's Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, warned that strict action would be taken against any distributor found hoarding cylinders, creating artificial shortages or overcharging consumers.

The minister said the government had received complaints alleging that some LPG dealers were trying to take advantage of the situation by delaying deliveries and demanding additional charges from customers.

According to the complaints, certain distributors were also allegedly pressuring consumers during the booking or refilling process.

Muniyappa said such practices were unacceptable and violated consumer pro-

tection norms. He directed authorities in the department to maintain close monitoring of the LPG distribution network across the state.

Officials have been instructed to ensure that cylinders are supplied to consumers at the prescribed rates without any irregularities.

The minister emphasised that cooking gas is an essential commodity relied upon by millions of households every day.

Any attempt to manipulate supply or create artificial scarcity in order to earn illegal profits would not be tolerated, he said.

Muniyappa also instructed officials to keep a strict vigil on LPG agencies and conduct inspections wherever necessary.

He said immediate action would be taken against distributors found engaging in hoarding, black marketing or other irregular practices.

The government is also coordinating with oil marketing companies to main-

tain adequate supply of LPG cylinders across Karnataka.

Authorities aim to ensure that distribution remains smooth and that consumers do not face unnecessary delays in receiving refills.

At the same time, the minister appealed to the public not to panic or resort to bulk booking of LPG cylinders.

He said panic buying could disrupt the normal supply chain and create unnecessary pressure on the distribution system.

Muniyappa assured residents that the government was taking steps to maintain a steady supply of LPG across urban and rural areas.

He also urged consumers to remain vigilant and report any instance of overpricing, black marketing or refusal of service by LPG distributors.

Such complaints, he said, would enable authorities to take prompt action and ensure that the distribution system functions fairly for all consumers.

Orissa High Court asks Govt to fill up vacancies in human rights panel

Bhubaneswar: Taking note of concern voiced by rights activists, the Orissa High Court has directed the State Government to expeditiously fill up the existing vacancies in the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC).

The OHRC is now being run with one Member (Chitta Ranjan Mohapatra) in view of the vacancy arising out of the completion of term of the Chairperson (Justice Sartruhana Pujahari) and a Member Asim Amitabh Dash on February 9.

"As a result the functioning of the OHRC has been adversely affected because the remaining/existing Member has not been authorised to act as the Chairperson until the appointment of a new Chairperson to fill such vacancy. Section 25 (1) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 mandates: In the event of the occur-

rence of any vacancy in the Office of the Chairperson by reason of his death, resignation or otherwise, the Governor may, by notification, authorize one of the Members to act as the Chairperson until the appointment of a new Chairperson to fill such vacancy," the petitioner Prabir Kumar Das stated.

The denial of authorisation to the existing Member has rendered the Odisha Human Rights Commission headless and caused administrative breakdown. It is an imperative need that the Member should be immediately authorised to act as the Chairperson for ensuring the proper functioning of the Odisha Human Rights Commission.

It is a matter of public concern that the State Government has always been displaying its indifference and callousness with regard to making the Commission a

full-fledged body in conformity with Section 21 with a view to enabling this institution to discharge its duties and functions effectively as mandated by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, claimed the petitioner.

It is high time that the State Government initiates immediate steps to appoint a Chairperson and a Member to man the Commission in order to enable the same to render its public service in a fulfilling manner in fidelity to the mandate of law. Because of the huge pendency of cases, it necessitates the filling up of the vacancies lying in the Commission, noted the petitioner. The Division Bench of Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice M S Raman, issuing directions to the Government for filling up the vacancies for disposal of cases of human rights violation, posted the matter for further hearing on March 18.

Seven injured in firing in protests against census in Manipur, CM assures SIR

Imphal: Seven persons were injured in firing by security personnel at Khwairamband Keithel the main market area here on Wednesday as hundreds of people took out a rally demanding a proper NRC before conducting census in Manipur.

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand informed the House that Special Intensive Revision (SIR) will be done before the census is conducted. The entire market area was sealed off and no vehicles were allowed to enter as hundreds of people started a march shouting slogans against conducting census organised by Just & Fair Delimitation (JFD).

The protestors carried placards which read "No NRC, No Census," "No Free Movement, No Census," and "Resolve Present Crisis

First, Census After". Security was beefed up as the Assembly session is going on.

Security personnel started firing tear gas shells and mock bombs in which six women and a man were injured.

Those who took part in the protests said the government should identify illegal immigrants who have come to Manipur. There is no mechanism to check the thousands of people who have entered Manipur and they will all become Indian citizens and create a problem in Manipur if NRC is not done it was added.

Congress Legislative Party Leader, K Meghachandra raising the matter in the House said the census activities will start soon. Thousands of families are living in relief camps and illegal immigration have taken reported and hence census works



will be affected he said. People want the census to be deferred considering the ground realities he further said.

He said as per schedule of the census activities from April to September this year the first phase of housing census will be taken which is not possible in Manipur due to the crisis. There is an option for self enumeration in the census which may be carried out by other individuals in the name of some other

person which may be misused he added.

The second phase of census in 2027 will not be possible as people belonging to different communities are not able to move freely due to the crisis in the state, Meghachandra added. The census operations should not be conducted until people are able to travel freely without any fear he added.

The government has failed to check influx of illegal immigrants as there is

political instability in Myanmar and illegal drug activities are carried out by people from Myanmar, he added.

Government of India and Manipur should consider the problems seriously and take up measures to identify the immigrants and stop illegal activities he added.

K Govindas Minister Home said the government is aware that conducting census in Manipur is not conducive due to the crisis. Committee was formed to identify illegal immigrants and collection of biometrics started he added.

He said 6020 arms were looted and during various operations about 7437 arms were recovered. There are reports of arms being smuggled in from Myanmar as the border is porous. Fencing of border is going on to stop illegal activities he added.

UP to become first state to implement a recipe-based supplementary nutrition program

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh government has taken a major step to improve nutrition for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Officials here on Wednesday said from April, a new 'Recipe-based supplementary nutrition system' will be implemented at Anganwadi centres across Uttar Pradesh. With this initiative, introduced under the Government of India guidelines and National Food Security Act, 2013, UP will become the first state in the country to implement such a system.

A Face Recognition System (FRS) will be introduced for the distribution of supplementary nutrition.

Offline distribution of supplementary nutrition will no longer be valid and only distribution through the FRS system will be recognised. This step is expected to ensure transparency and prevent irregularities in the distribution process.

Under the new system, nutritious food will be provided keeping in mind seven categories of beneficiaries. The recipe-based supplementary nutrition will be prepared through Uttar Pradesh Rajya Gramin Ajivika Mission (SRM) and supplied directly to Anganwadi centres. In districts or projects where this arrangement is not available, supplies will be made through NAFED.

Government has determined different meals for various age groups of children and for women. Children (6 months to 1 year) will be provided wheat flour and gram flour sweet halwa; Children (1-3 years) Wheat flour and gram flour sweet halwa; Children (3-6 years) will be offered wheat-gram flour sweet barfi and dalia-moong-soya khichdi (savory); Pregnant and lactating women will be offered Wheat-gram-soya barfi and dalia-moong dal khichdi.

Special nutritious food has been arranged for severely malnourished children. Nutritious halwa (6 months-1 year); Nutritious halwa called Bal Sanjevani (1-3 years); Nutri-

tious halwa and nutritious dalia (3-6 years).

This recipe-based system is a significant initiative to provide balanced and nutritious food to children as well as pregnant and lactating women. In accordance with Government of India standards, the recipes include calories, protein and 11 essential micronutrients.

To strengthen this system, state government has approved a Viability Gap Fund (VGF). Supplementary nutrition in the state has been supplied based on 2017 cost norms, which has put financial pressure on production units operating under UP Rajya Gramin Ajivika Mission.

To ensure that beneficiaries receive quality "Take-Home Ration" without compromising standards, government found it necessary to compensate production units for potential losses through a Viability Gap Fund. Accordingly, the state government has decided to provide financial support to these production units operating through SRLM.

In this regard, state cabinet has approved a total VGF of Rs 301.19 crore, which will strengthen the functioning of production units and ensure continuous supply of high-quality supplementary nutrition to beneficiaries according to prescribed standards.

KTR slams Speaker's verdict on defection issue, targets Rahul Gandhi

Hyderabad: K T Rama Rao, Working President of the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS), on Thursday criticised the Telangana Assembly Speaker's decision on disqualification petitions against defecting MLAs, terming the verdict "undemocratic and cruel."

Reacting to the ruling delivered by Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Speaker of the Telangana Legislative Assembly, KTR alleged that the decision was influenced by political pressure.

According to him, the developments surrounding the disqualification petitions were part of a broader political strategy being played by senior Rahul Gandhi of the Indian National Congress.

KTR claimed that the

Speaker had been subjected to heavy pressure while taking the decision and alleged that the ruling Congress party was orchestrating the entire defection episode.

The BRS leader said it was unjust to allow a legislator to be elected as an MLA on one party's ticket to contest a parliamentary election under another party's banner without facing disqualification.

He argued that such actions undermine the principles of the anti-defection law and weaken democratic accountability. According to KTR, allowing such political shifts without consequences amounts to a direct attack on democratic values.

He further alleged that the Congress party was damaging both the Constitution

and the spirit of democracy through such political practices.

KTR also questioned Rahul Gandhi's stance on the anti-defection law and his repeated statements about protecting constitutional institutions.

Referring to Rahul Gandhi's public outreach programmes across the country, KTR said the Congress leader frequently speaks about safeguarding the Constitution while addressing people in different states.

However, he claimed that the developments in Telangana contradicted those statements. KTR also criticised remarks made by MLAs Danam Nagender and Kadiyam Srihari regarding the defection issue.

Erratic weather likely in Kashmir till March 19: MeT

Srinagar: The Meteorological Department on Wednesday predicted erratic weather conditions across Jammu and Kashmir till March 19, with intermittent spells of rain and snow expected in several parts of the union Territory.

Over the last 24 hours precipitation across Kashmir remained scattered, with some areas receiving rainfall while many places stayed dry.

According to the Meteorological Centre in Srinagar, the weather will remain generally cloudy till Thursday, with light to moderate rain in the plains and snowfall in higher reaches at scattered to many places.

The MeT department said that the weather is expected to remain generally dry on March 13 and 14, providing a brief relief after the ongoing wet spell.

