

Aryan Age

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Lok Adalat In Mumbai Recovers ₹ 9.23 Crore In Settlements
PG.3



Janhvi Kapoor rates Jacobi Juve's performance in 'Hamnet' as the best performance of the year
PG.6



Ponting dissects Suryakumar's captaincy after India's T20 World Cup triumph
PG.7



AI adoption could unlock for USD 3 trn opportunity for India's MSMEs by 2047: Report
PG.8

Pune Plans 200 km Metro Network

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Inaugurates Metro Bhavan

Pune: Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the Pune Metro project has given a big boost to the city's public transport system and people have responded enthusiastically to the metro service. At present, around 2.5 lakh passengers use the metro every day. He said that the government is planning to build a metro network of nearly 200 kilometers in the future, covering areas under the Pune Municipal Corporation, Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation and the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA). Considering the fast pace of urban development, he instructed Pune Metro and the Urban Development Department to immediately prepare a detailed plan for the entire network. He also assured that the required funds would be made available.

Fadnavis was speaking after inaugurating 'Metro Bhavan', the administrative headquarters of the Pune Metro project that aims to strengthen the public transport system in Pune. The event was attended by Deputy Chief Minister and Pune Guardian Minister Sunetra Ajit Pawar, Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil, Minister of State for Urban Development Madhuri Misal, Pune Mayor Manjusha Nagpure, Member of Parliament Medha Kulkarni and MLAs Yogesh Tilekar, Bhimrao Tapkir, Sunil Kamble, Hemant Rasane and Babu Pathare. Urban Development Department Principal Secretary Aseem Gupta, Pune Divisional Commissioner Dr. Chandrakant Pulkundwar and MahaMetro Managing Director Shrawan Hardikar were also present.

Devendra Fadnavis said that although the Pune Metro project started late due to some initial difficulties, once it gained momentum it was completed very quickly. Today, Pune Metro is considered one of the fastest completed metro projects in the country. Currently, around 33 kilometers of metro line is operational in Pune. A 23-kilometer metro project, which is the country's first public-private partnership project with the Tata Group, is also in the final stage. Out of this, 12 kilometers will be inaugurated in May and the remaining 11 kilometers will start in July. With these projects, the total metro network in Pune will reach about 56 kilometers. In addition, work on another 55 kilometers is in progress and an expansion of about 80 kilometers has been

proposed. In the future, the metro network in Pune, including areas under PMC, PCMC and PMRDA, is planned to expand to around 200 kilometers. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis also directed MahaMetro to develop the network by considering future growth centres, the new airport, industrial areas and growing suburbs. He said the government aims to develop transport systems on roads, elevated routes and underground corridors so that Pune becomes a traffic-free and sustainable city. Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Ajit Pawar said that Pune Metro Bhavan is not just an administrative headquarters but also a symbol of modern Pune's progress. She said the building is an excellent example of advanced engineering and proper planning and will add to



the administrative importance of the city. She also remembered the work done by late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar for the Pune Metro project. The building has been constructed near the Mula-Mutha river in an

environmentally friendly manner. She said that Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad are important growth centres of the state and the increasing population had created heavy pressure on the transport system.

She added that the Mahayuti government has taken several major steps such as building ring roads, wider roads, service roads, tunnels, bridges and metro projects to reduce traffic congestion.

By-Elections Announced for Rahuri and Baramati Assembly Constituencies

Mumbai: The Election Commission of India has announced the schedule for by-elections in eight assembly constituencies across six states in the country. These include two constituencies in Maharashtra — Rahuri in Ahilyanagar district and Baramati in Pune district. These seats became vacant after the deaths of Rahuri MLA Shivaji Bhanudas Kardile and Baramati MLA Ajit Anantrao Pawar. The by-elections will be held to fill these vacant seats. After the announcement

of the election schedule, the Model Code of Conduct has come into effect immediately in Rahuri and Baramati constituencies. According to the Election Commission, voting will take place on 23 April and counting of votes will be held on 4 May. The official gazette notification for the election will be issued on 30 March. The last date for filing nomination papers is 6 April. The scrutiny of nomination papers will be conducted on 7 April and the last date for withdrawing nominations is 9 April.

Agriculture Sector Vital for Food Security and Economic Stability: Governor Jishnu Dev Varma

Ahilyanagar: Maharashtra Governor and Chancellor of Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth Jishnu Dev Varma said that the agriculture sector plays a very important role in ensuring the country's food security, economic stability and sustainable development. He said that conflicts and wars in one part of the world affect many regions, so it is necessary to strengthen the country's agricultural system and ensure food security. He added that the future of Indian agriculture depends on technology-based solutions, startups

and sustainable farming methods. Governor Jishnu Dev Varma was speaking at the 39th convocation ceremony held at the Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Auditorium of Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth in Rahuri. On this occasion, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was honoured with an honorary "Doctor of Science" degree by the Governor. The ceremony was attended by Chairman of the Maharashtra Legislative Council Prof. Ram Shinde, Water Resources Minister and Ahilyanagar Guardian Minister Dr. Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil and

Agriculture Minister and Pro-Chancellor of the university Dattatray Bharane. Former Director of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research Dr. Ashok Kumar Singh, Vice-Chancellor Dr. Vilas Kharche and Governor's Secretary Prashant Naravare were also present. Governor Jishnu Dev Varma said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expanded the slogan "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan" by adding "Jai Anusandhan," which highlights the importance of research for the development of the agriculture sector.



Trump urges other countries to send warships to open Hormuz Strait in a 'team effort'

New Delhi: US President Donald Trump urged all countries affected by the closure of Strait of Hormuz to send their ships to Persian Gulf and in a 'team effort', help the US to open the strategic Strait. Paradoxically, Trump claimed that the US had beaten and 'completely decimated' Iran and 'destroyed 100 per cent' of Iran's military capability. He hoped that China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and others, that are affected by this 'artificial constraint', will send Ships to the area so that the Hormuz Strait will no longer be a threat by a nation that has been 'totally decapitated', Trump said. He said The US has beaten and completely decimated

Iran, both militarily, economically, and in every other way, but the countries of The U.S. will also coordinate with those Countries so that everything goes quickly, together toward Harmony, Security, and Everlasting Peace,' Trump said on his attempted closure of the Hormuz Strait, will be sending War Ships, in conjunction

Iran's Military capability, but it's easy for them to send a drone or two, drop a mine, or deliver a close range missile somewhere along, or in, this Waterway, no matter how badly defeated they are'. 'Hopefully China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and others, that are affected by this artificial constraint, will send Ships to the area so that the Hormuz Strait will no longer be a threat by a Nation that has been totally decapitated.' He said the US will be bombing the 'hell out of the shoreline,' and continually shooting Iranian Boats and Ships out of the water. 'One way or the other, we will soon get the Hormuz Strait OPEN, SAFE, and FREE!', Trump said.

the world that receive oil through the Hormuz Strait must take care of that passage. 'We will help — A LOT! smoothly, and well. This should have always been a team effort, and now it will be — It will bring the World social media platform. Trump claimed that many countries, especially those who are affected by Iran's with the US to keep the Strait open and safe. 'We have already destroyed 100 per cent of



Scientists in Pune Develop DME Gas as Alternative to LPG

Pune : Amid a global shortage of LPG caused by ongoing war-related disruptions, scientists at the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) in Pune have achieved a breakthrough by developing Dimethyl Ether (DME) gas, which could serve as an alternative fuel to LPG. Dr. Tirumalaivami Raja and his team at NCL have successfully developed a catalyst required to produce DME after nearly two decades of research. Using this catalyst, the scientists have also managed to produce DME gas at a pilot level. Currently, around 250 kilograms of DME gas is being produced daily as part of the pilot project, a release stated on Sunday. If produced on a larger commercial scale in collaboration with industrial companies, the DME gas can

be blended with LPG at around eight percent. This could help reduce India's dependence on imported fuels and offer an effective solution during LPG shortages. Scientists say DME burns cleaner than LPG and produces a transparent flame, making it more environmentally friendly. The gas can be used independently or blended with LPG for fuel purposes. Researchers also expressed confidence that if mass production begins, DME gas could be cheaper than LPG, making it a cost-effective alternative fuel.



EC Announces Poll Schedule Counting on May 4

- Assam, Kerala, Puducherry Voting on April 9 ● Tamil Nadu on April 23
- West Bengal in Two Phases on April 23 and 29

New Delhi : The Election Commission on Sunday announced the schedule for Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the union Territory of Puducherry, setting the stage for the first major round of state elections after the 2025 Bihar polls. According to the schedule announced by the poll panel, voting will be held in a single phase in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry on April 9, while elections in Tamil Nadu will be conducted on April 23. Polling in West Bengal will take place in two phases on April 23 and April 29. Votes for all four states and the union Territory will be counted on May 4. Announcing the dates, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said the Commission had completed extensive consultations

and preparations to ensure a smooth, transparent and inclusive electoral process. "We are fully prepared to conduct free, fair and peaceful elections across these states and the union Territory. All necessary arrangements have been made in consultation with state authorities and security agencies," he said. The Chief Election Commissioner emphasised that the Model Code of Conduct had come into immediate effect in the poll-bound states and the UT of Puducherry following the announcement. "The Model Code of Conduct is effective from this moment. We expect all political parties and candidates to adhere strictly to the guidelines to maintain the integrity of the democratic process," Kumar said. The elections will be the first major electoral

test for political parties since the Assembly elections in Bihar, and are expected to carry significant political implications at the national level. Several major national and regional parties are preparing for intense campaigns across the five regions.