However, cloud cover is likely to return on March 15 and 16, with the possibility of light rain in plains and



snowfall in higher altitudes during the night of March 15.

And morning of March 16 at scattered locations.

Officials said that on March 17, the weather will remain generally cloudy with chances of light rain or snowfall in higher reaches at isolated places towards the night.

From March 18 to 19, cloudy conditions are likely to persist with the possibility of light rain or snowfall at scattered places across the region. Thereafter, from March 20 to 21, the weather is expected to remain gener-

ally dry, although a brief spell of light rain at isolated places cannot be ruled out.

The department has also issued an advisory warning of possible temporary traffic disruptions over higher reaches.

And important mountain passes due to the weather conditions.

Meanwhile, the MeT department said night temperatures across Kashmir and Jammu divisions have remained significantly above normal.

Minimum temperatures were recorded 6 to 11 degrees Celsius above normal at many places in Kashmir division and 6 to 9 degrees Celsius above normal at several locations in Jammu division.

The lowest minimum temperature in Kashmir was recorded at Gulmarg at 2.4 degrees Celsius, while Bhaderwah in Jammu division recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 9.8 degrees Celsius.

Akhilesh alleges rampant illegal mining, corruption in UP

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav has stated that illegal mining and other illegal activities are rampant in Uttar Pradesh. "Corruption and the plunder of resources are rampant under this government. All records of corruption have been broken. Illegal mining is taking place openly," he said in a statement here on Wednesday. Akhilesh Yadav stated that it appears Delhi and Lucknow are in collusion in this matter, and that's why neither Delhi's drones nor binoculars can see this illegal mining in broad daylight.

"As for the people of Lucknow, they have already put on dark glasses as an excuse, so that they will not see the crime, nor will they have



to take action, and the spoils will automatically reach their homes," he said.

He said that now, when they see the videos of direct evidence of illegal mining, the honorable people will again say that it is AI-generated. Akhilesh Yadav stated that ever since the BJP government came to power, the state's resources have been

openly looted, and from top to bottom, everyone is united in corruption. "Illegal mining, the illegal drug trade, and the illegal felling of forests and trees continue unabated. The state has never seen such a plunder of resources and the BJP government has ruined Uttar Pradesh," he said. "Both engines of the BJP's double-

engine government have failed. The public is facing severe shortages of essential commodities. People are distressed. Previously, farmers were unable to get fertilizers and had to stand in line. Now, people are facing difficulties in getting gas cylinders for cooking. Long lines are forming for gas. Hotels and shops are on the verge of closure due to gas shortages. Black marketing is rampant. The public is distressed, yet the BJP government, its ministers, and leaders continue to lie after lie. They have nothing to offer but false assurances. The BJP government is responsible for these conditions. The BJP, which practices hate politics, has no concern for the people," the SP president claimed.

MUMBAI

Aryan Age | 03

59 Flights Cancelled at Mumbai Airport Amid Middle East Tensions

Mumbai : Flight operations at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport faced disruptions on Wednesday as several services were cancelled due to aviation uncertainties linked to escalating tensions in the Middle East. Airport data showed that a total of 59 flight movements were cancelled during the day, affecting both incoming



and outgoing services at the airport.

Among the cancelled operations, 27 were arriving flights while 32 were departures, leading to disruption in scheduled air traffic movements. The cancellations affected passengers travelling on domestic as well as international routes through Mumbai's primary aviation hub. However, the number of cancellations on Wednesday was low-

er than the previous day, providing some relief to travellers.

On Tuesday, the airport had recorded 92 cancelled flight movements, including 30 arrivals and 62 departures.

The reduction in cancellations indicated a slight stabilisation in flight operations, though airlines continue to remain cautious.

TBM Installation Begins for GMLR Twin Tunnels in Aarey

Mumbai : The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has begun a crucial stage in the construction of the twin tunnels under Phase 3B of the Goregaon Mulund Link Road project, with parts of a Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) being lowered into a shaft at Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari in the Aarey Colony area.

The civic body shared updates and visuals of the operation on social media plat-

form X on Wednesday.

The process involves lowering several large components of the Tunnel Boring Machine into a deep shaft from where the tunnelling work will eventually begin.

Officials said the operation marks an important milestone in preparing the machine that will excavate the twin tunnels planned under the project.

Bhushan Gagrani, Municipal Commissioner of the

BMC, visited the site to inspect the work and review the progress of the installation process.

Specialised heavy-duty cranes with lifting capacities of 800 metric tonnes and 350 metric tonnes have been deployed to carry out the complex operation.

These cranes are being used to carefully lower the TBM components into the shaft while ensuring safety and precision.

LPG Shortage Hits BMC Canteen; Stocks May Last Only Two Days

Mumbai : The ongoing shortage of commercial LPG cylinders has begun affecting key civic facilities in the city, with the canteen at the headquarters of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation facing an acute shortage of cooking gas.

Canteen manager Danny Biswas said the facility currently has a very limited supply of LPG and the remaining stock is expected to last only until today or tomorrow.

According to Biswas, the issue has already been formally reported to the labour department and the management is awaiting a response regarding the supply of cylinders.

He explained that the situation has become critical as the canteen provides food to a large number of municipal staff working at the civic headquarters.

Officials said the problem has been linked to international tensions in the Middle East, which have affected supply chains and disrupted maritime trade routes.

As a result, commercial gas stocks used by restaurants, hotels and institutional kitchens have tightened considerably.

Biswas noted that the problem has also forced several nearby government office canteens to suspend operations temporarily.

With those facilities closed, more employees have begun visiting the BMC headquarters canteen



for meals.

This sudden increase in footfall has placed additional pressure on the already limited gas supply at the facility.

The canteen management has therefore begun exploring alternative cooking arrangements in case fresh LPG cylinders are not delivered soon.

These could include electric stoves or induction-based systems to continue preparing food for staff if the LPG shortage persists.

Apart from cooking gas, the canteen is also facing difficulties in sourcing other essential supplies.

As a result, the canteen staff have had to purchase these items directly from local markets instead of relying on regular suppliers.

Several restaurants and food establishments have reported difficulties in maintaining normal

operations due to the lack of commercial LPG cylinders.

Earlier, the West Zone of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation instructed catering licensees to adopt alternative cooking methods.

These measures include the use of microwaves, induction cooktops and other electric appliances across railway catering facilities.

The advisory particularly applies to static catering units such as Food Plazas, Refreshment Rooms and Jan Ahaars operating at railway stations.

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NIA court seeks prosecution response on Sachin Waze discharge plea

Mumbai : A special NIA court has directed the prosecution to file a reply by March 13 to a discharge plea filed by dismissed encounter specialist police officer Sachin Waze in the Antilia bomb scare case and the subsequent murder of Thane trader Mansukh Hiran. In his plea, Waze argued that the prosecution's case rests on mere allegations without admissible evidence and highlighted several investigative flaws.

In his plea, running into more than 150 pages, Waze questioned the prosecution case from the receipt of the alleged threat note to the alleged murder of Hiran. The 150-page petition challenges the entire case

and disputes the motive attributed by the NIA regarding the placement of an explosives-laden vehicle near the Ambani residence. Waze claimed there was no material on record to suggest that anyone, including Ambani family members, feared death as alleged. He also questioned the applicability of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the transfer of the probe to the NIA, arguing that the alleged threat note could easily be inferred as a hoax or prank rather than a terrorist act. Questioning the applicability of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the transfer of the probe to the NIA, Waze said.

Family's Written Permission Mandatory for Initiatives in Memory of Ajit Pawar

Mumbai : In the aftermath of former Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's demise, it has now been made mandatory to obtain official written permission from his family before launching any new initiative, trust, or memorial in his name.

The Charity Commissioner of Maharashtra has issued clear directives in this regard and informed all public institutions and registration offices across the state.

Due to Ajit Pawar's popularity, several groups have initiated efforts to build memorials, establish trusts, conduct social initiatives, or name government and semi-government schemes after him. However, to maintain proper

regulation and prevent any misuse of his name, the Pawar family has taken a significant step by introducing a formal permission process.

In this context, Sunetra Pawar's Special Executive Officer, Sunilkumar Musale, submitted an official letter to the Charity Commissioner. The letter states that any persons or organisations attempting to construct memorials, establish institutions, or undertake public initiatives in memory of Ajit Pawar must first obtain written permission and a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Pawar family.

Taking cognizance of the letter, the Charity Commissioner has initiated immediate

Editorial

Gulf War and Fuel Crisis

The war raging in West Asia is no longer confined to the battlefield. Its repercussions are directly affecting economies around the world and the daily lives of ordinary people. Iran's strong response to the US and Israeli military actions has increased instability in the Gulf region and is having a serious impact on the global fuel supply chain. The conflict has posed a major economic challenge to the entire world due to the rapid increase in oil and gas prices, transportation disruptions and fears of inflation.

The terrible consequences of the raging war in West Asia are no longer confined to the battlefield, but have reached the doorsteps of ordinary people. Eight days after the US and Israel launched a military attack on Iran, the entire Gulf region has been plunged into a state of war due to Iran's strong response. The Gulf countries are considered the world's energy hubs; therefore, even a small movement there can cause a slowdown in the global economy. As the scope and intensity of the current war increases day by day, the global supply chain has completely collapsed, and the signs of the entire world burning in the fire of inflation are clear due to the disruptions in the supply of fuel and gas. This war is no longer just a power struggle between two or three nations, but is becoming a huge event that will shake the economic cycle of the modern world.

Crude oil prices in the world market have broken all records in the last four years. The prices, which were at \$ 72 per barrel before the war, have now directly crossed \$ 110. The Gulf countries have stopped oil production in the shadow of the attack, and most importantly, the 'Strait of Hormuz' has become a battlefield. As much as 20 percent of the world's total oil supply is transported through this narrow sea route. However, Iranian drone and missile attacks, as well as the presence of the US Navy, have disrupted cargo ships from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Analysts believe that this is the most serious oil crisis since the 1970s. The backbone of any country's economy is fuel supply. From industries to transportation, every sector depends on fuel for its operations. With this main source now in limbo, India and the world are facing an unprecedented economic crisis.