Jairam Ramesh criticises BJP ahead of assembly poll schedule announcement

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday took a swipe at the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the announcement of the 2026 assembly election schedule by the Election Commission of India, alleging that the Model Code of Conduct has been reduced to what he termed "Modi's Code of Campaigning." The poll panel is scheduled to announce the election schedule for the legislative assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal at a press conference in New Delhi at 4 PM. In a post on X, Ramesh wrote, "The Election Commission will announce the schedule for the 2026 assembly elections at 4 PM today. It would have been given the go-ahead by the G2, since G1

would have completed this round of inaugurations, ribbon-cuttings, flag-offs, and launches." He further criticised the functioning of the Model Code of Conduct, saying, "The Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct will soon come into effect. But since 2014 this has come to stand for Modi's Code of Campaigning — which will be full of defamation, abuses, intimidation, fear-mongering, and spreading the virus of lies." The Model Code of Conduct, enforced by the

Election Commission once the poll schedule is announced, lays down guidelines for political parties and candidates to ensure free and fair elections by regulating campaign conduct, government announcements and use of official machinery. Assembly elections in the five states are expected to witness intense political competition among national and regional parties. The previous round of elections in 2021 saw the All India Trinamool Congress retain power in West Bengal, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam form the government in Tamil Nadu, the Left Democratic Front return to power in Kerala, and the Bharatiya Janata Party emerge victorious in Assam, while a coalition government led by the All India N R Congress took office in Puducherry.



CM Banerjee announces hike in honorarium for priests, muezzins ahead of poll date announcement

Kolkata: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday announced an increase in the monthly honorarium for Hindu priests and Muslim muezzins in West Bengal, hours before the expected declaration of the Assembly election schedule by the Election Commission of India.

According to government sources, the honorarium has been raised by Rs 500, taking the monthly amount from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000. The chief minister made the announcement through a post on X around 2:40 p.m., while the poll panel was expected to announce the election dates later in the afternoon.

In her message, Ms Banerjee said the services of priests and muezzins play an important role in sustaining the spiritual and social fabric of communities. "I am pleased to announce an increase of Rs 500 in the monthly honorariums extended to our purohiths and muezzins, whose service sustains the spiritual and social life of our communities. With this revision, they will now receive Rs 2,000 per month," she wrote.

The chief minister also stated that the state government had approved all fresh applications submitted by priests and muezzins seeking



to be included in the honorarium scheme.

"At the same time, all fresh applications that have been duly submitted by purohiths and muezzins have also been approved by the State government. We take pride in nurturing an environment where every community and every tradition is valued and strengthened," Ms Banerjee said, adding that the government remained committed to recognising and supporting those who preserve the state's spiritual traditions.

The decision comes against the backdrop of several welfare an-

nouncements made by the state government in recent weeks ahead of the Assembly elections. Earlier, the government had already enhanced benefits under the popular 'Lakshmi Bhandar' scheme and announced the 'Yuvashree' initiative aimed at providing financial support to unemployed youth.

Political observers noted that the latest announcement came just hours before the anticipated poll schedule announcement by the Election Commission, which is expected to formally set the stage for the Assembly elections in West Bengal. However,

the move immediately drew criticism from the opposition, particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Critics alleged that the decision was politically motivated and timed to influence voters ahead of the elections. Union minister and former state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar criticised the announcement, claiming the state government was attempting to appease voters through financial incentives.

"After Lakshmi Bhandar, now the honorarium for priests is being increased. The people of Bengal are expected to remain satisfied with an additional Rs 500," Majumdar said.

The Trinamool Congress government, however, has maintained that the initiative is part of its broader policy of recognising the role of religious functionaries across communities and ensuring that they receive financial assistance for their services.

With the election schedule expected to be announced shortly, political parties across the state are intensifying their campaign efforts, with welfare measures and governance issues likely to remain at the centre of the electoral discourse.