While crude oil prices are moving towards \$120 in the international market, the central government has promised not to increase the prices of petrol and diesel for the time being. However, given the global situation, there is a big doubt about how long this relief will last. A crisis as acute as fuel has now arisen regarding cooking gas. Due to the disruption in the gas supply chain, the price of a domestic gas cylinder has increased by Rs 60 and the price of a commercial cylinder by Rs 120. In India, the number of gas connections has increased significantly in the last few years, and the country is heavily dependent on imports. Currently, the supply of commercial gas has almost come to a standstill in metros like Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai. This is having a serious impact on the hotel industry, with more than 20 percent of hotels in Mumbai alone having to close. Since the hotel business is an important part of the urban economy, its collapse is bound to have an adverse impact on employment and the tourism sector. Along with urban areas, the gas shortage is also starting to affect rural areas. Complaints have increased that consumers are not getting cylinders on time despite booking them. In this time of crisis, black marketing tendencies have reared their heads, and in some cities, cylinders are being sold for Rs 1,500 to 2,000. At such a time, the government needs to take strict steps to stop hoarding and black marketing, rather than just making promises. If the war continues to rage, the government will have no other option but to provide relief to the common man through subsidies. The impact of any war is not only on the border, but also on industrial production, employment and GDP. It will be difficult for a developing country like India to digest this wave of inflation, as it will have to spend the funds required for development work on fuel imports.

The dogmatic policies of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are contributing to the seriousness of this crisis at the global level. Due to the shallow politics of these two leaders and their attitude of teaching each other lessons, no one is left to worry about the global economy. Given Trump's nature, there are no signs that this war will end soon.

However, if this war continues, the economic and human losses to the world will be immeasurable. Although India has started considering alternative sources to overcome the fuel crisis, peace in the Gulf countries is the only way to meet the urgent need. It has become imperative for the world community to use effective diplomacy to stop this war, rather than just playing the role of a spectator.

After all, the result of any war is only destruction. If this war in West Asia escalates to the level of a nuclear war or a protracted conflict, it will not take long for the world's growth rate to go to zero. Fuel and gas shortages are just the beginning, and food security issues may also arise soon. Therefore, it is necessary to curb these belligerent tendencies by considering human values and the global economy. India should use its strategic autonomy to ensure smooth fuel supply through Russia or other alternative sources, so that domestic inflation can be avoided. Until the superpowers realize that peace is the only way to progress, the common people will have to burn in the fire of such crises. The longer this conflict in the Gulf region lasts, the more severe its economic and social consequences will be. Many countries of the world may have to face difficult situations due to the increase in fuel prices, gas shortages and a wave of inflation. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt the path of diplomacy and dialogue at the global level to resolve this conflict. Otherwise, these flames of war will not be limited to the battlefield only, but they will also keep the world economy and the lives of the common people burning for a long time.

The agriculture and allied activities sector have historically formed the backbone of the Indian economy, making substantial contributions to national income, employment generation, and rural livelihoods. With nearly 46.1 per cent of the population dependent on agriculture and allied activities for their sustenance, ensuring financial security and improved access to institutional credit for farmers remains a central policy priority for the Government. In this context, a set of targeted interventions has been introduced to strengthen agricultural finance, with particular emphasis on expanding and modernizing the Kisan Credit Card (KCC). The Revised Kisan Credit Card (2020) scheme seeks to ensure that farmers have access to adequate and timely credit for a wide range of agricultural requirements, including short-term crop cultivation, post-harvest operations, marketing-related expenses, household consumption needs, working capital for farm maintenance, and investment credit for allied and non-farm activities.

The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme, introduced in 1998, was designed to simplify and expedite farmers' access to short-term institutional credit for crop production. It provides working capital and investment credit for allied activities and covers post-harvest and marketing expenses, thereby offering comprehensive financial support to enhance farm incomes. To further improve the affordability of credit under the KCC, the Government launched the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS) as a Central Sector Scheme in 2006-07. The scheme ensures farmers have access to credit at affordable rates through the Kisan Credit Card (KCC). The scheme also supports farmers in recovering from natural calamities and promotes timely loan repayment, thereby easing overall financial stress. Over time, it expanded to cover allied and non-farm activities, with the Revised KCC Scheme (2020) providing integrated, single-window credit support.

The revised KCC offers a RuPay-enabled card with flexible withdrawals, digital payments, and one-time documentation, making access to credit simple and efficient. It covers cultivation, post-harvest needs, allied, and non-farm activities, and is implemented through commercial, regional rural, and cooperative banks to ensure broad outreach.

The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme covers a wide range of farmer categories to promote inclusive and equitable access to institutional credit. It extends coverage to: individual farmers and joint borrowers who are owner-cultivators, tenant farmers, oral lessees, and sharecroppers.

In addition, the scheme also includes Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), including groups formed by tenant farmers and sharecroppers, thereby ensuring broader financial inclusion across diverse farming communities.

To streamline farmer onboarding and improve access to institutional credit, facilitative measures have been implemented under the Kisan Credit Card.

A simplified one-page KCC application form has been introduced, with basic applicant details pre-filled from banks' PM-KISAN records, and farmers are required to submit copies of land records and information on the crops cultivated.

The form is widely disseminated through national newspaper advertisements and made available for download on the websites of all Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), the Depart-

Kisan Credit Card: Fueling Growth in Agriculture



ment of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (agricoop.gov.in), and the PM-KISAN portal (pmkisan.gov.in).

Common Service Centres (CSCs) have been authorized to assist in completing and digitally transmitting applications to the concerned bank branches, thereby expanding outreach.

To strengthen the implementation and monitoring of the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, the Government launched the Kisan Rin Portal (KRP) in September 2023 as a unified digital platform that integrates: farmer profiles, loan disbursement data, interest subvention claims, and scheme performance metrics.

For farmers, the portal simplifies access to low-cost institutional credit, expands coverage to allied activities such as dairy, poultry, fisheries, and beekeeping, and enables faster loan processing through seamless digital integration with banks and cooperative institutions.

For banks and lending agencies, KRP facilitates the automated submission and processing of Interest Subvention (IS) and Prompt Repayment Incentive (PRI) claims, reduces delays

A flexible limit of Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000 may be sanctioned based on factors such as landholding size and cropping patterns. The composite KCC limit is to be

verified delivery architecture to ensure broad geographic coverage and inclusive access to institutional credit for farmers nationwide. Across these

inputs, thereby contributing to enhanced farm productivity and higher incomes.

Affordable Institutional Credit: The scheme continues to offer institutional



fixed for a period of five years. In cases where higher credit is required due to changes in cropping patterns or scale of finance, the limit may be revised in accordance with prescribed estimation norms. This limit is designed to cover: post-har-

vest and warehouse-related credit requirements, routine farm and consumption expenses, and short-term investments, including the purchase of farm equipment or the establishment of an allied enterprise, as assessed by the branch manager and independent of land valuation.

More than 7.72 crore Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs) are currently operational across the country, with an outstanding credit amounting to Rs. 10.2 lakh crore. This reflects the extensive reach of the KCC scheme in facilitating access to institutional credit for farmers and underscores its critical role in supporting agricultural and allied activities through affordable, timely financing.

Under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC), term loans and composite credit limits are structured differently for marginal and non-marginal farmers, taking into account their landholding size, investment capacity, and livelihood requirements. While non-marginal farmers are provided asset-linked term loans for long-term agricultural and allied investments, marginal farmers are provided with flexible, need-based credit limits that integrate short-term production credit, consumption needs, and minor investment requirements within a single composite Kisan Credit Card limit.

institutions, a total of 1,998.7 lakh kisan credit card applications have been processed, of which 631.5 lakh were through commercial banks, 337.2 lakh through regional rural banks, and 1030.0 lakh through cooperative banks. It reflects the broad institutional participation in the KCC implementation and highlights the central role of cooperative banks in extending agricultural credit, particularly at the grassroots level.

In 2018-19, the Government of India extended the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) facility to fishers and fish farmers to meet their working capital requirements, thereby enabling timely access to institutional credit for fisheries and aquaculture activities. The total KCC issuance peaked, reflecting the scheme's expanding reach to support diverse agricultural activities.

The facts and figures indicate a strong institutional response to credit demand in allied agricultural activities. In animal husbandry, the exceptionally high acceptance rate, 55.08 lakh out of 55.9 lakh applications, reflects broad eligibility, effective screening mechanisms, and sustained policy support for the sector. The sanctioning of 39.22 lakh applications further suggests substantial credit flow, translating into actual financial support.

Similarly, in fisheries, 6.83 lakh applications were received, of which 6.77 lakh were accepted. The sanctioning of 4.82 lakh applications indicates meaningful conversion of demand into credit access. Overall, these outcomes underscore the growing integration of allied sectors into formal credit systems.

By easing access to working capital, the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme is facilitating timely investment in quality agricultural

inputs, thereby contributing to enhanced farm productivity and higher incomes.

Under these provisions, interest on loans may not be charged for up to one year in cases where crops are affected by disasters. In severe cases, the relief period can be extended for as long as five years, helping farmers recover from losses and stabilise their agricultural activities. Another major benefit of the KCC scheme is the provision of collateral-free loans for smaller amounts. Farmers can avail loans up to ₹2 lakh without providing collateral, significantly reducing barriers that often prevent small farmers from accessing formal credit.

it. This feature is particularly beneficial for small and marginal farmers who may not have sufficient assets to pledge as security for bank loans.

According to official data, nearly 76 percent of agricultural credit accounts under the scheme are held by small and marginal farmers.

This highlights the scheme's critical role in empowering vulnerable sections of the farming community and promoting financial inclusion in rural areas.

Access to institutional credit through the KCC system also enables farmers to invest in better agricultural inputs and modern farming techniques.

With improved seeds, fertilisers, irrigation equipment and farm machinery, farmers are able to enhance productivity and increase crop yields.

Higher productivity ultimately contributes to improved incomes, stronger resilience against economic shocks and greater sustainability in agriculture.

To further strengthen the reach of the scheme, the Government of India has undertaken several initiatives aimed at improving accessibility and awareness among farmers.

These efforts involve coordinated action by the Union and state governments along with institutions such as the Reserve Bank of India and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Together with banking institutions, these agencies have launched extensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns to increase awareness about the benefits of the KCC scheme.

Farmer outreach programmes and awareness drives are being conducted to ensure that eligible farmers understand how to apply for and utilise Kisan Credit Cards effectively.

Under the broader economic initiative Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, the government has also launched a nationwide KCC Saturation Drive.

The campaign aims to ensure that all eligible farmers receive access to the scheme, including those involved in allied activities such as dairy farming, animal husbandry and fisheries.

As part of the drive, district-level weekly camps are organised to facilitate applications and provide on-the-spot assistance for farmers seeking KCC coverage.

In addition, the introduction of the RuPay Kisan Credit Card has further improved the accessibility and usability of the scheme.

The RuPay-enabled KCC allows farmers to conveniently access short-term agricultural credit through digital payment systems.

This development has encouraged digital transactions in rural areas and reduced farmers' dependence on cash-based borrowing and informal lending sources. By enabling secure and interoperable payments, the system also allows farmers to benefit from interest subvention schemes offered by the government.

Collectively, these initiatives have strengthened financial inclusion and improved the delivery of institutional credit in rural areas.

Access to affordable and timely credit remains essential for sustaining agricultural livelihoods and supporting rural economies.

The Kisan Credit Card scheme has addressed this need by establishing a reliable credit framework that supports crop cultivation, allied activities and post-harvest requirements. Over time, the scheme has evolved from a basic credit facility into a comprehensive financial instrument aligned with farmers' production cycles and income flows.

Gas supply in Nashik is stable, and teams formed to prevent gas black marketing

Nashik: Gas supply to customers in Nashik is normal, and there is no shortage, District Collector Ayush Prasad said on Wednesday.

Teams have been formed at the district and taluka levels to prevent black marketing, the Collector said and appealed to the public not to pay attention to any rumours.

In the Nashik district, work is being carried out in accordance with the District leaflet issued by the Centre on March 9, and the guidelines issued by the State Government on March 8. Internal circulation guidelines of various oil market-



ing companies are being followed.

Teams have been formed

at every department, taluka, and district level to prevent black marketing. No complaints have been received so far, the District Collector said. The administration is addressing all these matters.

Complaints had surfaced that the online number provided by the company for customers to book gas is frequently disconnected. In such situations, customers can contact the company by calling 1800.

The District Collector also clarified that if these problems occur locally, he will discuss them with the district supply officials and find a solution.

FDA conducts search operations in Nagpur to prevent LPG hoarding; police on alert

Nagpur: After the government invoked the Essential Commodities Act across the country, the administration in Nagpur has stepped up vigilance to prevent possible hoarding and black marketing of LPG cylinders.

Officials said the move is aimed at ensuring that the supply of cooking gas remains smooth and that consumers do not face artificial shortages created by illegal stockpiling.

Following the directive, the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) has launched a series of search operations across the city.

The inspections are being carried out amid apprehensions that some traders might attempt to hoard LPG cylinders or sell them at in-

flated prices during periods of increased demand.

FDA teams have begun checking hotels, restaurants and LPG warehouses in several parts of the city to verify stock levels.

During these inspections, officials are examining whether cylinders are being stored illegally or diverted for sale in the black market.

Authorities said they are particularly monitoring commercial establishments that use large numbers of LPG cylinders for their daily operations.

Officials explained that the purpose of the inspections is to ensure compliance with existing regulations governing the storage and sale of LPG.

If any irregularities are

found, strict legal action will be taken against those responsible, they said.

The administration is concerned that rumours or fears of shortages could encourage some traders to exploit the situation by hoarding supplies.

Such practices can disrupt the distribution system and make it difficult for households to obtain cylinders at regular prices.

To prevent this, FDA teams are carefully verifying inventory records and cross-checking them with actual stock available at establishments.

Meanwhile, the Nagpur Police have also intensified surveillance to prevent illegal activities related to LPG distribution.

Thunderstorm and Rain forecast for parts of Maharashtra; Heat and humidity likely in Mumbai and Konkan

Pune: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted rain accompanied by strong winds in several parts of Maharashtra over the coming days.

According to the weather department, districts including Pune, Nanded, Beed and Parbhani may experience a sudden change in weather conditions.

Meteorologists have forecast thunderstorms accompanied by gusty winds and light to moderate rainfall in these regions.

Officials said the weather system developing over parts of the state could lead to intermittent showers and

brief spells of strong winds. Residents in the affected districts have been advised to remain cautious, particularly during periods of thunderstorms and sudden rainfall.

Authorities have also warned that strong winds may cause minor disruptions and urged people to take necessary precautions.

Farmers and those working outdoors have been advised to keep track of weather updates and secure equipment or materials that could be affected by gusty winds.

Meanwhile, the weather situation is expected to re-

main different in coastal areas of the state.

Cities such as Mumbai and the wider Konkan region are likely to witness rising temperatures and increasing humidity levels.

Meteorologists said the coastal belt may experience hot and uncomfortable weather conditions over the next few days.

The combination of high temperatures and moisture in the air is expected to make the weather feel particularly humid in these areas. Officials noted that humidity levels could rise further, especially during the afternoon and evening hours.

Four-year-old survives 50 injuries in stray dog attack; returns home after 11 days of hospitalisation

Ch. Sambhajinagar:

A four-year-old girl who was critically injured in a stray dog attack in Ch. Sambhajinagar has recovered after intensive medical treatment, with doctors saying the child survived more than fifty wounds following eleven days of care in hospital. The girl was finally discharged and returned home smiling, bringing relief and joy to her family.

The injured child, Ayesha Syed, aged four, is a resident of the Narigaon area. The incident occurred

in the early hours of February 28 when her family had woken up at around three in the morning for the (Saheri) pre-dawn meal during the month of Ramzan. At that time, Ayesha was standing near the door of her house when five to six stray dogs suddenly attacked her.

The dogs bit and clawed the child repeatedly, causing severe injuries across her body. Within moments, she had sustained more than fifty wounds. Her family rushed her immediately to Ghati Hospital, where doctors began emergency treat-

ment in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU).

Doctors administered Anti Rabies Serum (ARS) and Anti Rabies Vaccine (ARV) to prevent rabies infection in every wound. Along with this, she was given saline, antibiotics and other essential treatment to stabilise her condition and prevent further complications.

The treatment was carried out under the guidance of hospital dean Dr Shivaji Sukre and head of the paediatrics department Dr Prabha Khire.

With continuous treatment and careful monitoring, Ayesha's condition gradually improved and her wounds began healing. After eleven days of treatment, doctors discharged her from the hospital on Tuesday. The doctors advised the family to continue follow-up visits at the paediatric outpatient department for further vaccination and medical check-ups.

The moment of Ayesha's return home was emotional for the family. Her grandmother, Naseem Syed Mukhtar, said the doc-

tors at Ghati Hospital had given the child a new life. To celebrate her recovery, the family dressed her in new clothes before taking her home, and she is now cheerful and recovering well.

Following complaints from local residents after the incident, authorities captured eight stray dogs that had been roaming near the family's house. The return of the smile on the toddler's face has become a symbol of the relentless efforts of the doctors who treated her.

Govt fixes chickpea procurement price at ₹5,875 per quintal; online registration begins, nine centres approved

Ch. Sambhajinagar:

The process for procurement of chickpea under the Minimum Support Price scheme for the 2025-26 season has begun in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district, with farmers now able to register online to sell their produce at the government-fixed rate.

The procurement programme is being implemented jointly by the Maharashtra State Cooperative Marketing Federation, Mumbai, and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF),

following the support price announced by the Central Government.

According to officials, the online registration of farmers as well as the procurement process started on 1 March 2026. Farmers intending to sell their chickpea crop under the scheme must complete their online registration within the prescribed period from 1 March 2026 to 31 March 2026.

Under the scheme, the government has fixed the support price for chickpea

at 5875 rupees per quintal. Registered farmers will be able to sell their produce through the authorised procurement centres during the procurement period scheduled from 1 March 2026 to 29 April 2026.

To ensure convenience for farmers across the district, the NCCF office has approved nine procurement centres. These centres will operate in the talukas of Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Gangapur, Vaijapur, Khultabad, Kannad, Soygaon, Sil-

lod, Phulambri and Paithan.

District Marketing Officer V. U. Rathod has appealed to chickpea growers to complete their online registration within the specified dates and take advantage of the government's procurement scheme offering the assured support price.

The authorities have urged farmers not to delay registration so that they can sell their produce smoothly through the approved procurement centres during the procurement period.

Maha Governor pays tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Dr Ambedkar and Veer Savarkar Memorial

Mumbai: On the first day after assuming office, Maharashtra Governor Jishnu Dev Varma offered floral tributes to the equestrian statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Dadar, Mumbai, on Wednesday.

The Mayor of Mumbai, Ritu Tawde, was also present.

Thereafter, the Governor visited Chaityabhoomi and paid floral tributes at the memorial of the architect of the Constitution, Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The

Trisharan Buddha Vandana was recited in the presence of the Governor.

Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde, Bhante Dr Rahul Bodhi Mahathero, General Secretary of the Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Mahaparinirvan Din Samanvay Samiti, and Nagasen Kamble were present.

Pratap Kamble, Bhikaji Kamble and Pratik Kamble from the Indian Buddhist Mahasabha presented a copy of the Constitution to the Governor.

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma also visited the Swatantryaveer Savarkar National Memorial and paid floral tributes to the bust of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde, former Member of Parliament Rahul Shewale, Executive President of the memorial Ranjit Savarkar and Treasurer Manjiri Marathe were present. The Governor was presented with a memento of Veer Savarkar as well as books on Savarkar.

ACB officials nab three for accepting bribe

Kolhapur: Officials from the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in the Satara division have arrested three individuals, including the president of an educational institution, a library clerk and a private agent, for allegedly accepting a bribe of ₹3 lakh from a complainant in connection with a promotion to the post of professor.

The arrested persons have been identified as Ajit Ramchandra Patil (59), president of the Chandraraj Patil Rural Education Institutions;

Anil Sadashiv Gujar (42), a library clerk; and Ravindra Ganapati Pawar (36), a private agent.

According to officials, the action was carried out by the ACB team following a complaint regarding an alleged demand for a bribe in exchange for facilitating a promotion in a college.

The complainant, who works as an assistant professor at Shahaji College, approached ACB authorities after being allegedly asked to pay ₹3 lakh to obtain a



promotion letter for the post of professor. In a press release, officials said the complainant reported that the demand for the bribe was made

by Ajit Ramchandra Patil and Anil Sadashiv Gujar. The accused allegedly promised to help secure the promotion letter if the complainant paid

the demanded amount.

After receiving the complaint, ACB officials verified the information and decided to conduct a trap operation to catch the suspects in the act. During the operation, the complainant was instructed to hand over the bribe amount under the supervision of the ACB team.

According to officials, private agent Ravindra Ganapati Pawar accepted the ₹3 lakh bribe amount from the complainant on behalf of the other accused.

Mahajan reviews preparations for Simhastha Kumbh Mela in Nashik, asks officials to ensure quality facilities

Nashik: Girish Mahajan, Maharashtra's Minister for Water Resources (Vidarbha, Tapi and Konkan Irrigation Development Corporation), Disaster Management and Kumbh Mela, on Wednesday reviewed various development works being undertaken in preparation for the Simhastha Kumbh Mela 2027 to be held in Nashik and Trim-bakeshwar.

During the review meeting, Mahajan directed officials to ensure that all facilities for devotees are carefully planned, executed with high quality standards and completed within the stipulated timeframe, as crores of pilgrims are expected to attend the religious event.

Shekhar Singh, Commissioner of the Kumbh Mela Authority, attended the meeting in person. Senior officials including Ayush Prasad, District Collector of Nashik; Manisha Khatri, Municipal Commissioner of Nashik; and Omkar Pawar, Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad, participated virtually along with officers from various government departments.

Officials from the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), the Deputy Director of Land Records from Niphad, the Nashik Sub-Divisional Magistrate and other departmental representatives were also part of the meeting conduct-



ed to assess the progress of the preparations.

Mahajan emphasised that the Simhastha Kumbh Mela is not merely a religious gathering but a grand representation of India's spiritual and cultural heritage.

He said it is the government's responsibility to ensure that the millions of devotees visiting from across the country and abroad are provided with safe, convenient and well-organised facilities. The minister urged all departments to work in close coordination and give priority to completing the projects required for the mega religious

event. During the meeting, Mahajan reviewed the progress of several key infrastructure projects, including the development of the Nashik Circular Road, Trimbak DP Road and the Trimbak Darshan Path. He also examined works related to the redevelopment of the Dwarka Circle area, infrastructure facilities associated with Ozar Airport and improvements along Ghotiwale Road. In addition, the minister assessed the status of construction works such as employee housing colonies, development of river ghats and other essential facilities required to handle the expected influx of pilgrims.

Mitkari urges narco test on VSR's Singh in air crash case, alleges his underworld links

Mumbai: Ajit Pawar-led NCP MLA Amol Mitkari today urged that a narco test must be conducted on Delhi-based air charter company VSR Ventures director VK Singh, since he has alleged underworld connections and also allegedly threatened the family of flight attendant Pinky Mali, who was on the ill-fated aircraft which crashed on January 28 at Baramati, killing late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

Ajit Pawar-led NCP MLA Amol Mitkari visited the hospitalised mother of Pinky Mali. Speaking to media persons after his visit, Mitkari referred to an audio clip which was with Pinky Mali's mother and said, "When I met Pinky Mali's mother, she played an audio for me. Pinky Mali's family has been threatened not to speak to the media about the air crash."

"V K Singh has links with the underworld and a narco test must be conducted on him," Mitkari demanded. Mitkari also informed



that considering the serious nature of the statement made by VSR Ventures flight attendant Pinky Mali's mother, Ajit Pawar's younger son Jai Pawar will meet the Mali family soon. Meanwhile, VSR Ventures Director V K Singh, who recently recorded his statement before the CID, blamed pilot Captain Sumit Kapoor for the January 28 air crash, which killed the late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

VK Singh was questioned by the CID for three days. According to Singh, Captain Sumit Kapoor is at fault for the January 28 air crash which killed every-

body on board including flight attendant Pinky Mali and the late Ajit Pawar.

"I am not at all at fault in this. If I am at fault, punish me severely," VK Singh told the CID which is yet to file any FIR so far. Reacting to Singh's statement to the CID, Sharad Pawar-led NCP MLA Rohit Pawar said, "The CID has stated that the investigation into the air crash is merely at the beginning stage. It is not known what to say about the credibility of the recently released report of the AAIB. Sometimes news is spread that the black box burned and sometimes it is suggested that it was re-

covered. If what was actually recorded in the black box has not come out yet, then how does VK Singh know that it was the pilot's fault within a short time after the accident?"

"Singh has claimed that the air crash was due to the pilot's fault. So perhaps his plan is to put somebody else before the barrel of the gun and slip away. Until concrete and reliable information about Ajit Dada's air crash is released by the investigating agency, nobody should believe in baseless discussions," Rohit Pawar said.

Earlier, Rohit Pawar said, "Former union Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel, I request you to answer. Did you attend the wedding of Rohit Singh, the son of the owner of VSR Ventures? If you did, then you should tell the people who were the other leaders present at that wedding and which parties they belonged to. Show Maharashtra whether you are selfish or a real Ajit Dada follower."

'Ranabaali' rooted in a dark chapter of British Raj famine history

Mumbai: "Ranabaali" starring newlywed Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandana, is linked to the tragic famine of the British Raj era.

Mounted by Mythri Movie Makers, the film is set to be one of the biggest films of 2026. This historical drama will bring to the big screen the real events and unheard stories of Indian history, which have rarely been talked about.

It will show those chapters of history that people have forgotten. With this project, Vijay Deverakonda will be seen in a powerful character, inspired by the story of an unknown person who really needs to be recognised.

Excitement surrounding this film has been building since the first glimpse was released. Judging by the visuals, the film's story, set during the era of colonial India, is set to be powerful and emotional. The makers' aim is not just to entertain, but to uncover historical truths that many people are still unaware of.

Interestingly, the backdrop of 'Ranabaali' is connected to one of the most horrific chapters in Indian history. The story recounts the devastating famine that claimed the lives of over 10 million Indians.

The film also exposes the brutal policies of the British Raj, which plundered India to the tune of approximately \$45 trillion. Historians have debated these figures for years, but the devastating impact of colo-



nial policies can never be denied. One of the darkest periods in Indian history was the Great Famine of 1876 to 1878. In Rayalaseema, now

part of Andhra Pradesh, farmers had already been devastated by recurring droughts. When the monsoons failed in 1876, famine spread rapidly, yet grain exports continued.

Meanwhile, British official Sir Richard Temple imposed strict restrictions to reduce expenditures and even reduced rations in famine camps. Nearly 700,000 people died in Rayalaseema alone, while millions died across India.

This tragedy wasn't just a natural disaster, but the result of policies enacted in the name of empire. And it is in this world that "Ranabaali's" story is woven.

The film depicts the rebellions, both large and small, that broke out in famine-stricken Rayalaseema. In these movements, helpless people seized stored grain, refused to pay heavy taxes and fought for their lives, only to be labeled "criminals" in British records.

While their names are rarely found in official documents, the memories of these rebels who stood up against famine and injustice live on in Rayalaseema folklore.

Directed by Rahul Sankrityan and produced by Y. Ravi Shankar and Naveen Yemini of Mythri Movie Makers in association with T-Series. The film boasts a prominent cast, including international actor Arnold Vosloo, making it even more special globally.

'Ranabaali' is slated to release in theaters on September 11.

'Michael' biopic to get early-access screenings ahead of release

Mumbai: Lionsgate has announced that its much-anticipated biographical drama Michael will debut with special limited early-access screenings, giving fans an exclusive opportunity to watch the film before its official theatrical release. The project centres on the life and legacy of the legendary King of Pop, Michael Jackson, whose music and performances transformed global pop culture.

According to the studio, the film will hold one-night-only premium format screenings on Wednesday, April 22. These early shows will take place two days ahead of the film's official nationwide release scheduled for Friday, April 24.

Tickets for the special preview screenings will go on sale at 6 a.m. PT and 9 a.m. ET on Wednesday, March 11. The early release strategy is designed to build excitement among Jackson's global fan base and generate momentum ahead of the wider theatrical rollout.

The film is directed by acclaimed filmmaker Antoine Fuqua, known for delivering large-scale cinematic storytelling. Fuqua's involvement has raised expectations for a visually striking and emotionally power-



ful portrayal of Jackson's extraordinary life.

In a particularly notable casting decision, the film stars Jaafar Jackson in the titular role. Jaafar, the nephew of the late pop icon, makes his major screen debut by portraying his famous uncle in what is expected to be a defining performance of his career.

Industry publication Deadline reported that the film explores far more than Jackson's chart-topping songs. Instead, the narrative aims to delve into the personal and professional journey that shaped him into one of the most influential entertainers in modern music history.

The storyline traces Jackson's rise from a gifted child performer discovered from Jackson's early solo career are expected to be recreated on screen.

Jack 5, the iconic Motown group that first introduced his talent to the world.

From those beginnings, the film follows Jackson's transformation into a groundbreaking solo artist who set out with an ambitious goal—to become the biggest entertainer in the world. His relentless pursuit of artistic innovation ultimately helped redefine the global music industry.

The narrative also explores aspects of Jackson's life away from the stage, offering a deeper look into the personal experiences that influenced both his artistry and public persona. The filmmakers have emphasised that the story aims to balance spectacle with emotional depth.

Several iconic moments from Jackson's early solo career are expected to be recreated on screen.

Tina Ahuja: "Two years have not been great, there has been turbulence"

Mumbai: Rumours about trouble in the marriage of veteran Bollywood actor Govinda and his wife Sunita Ahuja have been circulating on social media for some time. Their daughter Tina Ahuja has now addressed the speculation, acknowledging that the past few years have been challenging for the family.

Tina spoke about the situation during a special moment featured in Sunita Ahuja's Women's Day vlog. The video captured a heartfelt celebration where

she presented her mother with flowers, thoughtful gifts and a solitaire ring. Explaining the gesture, Tina said she had decided to "hijack" the vlog to honour her mother and make the day memorable for her. She emphasised that women often spend most of their lives caring for others while neglecting their own needs. "Us women do a lot for others and we don't think about ourselves. So, I thought of doing something special for my woman," Tina said while presenting the gifts to her mother. The moment was filled with warmth and emotion, as Tina used the occasion not only to celebrate her mother but also to acknowledge her strength and dedication to the family over the years. While talking about family matters, Tina also indirectly addressed the rumours surrounding her parents' relationship.

Without going into details, she admitted that the past two years had not been easy for the family.

"Two years have not been great. There has been turbulence," she said, hinting at the difficulties they have faced.

Although speculation continues to circulate online, Tina chose to focus mainly on expressing appreciation for her mother's efforts and sacrifices. The vlog showed an emotional exchange between mother and daughter as Tina spoke about how much she values Sunita's role in the family and the support she has always provided.

Sunita, in turn, reflected on her own journey and spoke candidly about reaching a stage in life where she wants to prioritise herself after years of fulfilling family responsibilities. "Everything must be done in a limit... I have done all my duties but at this point, I have started living for myself," she said while sharing her thoughts about personal balance and self-care.

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The moment was filled with warmth and emotion, as Tina used the occasion not only to celebrate her mother but also to acknowledge her strength and dedication to the family over the years.

While talking about family matters, Tina also indirectly addressed the rumours surrounding her parents' relationship.

Although speculation continues to circulate online, Tina chose to focus mainly on expressing appreciation for her mother's efforts and sacrifices. The vlog showed an emotional exchange between mother and daughter as Tina spoke about how much she values Sunita's role in the family and the support she has always provided.

Sunita, in turn, reflected on her own journey and spoke candidly about reaching a stage in life where she wants to prioritise herself after years of fulfilling family responsibilities. "Everything must be done in a limit... I have done all my duties but at this point, I have started living for myself," she said while sharing her thoughts about personal balance and self-care.

Explaining the gesture, Tina said she had decided to "hijack" the vlog to honour her mother and make the day memorable for her. She emphasised that women often spend most of their lives caring for others while neglecting their own needs.

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Sinner survives Fonseca thriller to reach Indian Wells quarterfinals

Indian Wells: World No. 2 Jannik Sinner overcame a fierce challenge from rising Brazilian star Joao Fonseca to reach the quarterfinals of the BNP Paribas Open with a 7-6(6), 7-6(4) victory in a gripping encounter. The much-anticipated first meeting between the two young talents lived up to expectations in front of a packed crowd at Indian Wells Tennis Garden, with Sinner prevailing in key moments to secure his third quarterfinal appearance at the tournament, as per the ATP Tour website. Sinner saved three set points in the opening-set tie-break and later recovered after failing to close out the match at 5-2 in the second set before finishing strongly in another tie-break to seal the win. "Joao is an incredible player, incredible talent, very powerful from both sides. He was serving very well," Sinner said after the match. "I felt like trying to be as aggressive as possible was the key. I dropped a bit of in-



tensity at the end of the second set but he played incredible tennis out there. The atmosphere has been amazing, so I'm very happy about today's match." With the win, Sinner recorded his 97th victory at the ATP Masters 1000 level, surpassing Fabio Fognini for the most wins by an Italian in the series. The 24-year-old has now reached the quarterfinal stage in 11 of the 12 ATP Masters 1000 events he has played since the start of 2024. The opening set saw little separating the two players as both held

firm on serve before Fonseca surged ahead 5-2 in the tie-break.

However, Sinner responded with five consecutive points, including a return winner at 6-6, to snatch the set. Sinner looked set to wrap up the match comfortably when he moved ahead 5-2 in the second set, but the 19-year-old Brazilian staged a spirited comeback, breaking the Italian and forcing another tie-break with a strong run of points that lifted the Brazilian supporters in the stands.

Sharma & Kishan give India remarkable 1-2 in ICC Men's T20I batting rankings

Dubai: Left-handers Abhishek Sharma and Ishan Kishan occupy the first two positions in the ICC Men's T20I Batting Rankings in what is the first instance of an Indian batting pair making it a one-two in the format, with Kishan also eyeing the chance to become the fourth Indian to top the T20I batting rankings.

Sharma is currently on 875 rating points, his 21-ball 52 against New Zealand in the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 at the Narendra Modi Stadium ensuring he still leads the table, while Kishan's 52 off 25 balls against the Kiwis and 39 off 18 against England in the semifinal have helped him leapfrog Phil Salt of England and Sahibzada Farhan of Pakistan into second place.

With just four points separating the two, Kishan is also in with a chance to emulate Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav and Sharma and



become only the fourth Indian batter to go tops in the format.

The last two batters from the same team to have occupied the first two positions were Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan of Pakistan, in September 2022.

The latest weekly rankings update also sees New Zealand opener Tim Seifert

move up four places to a career-best sixth position after scores of 58 in the semifinal against South Africa at the Eden Gardens and 52 in the final against India.

The others to make big gains are England's Jacob Bethell, whose century against India in the semifinal has lifted him to a career-best 16th position, and Play-

er of the Tournament Sanju Samson, whose knock of 97 not out against the West Indies and identical scores of 89 against England and New Zealand have carried him to 22nd place. Shivam Dube (up four places to 27th) and Will Jacks (up eight places to 58th) have also progressed. In the bowling rankings, India spinner

Varun Chakravarthy's reign at the top is over even after finishing the tournament as the leading wicket-taker. He grabbed 14 wickets in nine matches but went for too many runs, especially in the matches this past week.

Afghanistan star Rashid Khan, who has spent more than four years at the top of the T20I bowling rankings, is back to number one with another leg-spinner Adil Rashid of England also moving up one spot to fourth position after taking two for 41 in the semifinal against India. India fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah, who was the Player of the Match in the final for his haul of four for 15, has gained one spot to reach sixth position, while his team-mates Axar Patel (up six places to 17th), Hardik Pandya (up four places to 46th) and South Africa pace bowler Kagiso Rabada (up three places to 50th) have also moved up the rankings.

IPL 2026: Dhoni to play all matches, confirms CSK CEO Vishwanath

New Delhi: Chennai Super Kings CEO Kasi Viswanathan confirmed that veteran wicketkeeper-batter MS Dhoni is expected to play the full season of the Indian Premier League in 2026, while adding that the final decision regarding his role will be taken by the team's coaching staff.

The 19th edition of the IPL is scheduled to begin on March 28, with franchises already starting their training camps.

CSK began their preparations in Chennai earlier this month under the leadership of captain Ruturaj Gaikwad, with former skipper Dhoni joining the squad and training alongside his team-mates.

Speculation about five-time IPL winning captain's future had intensified after CSK traded Sanju Samson from Rajasthan Royals. The move had led to suggestions that the veteran could reduce his on-field involvement this season.

However, Dhoni arrived in Chennai during the first week of March and has been actively training with the squad.

The 44-year-old also began preparations earlier in Ranchi with light net ses-

sions before joining the team camp. Speaking to reporters in Chennai, Kasi made it clear that the legendary cricketer is likely to feature throughout the season.

"He will play the match-



es, all matches," Kasi Viswanathan told reporters in Chennai. When asked whether Dhoni could be used as an Impact Player during the tournament, he said the decision would rest entirely with the cricketing staff.

"I can't say. That's a cricketing decision which will be taken by the cricketing staff, not by the administrative staff. They will decide whether he is going to play as a batter, or a wicketkeeper-batter or as an Impact Player."

Dhoni has played the full

season in the previous two editions of the IPL despite ongoing speculation about his retirement and a persistent knee issue that he managed during those campaigns. In IPL 2025, he also

took over the captaincy midway through the tournament after Gaikwad suffered an injury. Kasi reiterated that Dhoni is expected to feature in every match of the upcoming season. "He will play all the matches, according to me," he said. Asked about the role the veteran could take in the team, especially with Samson now part of the squad, he repeated that the final decision would be taken by the coaching group. "That I cannot say. That is a cricketing decision which will be taken by the cricketing staff."

Not by the administrative staff. So they will decide whether he is going to play as a batsman or as a wicketkeeper-batter, or as an impact player."

The CSK CEO also said the franchise is awaiting the official announcement of the tournament schedule, which is expected soon.

"We are supposed to play in Tamil Nadu only. So we are waiting for the schedule to be announced by the BCCI," he said.

Kasi further expressed satisfaction with the performances of CSK players Samson and Shivam Dube during India's successful campaign at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026.

"We are very happy that India has won the World Cup, that too they've won it back-to-back. We are delighted because two of the CSK players, Sanju and Shivam Dube, have performed extremely well. It gives us a lot of confidence in the team doing well for CSK here also."

roviding an update on the team's preparations, Kasi added that the training camp has been progressing smoothly. "Practice is going on well, no problems so far," he said.

viewed sporting leagues globally, attracting millions of viewers and fans across digital and broadcast platforms.

The association will see Pulkit Steels integrated into the CSK ecosystem through a series of branding and communication deliverables linked to the upcoming seasons, allowing the brand to leverage the franchise's strong national fan base and extensive broadcast reach.

With the matches continuing to command massive viewership and engagement across television and digital platforms, the partnership offers Pulkit Steels an opportunity to strengthen brand recall while connecting with cricket audiences across multiple markets. Addressing a press conference today, Company Chairman Vinod Garg said the collaboration represents a strategic step in strengthening its brand presence while aligning itself with a franchise that has built a legacy of consistency, resilience and performance in

one of the world's most competitive cricket leagues. Over the years, this cricket format has evolved into a powerful platform for brand storytelling, enabling companies to engage with consumers through the cultural energy and nationwide following of the sport. He said this association reflects the company's commitment to strength, reliability and long term performance. "CSK represent consistency, resilience and the ability to perform under pressure."

Chennai: Pulkit Steels on Wednesday announced its partnership with five time IPL champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK) as the Strength sponsor for the 2026 and 2027 seasons, marking the company's entry into one of the most visible sporting platforms in the country.

The collaboration is expected to give Pulkit Steels a strong platform for brand visibility during tournaments, which continues to be one of the most widely

Pulkit Steels becomes 5 time IPL winner CSK's Strength sponsor for 2026, 2027 seasons

Madrid: Atletico Madrid took a big step toward the Champions League quarterfinals with a 5-2 home win over Tottenham Hotspur in the first leg of their last-16 tie at the Metropolitan Stadium.

Tottenham coach Igor Tudor said before the match that he was prioritizing Premier League survival over European progress, and his side made a disastrous start as Atletico led 4-0 after 22 minutes on Tuesday.

Tudor started with Antonin Kinsky in goal, even though the 22-year-old had not played a minute in either the Champions League or the Premier League this season. A mistake from Kinsky gifted Atletico the lead in the

sixth minute when he slipped while trying to play the ball out from the back, allowing Marcos Llorente a simple finish, according to Xinhua.

Another slip, this time from Micky van de Ven, left Antoine Griezmann with a clear run on goal in the 14th minute and the Frenchman made no mistake to double Atletico's lead. A further error from Kinsky then left Julian Alvarez with a tap-in a minute later. Tudor replaced Kinsky with Guglielmo Vicario in the 17th minute, with the visibly upset goalkeeper heading straight down the tunnel as teammates followed to console him.

Vicario reacted quickly when Griezmann's free kick was flicked on

in the 22nd minute, but Robin Le Normand headed in the rebound to make it 4-0. Pablo Porro pulled a goal back for Tottenham four minutes later.

Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak made a fine save to stop Richarlison making it 4-2 in the 55th minute, and Atletico then restored its four-goal cushion as Griezmann released Alvarez, who outran the Tottenham defense and finished to make it 5-1.

Oblak then misplayed the ball at his feet, allowing Dominic Solanke to lash home Tottenham's second, but Tottenham will need a much improved performance to have any chance of turning the tie around.

Atletico Madrid claims big Champions League win at home against Tottenham

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which remain uncertain. Multiple approaches have since been made through CWI, players, and other partners, in coordination with the ICC, to secure commercial travel to facilitate the squad's safe return. It is important to note that some players and staff have already departed, with the remaining members scheduled to depart today, (Tuesday, 10th March), and tomorrow, (Wednesday, 11th March 2026).

According to the International Cricket Council (ICC), nine members of the West Indies contingent had already begun their journey back to the Caribbean, while the remaining 16 were scheduled to depart India within the next 24 hours. "We will update updates on further departures as confirmed arrangements are in place," the ICC said.

"We understand that players, coaches, support staff and their families who have completed their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 campaigns are anxious to return home. That they have

not yet been able to do so is a source of genuine frustration, and the ICC shares that frustration," the ICC added.

The governing body attributed the delays to the ongoing crisis in West Asia, which it said had caused "widespread and continuing disruption to international air travel," including airspace closures, missile warnings and sudden flight cancellations.

"These are conditions entirely outside the ICC's control, and they have made each travel solution significantly more complex and time-consuming than under normal circumstances," the ICC said.

The charter flight that had originally been arranged to carry both teams from Kolkata was scheduled to depart at 2.30 am on March 10, with a stop in Johannesburg before proceeding to Antigua. However, the teams were informed that the flight had been cancelled, and a subsequent attempt to schedule another departure was also scrapped.

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Sabalenka beats Osaka in Indian Wells last 16

California: World number one Aryna Sabalenka moved into the quarterfinals at Indian Wells with a 6-2 6-4 victory over Naomi Osaka.

The two four-time Grand Slam champions were meeting for the first time since 2018, when Osaka beat Sabalenka en route to winning the US Open. But on this occasion Sabalenka, 27, proved too strong for the 16th seed as she wrapped up the match within 80 minutes, according to BBC sport.

"It's crazy, for so many years we only played once. I'm pretty sure we are playing many more matches. She's coming back playing great tennis," Sabalenka said. "I'm pretty happy for the

result - much better than last time."

Osaka, who did not play for 14 months around the birth of daughter Shai in July 2023, began the match with a confident opening service game.

However, Sabalenka soon found her rhythm and broke the 28-year-old Japanese's serve to take a 2-1 lead. The Belarusian tightened her grip with a barrage of powerful backhands to lead 5-2, then served out the set comfortably with an ace.

Osaka and Sabalenka both held serve early in the second set before the latter seized control at 4-2 with a decisive break before she served out for the match.

"I'm happy that I put so

much pressure on her today, that I brought variety to the court," Sabalenka added. "My serve worked well. On the return I played really great tennis. Happy with my performance for sure."

Sabalenka, who finished runner-up last year, will face Canada's Victoria Mboko in the last eight.

Mboko won 6-4 6-1 against American Amanda Anisimova, who ended British number one Emma Raducanu's tournament in the pre-

vious round.

Elsewhere, Australia's Talia Gibson enjoyed the biggest win of her career with a 7-5 2-6 6-1 victory over Italy's world number seven Jasmine Paolini, in her first match against a top-10 player.

The 21-year-old Gibson, ranked 112 in the world and playing her first WTA 1000 main draw, also became the first qualifier in 11 years to reach the quarter-finals of the tournament.

Liverpool lose Slot's 100th game in charge - but his record among best

Istanbul: Arne Slot's 100th game in charge of Liverpool ended in defeat as Galatasaray established a narrow last-16 Champions League lead to take to Anfield next week.

In front of a hostile home crowd here, Liverpool's familiar shortcomings resurfaced as Mario Lemina nodded the seventh-minute winner - the 10th goal Slot's side have conceded from corners this season.

The former Southampton, Fulham and Wolves midfielder was well placed to head past Giorgi Mamardashvili, making a rare start in the absence of injured first-choice goalkeeper Alisson, from close range after Victor Osimhen's headed on a Gabriel Sara set-piece, according to BBC sport.

It was Lemina's first goal of the season - and five years ago he scored the winner at Liverpool for Fulham in a Premier League game. Osimhen



thought he had made it 2-0 after a calamitous mistake by Ibrahim Konate, but the close-range effort was ruled out after Baris Alper Yilmaz was deemed to be offside in the build-up, even though he didn't touch the ball. Liverpool thought they had equalised in the 70th minute after the ball was bundled over the line

from Dominik Szoboszlai's corner. But that was also ruled out following a lengthy check after the video assistant referee (VAR) ruled the ball hit Konate's arm twice - firstly from the corner delivery, and then after the ball came off Virgil van Dijk's heel.

"If it's correct that the goal was disallowed, which is difficult to judge

as I've heard different opinions from people, it's not completely obvious but let's say that decision is right," said Slot when asked about Liverpool's disallowed goal. "In the Premier League there is much more allowed than in the Champions League. That's why I was so surprised it wasn't a penalty because in all the other incidents where he (the referee) thought he saw something when we made a foul and was so fast to blow his whistle and give Galatasaray a free-kick." In a frantic match, the Reds should have been ahead before Galatasaray's early breakthrough, but Florian Wirtz fired narrowly wide after an error by home keeper Ugurcan Cakir. Even after conceding, they had chances to get themselves back on level terms. Wirtz forced Cakir into a save before Konate drilled agonisingly over the bar, before Mamardashvili rescued the visitors.

BSE Sensex			Nifty 50			Nifty 500			Nifty Next 50			Nifty 100			Nifty Bank			Nifty Midcap 100		
Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change	
76,863.71	-1.72%		23,866.85	-1.63%		22,042.30	-1.35%		66,498.65	-1.08%		24,574.55	-1.54%		55,735.75	-2.13%		56,461.10	-1.25%	
Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open	
78,205.98	78,238.91		24,261.60	24,231.85		22,342.95	22,351.85		67,227.95	67,375.90		24,957.80	24,941.60		56,950.80	56,790.40		57,177.65	57,335.20	
High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low	
78,324.37	76,759.26		24,299.00	23,834.30		22,440.90	22,440.90		67,765.40	66,363.70		25,020.50	24,538.80		56,938.40	55,631.95		57,656.90	56,363.40	

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Jio Financial	238.70	1.14
Dr Reddys Labs	1,325.50	0.83
Sun Pharma	1,825.90	0.72
Coal India	446.75	0.72
NTPC	379.90	0.69

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Bajaj Finance	893.65	-4.91
Axis Bank	1,255.80	-4.48
Bajaj Finserv	1,795.30	-3.88
M&M	3,168.20	-3.81
Eicher Motors	7,253.50	-3.76

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Apr 02	162,379.00	-924.00 -0.57
Silver May 05	270,440.00	-7,410.00 -2.67
Crudeoil Mar 19	8,030.00	609.00 8.21
Naturalgas Mar 26	287.80	11.70 4.24

Global destinations eye South India's booming travel market at TTF

Bengaluru: Global tourism boards and travel brands are increasingly focusing on South India's rapidly expanding travel market, with the upcoming edition of TTF Bengaluru 2026 set to position the city as a key gateway for international and domestic tourism businesses seeking access to high-spending travellers from the region.

Scheduled to be held from March 13 to 15 at Tripura Vasini, Palace Grounds, the travel trade show will bring together tourism boards, travel companies, airlines, hospitality brands and travel technology providers from across India and overseas destinations, creating a major networking platform for the tourism industry.

Organised by Fairfest Media, the event is expected to attract more than 150 exhibitors representing over 15 Indian states and six countries, alongside more than 1,800 travel trade buyers and around 2,100 visitors. The exhibition will serve as a marketplace where destinations showcase tourism offerings and forge partnerships with travel operators targeting South India's growing

outbound and leisure travel segment.

Industry stakeholders say Bengaluru has emerged as one of India's most important travel markets, driven by rising disposable incomes, strong corporate travel demand and increasing interest in premium leisure experiences. The city is also witnessing rapid growth in segments such as destination weddings, business travel, and MICE tourism—meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions—making it an attractive target market for global tourism campaigns. The travel show will therefore act as a strategic bridge between international destinations and the South Indian travel trade, enabling tourism boards and hospitality companies to tap into demand from Karnataka and neighbouring states, which are among India's fastest-growing tourism source markets. Part of the long-running Travel & Tourism Fair (TTF) network, the exhibition is among India's oldest and largest travel trade platforms. Over the past three decades, the series has hosted more than 4,000 exhibitors from over 100 countries.

Stock market under pressure after rebound in previous session; Nifty dips below 23,850

Mumbai: The stock market came under pressure on Wednesday following a strong rebound in the previous session, with broad-based selling across sectors. At close, the Sensex fell 1,342.27 points, or 1.72 pc, to 76,863.71, while the Nifty 50 dropped 394.75 points, or 1.63 percent, to 23,866.85. The Nifty Midcap index declined 1.2 percent, and the Smallcap index slipped 0.36 percent. Market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms fell to over Rs 442 lakh crore from more than Rs 447 lakh crore in the prior session. Among sectors, auto, FMCG, PSU banks, consumer durables, private banks, capital goods, IT, and realty saw significant losses. Oil & gas and pharma ended with marginal gains. On Nifty, the key gainers were NTPC, Jio Financial, Coal India, Sun Pharma, Dr Reddy's Labs. While on the losing end were Bajaj Finance,



Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Eicher Motors and M&M. Around 180 stocks touched their 52-week low on the BSE. These included Aegis Logistics, Hexaware Technologies, Coforge, IRCTC, KPR Mills, Godrej Industries, Emami, Five-Star Business, Jubilant Food, TCS, Tata Technologies, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Jyothy Labs, Relaxo Footwear, JK Lakshmi Cement among others. The key losers in the FMCG stocks were Colgate-

Adani Gangavaram Port launches digital smart gates to boost cargo efficiency

Visakhapatnam: Adani Gangavaram Port Limited on Wednesday unveiled its Digital Smart Gates, an automated entry system for cargo vehicles described as a "DigiYatra-like" initiative for ports. The system is designed to enhance operational efficiency and streamline logistics at the Visakhapatnam facility.

The system was inaugurated by N. Srihar, Principal Commissioner of Customs & CGST, in the presence of senior customs officials and port management at the facility in Visakhapatnam.

In a release, the Port said the digital gates have been implemented across key op-

erational points including parking zones, entry gates, weighbridges and tarpaulin stations, enabling automated and contactless vehicle movement across the port.

The system integrates FASTag and RFID-based verification with the port's Terminal Operating System (TOS) and Port Operating System, allowing faster vehicle clearance, improved security checks and real-time monitoring of cargo movement.

The initiative is expected to reduce congestion, minimise manual intervention and improve overall turnaround time for logistics operators by enabling seamless digital tracking and auto-

mated documentation.

Speaking on the occasion, Sridhar said technology-driven systems in port operations play a key role in facilitating seamless trade while maintaining regulatory oversight.

Port authorities said the digital transformation initiative aims to strengthen transparency, improve traffic management and deliver a more predictable and efficient experience for transport partners and customers.

With the implementation of Digital Smart Gates, the Port said it aims to set new benchmarks for automation and operational efficiency in India's maritime logistics sector.

Blue Star Limited to export heat pumps to US, invest Rs 210 crore

Chennai: Blue Star Limited, a major player in air conditioning and commercial refrigeration, is planning to export heat pumps to the United States market after receiving product approvals from two American companies, a top company official said.

According to B Thiagarajan, Managing Director of Blue Star, the company has secured approval from two firms in the US to manufacture heat pumps as a contract manufacturer.

He said the heat pumps will be produced at the com-

pany's manufacturing facility in Wada in Maharashtra. These products will then be exported to the United States and sold under the branding of the American partner companies.

Heat pumps are widely used in the US to warm homes during the winter season. They are an energy-efficient alternative for residential heating and are in growing demand in colder regions.

Thiagarajan noted that import tariffs imposed by the US government will play an important role in determin-

ing the competitiveness of the product in that market.

Apart from the United States, Blue Star is also exploring opportunities to introduce its heat pump products in European markets.

The company has outlined ambitious export targets as part of its long-term strategy. According to Thiagarajan, Blue Star aims to generate around ₹3,000 crore in export revenue by the year 2030.

This export goal will form a significant share of the company's overall business plans, with the compa-

ny targeting total revenues of about ₹20,000 crore by the same period.

At present, exports contribute roughly 10 percent of Blue Star's overall revenue, indicating significant room for growth in international markets.

To support its expansion plans, the company has announced capital expenditure of approximately ₹210 crore. The planned investments will be directed toward manufacturing up-

grades, automation, maintenance of facilities, research and development, and

media advertising initiatives.

As part of its long-term manufacturing expansion, Blue Star also plans to start construction of a new facility in Sri City in 2029.

The proposed facility will focus on manufacturing room air conditioners and will also support exports of commercial air-conditioning products. Meanwhile, rising input costs are posing challenges for the air-conditioning industry. Thiagarajan noted that prices of key raw materials such as copper have increased significantly.

KCC outstanding credit crosses Rs 10.2 lakh crore nationwide

New Delhi: Outstanding credit under the Kisan Credit Card Scheme has crossed ₹10.2 lakh crore across the country, with more than 7.72 crore Kisan Credit Cards currently operational, according to data released by the Government of India.

The figures highlight the expanding reach of the scheme, which was introduced to ensure that farmers have timely access to affordable institutional credit for agriculture and allied activities.

According to the official data, a total of 457 banks have been onboarded on the KCC platform to facilitate credit delivery across the

country.

These include 37 commercial banks, 46 regional rural banks, and 374 cooperative banks, reflecting a diversified banking network supporting the scheme.

The government noted that this wide institutional participation helps ensure strong geographic coverage and improves access to credit for farmers in both rural and remote areas.

By involving multiple banking institutions, the KCC platform aims to strengthen the availability of institutional finance and reduce farmers' dependence on informal sources of

borrowing.

Across these institutions, a total of 1,998.7 lakh Kisan Credit Card applications have been processed so far under the scheme.

Of these, commercial banks processed around 631.5 lakh applications, while regional rural banks handled about 337.2 lakh applications.

Cooperative banks accounted for the largest share, processing approximately 1,030.0 lakh applications, highlighting their critical role in extending agricultural credit at the grassroots level.

The data underscores the central

importance of cooperative banking institutions in reaching farmers in villages and smaller agricultural communities.

Officials noted that the extensive participation of banks demonstrates the scheme's effectiveness in improving farmers' access to formal credit systems.

The KCC scheme is designed to provide farmers with short-term credit for crop cultivation, post-harvest expenses, and other agricultural needs. In addition to crop-related financing, the scheme has also been expanded to cover allied sectors such as animal husbandry and fisheries.

SAIL clocks record sales in FY26 records sales of 18.24 MT

New Delhi: The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has clocked its historical sales in the Financial Year 2026 during the April to February period, recording a total sales of 18.24 million tonnes (MT), registering a 14% year-on-year (y-o-y) growth.

During the same period, SAIL also achieved the highest-ever cash collection of Rs 1.11 lakh crore, reflecting a 10% y-o-y growth.

In February 2026, the company achieved total sales of 1.58 MT. The company reduced its inventory

by 1.05 lakh tonnes compared to January 2026 and lowered its borrowings by Rs 1000 crore.

On the results, AK Panda, Director (Finance) with additional charge of Director (Commercial) said, "We are ready to adapt and grow with the market. By managing inventory and working capital smartly, we are showing financial discipline that strengthens the company's foundation. At the same time, our record sales and cash collections are proof of the trust our customers place in us."

Sharing the results details, SAIL said it has reintroduced the production of chequered plates, catering to the demand from the relevant sector. For the first time, chequered plates are being produced from SAIL's Bokaro Steel Plant located in Jharkhand. Notably, the brokerage firm ICICI Direct has turned bullish on SAIL, citing favourable demand tailwinds, safeguard duty-driven steel prices, and the company's focus on optimisation. The brokerage has assigned a 'Buy' call on SAIL with a target price of Rs 200.

India's energy sector showing resiliency amid west asian unrest

New Delhi: The ongoing unrest in West Asia appears to be destabilising the global energy sector, raising concerns over disruptions in oil supplies through critical chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz and attacks on energy infrastructure.

In the midst of the crisis, the Strait of Hormuz, often described as the world's most important oil transit chokepoint, has come under renewed focus due to its central role in global energy trade.

According to estimates by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), nearly 25 per cent of the world's seaborne oil trade and around 20 per cent of global liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments pass through the narrow maritime corridor connecting the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea.

For India, the strategic

waterway carries particular significance as nearly 40 per cent of the country's crude oil imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Any prolonged disruption or complete closure due to military escalation could therefore have implications for India's energy security and supply chains.

However, India currently maintains a substantial energy buffer to manage potential supply disruptions. The country holds over 250 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products—equivalent to roughly 4,000 crore litres—across its supply chain.

These reserves provide an estimated seven to eight weeks of buffer coverage. The stocks are distributed across a wide network of storage infrastructure, including above-ground tanks, underground strategic petroleum reserve caverns,

pipeline systems, terminal tankage, and offshore storage vessels.

Strategic petroleum reserves located at Visakhapatnam, Mangalore, and Padur further strengthen India's emergency preparedness.

Another mitigating factor is that only about 40 per cent of India's crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, meaning nearly 60 per cent of supplies could remain unaffected even if the waterway faces disruption.

Over the past decade, India has significantly diversified its crude sourcing to reduce geopolitical risk. The country's supplier base has expanded from 27 to about 40 nations spanning six continents. Apart from Gulf suppliers, India now imports crude from Russia, West Africa, the United States, Central Asia, and other non-Gulf

routes, providing flexibility in times of disruption.

New energy supply arrangements with partners such as the United States and the United Arab Emirates have also strengthened long-term supply security.



India's strong refining sector further provides resilience in the global energy landscape. With a refining capacity of around 258 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA), India is the

fourth-largest refining hub in the world.

The capacity exceeds the country's domestic consumption of about 210–230 MMTPA, enabling refiners to process a wide range of crude grades while also ex-

porting refined petroleum products to global markets. Russia has emerged as India's largest crude supplier in recent years, particularly after 2022, when discounted Russian oil reshaped trade

flows. The shift has helped India secure supplies at competitive prices while diversifying sources away from traditional Gulf dependence. Domestic energy initiatives are also helping moderate the impact of crude imports. India's ethanol blending programme has reached the 20 per cent blending level, displacing nearly six million tonnes of crude oil annually—equivalent to roughly 44 million barrels.

Since 2014, the programme has saved around Rs 1.36 lakh crore in foreign exchange while generating approximately Rs 1.18 lakh crore in income for farmers.

Despite these buffers, experts warn that sustained price spikes in global crude markets could significantly impact India's import bill and inflation outlook.

Karthik Ganesan, Fel-

low and Director Strategic Partnerships at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) said the latest price spikes and supply disruptions highlight India's continuing vulnerability to imported crude.

"The spike in prices and supply shocks once again brings to the fore India's tenuous relationship with imported crude oil. This must give us even more impetus to seek solutions to reduce our dependence on imported crude. Driving down demand for oil products from private mobility by pricing it appropriately and incentivising a slow shift to electric cooking and away from LPG in urban India can help alleviate the situation, even in the short to medium term," he said. Ganesan also noted that if global crude prices remain elevated at around USD 115 per barrel, India's crude import bill

could increase by nearly USD 6 billion per month for every month prices remain at that level.

The increase would represent roughly a 50 per cent jump in the current crude import bill, with petroleum imports already accounting for nearly 23 per cent of India's total import basket.

Coming on the expected inflationary trends on petrol and diesel prices, Ganesan said, "Price spikes and supply shocks once again expose India's vulnerability to imported crude. This should accelerate efforts to curb oil demand through better pricing of private mobility and a gradual shift from LPG to electric cooking in urban India." Ganesan pointed towards an RBI research said that it suggested that a 10pc rise in global crude oil prices could raise headline inflation by about 20 bps (0.2pc increment).