Project Sampark continues to play vital role in development: BRO

Jammu: A senior Army officer has highlighted the crucial role played by Project Sampark in the development and maintenance of roads, bridges and tunnels that serve both strategic and civilian purposes. The project has been instrumental in strengthening connectivity in difficult terrains while contributing significantly to national development and socio-economic growth in the region.

The remarks were made during the celebrations of the 51st Raising Day of Project Sampark, an important initiative under the Border Roads Organisation (BRO). The event was held with great enthusiasm and marked the organisation's continued commitment to building and maintaining strategic road infrastructure. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Engineer of Project Sampark, R. K. Mishra, reflected on the major achievements and milestones attained by the project over the years. He praised the dedication and professional-

ism of the personnel who have contributed to strengthening connectivity in challenging terrain.

Brigadier Mishra also exhorted the troops and staff to continue striving for excellence and to aim for even greater achievements in the future. He emphasised that infrastructure projects such as these are vital not only for defence preparedness but also for the economic development of remote regions.

The raising day celebrations served as a reminder of the significant contributions made by Project Sampark in building and maintaining strategic roads in the region. The project has played a vital role in improving accessibility and connectivity in areas that are often difficult to reach. Project Sampark was originally raised on January 1, 1975, with the primary objective of developing and maintaining road infrastructure in the region south of the Pir Panjal mountain ranges in Jammu and Kashmir. Over the decades, the project has

expanded its operations to support infrastructure development in adjoining areas.

In addition to Jammu and Kashmir, the project also caters to road infrastructure needs in contiguous areas of the neighbouring states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. These road networks are vital for both strategic defence movements and civilian transportation.

Officials noted that the roads, bridges and tunnels constructed by the BRO play an important role in facilitating troop mobility while also improving connectivity for local communities. These developments help boost trade, tourism and access to essential services. During the event, the Chief Engineer honoured several personnel for their outstanding service and dedication to duty. The felicitation recognised the hard work and commitment of individuals who have contributed to the successful execution of infrastructure projects in difficult conditions.

Errabelli Swarna assumes charge as TPCC Mahila Congress President

Hyderabad: Errabelli Swarna formally assumed charge as the President of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Mahila Congress at a ceremony held at Prakasam Hall in Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday. The event marked a significant organisational development for the women's wing of the Congress party in Telangana and was attended by several senior party leaders and activists.

The ceremony witnessed the presence of prominent leaders of the party, who gathered to extend their support and congratulate Swarna on her new role. Party members and Mahila Congress workers from different parts of the state attended the programme, highlighting the importance of strengthening the organisation at the grassroots level.

Mahesh Kumar Goud, President of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee, attended the event as the chief guest and formally welcomed Swarna into her new position. He expressed confidence that her leadership would help energise the Mahila Congress and expand the party's outreach among women across the state.

Also present at the ceremony was Alka Lamba, President of the All India Mahila Congress, who extended her congratulations to Swarna and encouraged Mahila Congress leaders to strengthen the organisation through active engagement with women at the grassroots level.

Several other leaders and representatives of the Congress party attended the programme. Among them were Mahila Congress leader Sunitha Rao, state Mahila Congress in-charge Harker Venugopal Rao, Member of Parliament Kadiyam Kavya, and Congress leaders Gundu Sudharani, Kota Neelima and Nerella Sarada.

Congratulating Swarna on assuming the responsibility, Mahesh Kumar Goud said the Congress party has always been committed to promoting women's participation in politics and leadership roles. He emphasised that the party continues to create opportunities for women leaders at various levels of the organisation.

He noted that several Mahila Congress activists had already been given important responsibilities, including director-level positions in various bod-

ies. In addition, six women leaders have recently been appointed as presidents of District Congress Committees (DCCs), reflecting the party's commitment to gender representation.

Goud stated that the Congress government in Telangana is implementing a number of welfare programmes specifically designed to empower women and improve their socio-economic conditions.

These initiatives aim to ensure greater participation of women in public life and decision-making processes.

One of the key initiatives highlighted during the event was the 'Mahalakshmi' scheme, which provides free bus travel for women across the state. According to party leaders, the scheme has benefited thousands of women by making transportation more accessible and affordable.

Mahesh Kumar Goud further said that the government was creating more opportunities for women to contest elections, both in the State Assembly and in Parliament. He added that increasing women's representation in legislative bodies remains an important objective for the party.

NDA, GA hold meetings ahead of Bihar Rajya Sabha polls

Patna: Political activity in Bihar on Sunday gained momentum ahead of the voting for the Rajya Sabha elections, as leaders of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the opposition Grand Alliance (GA) held a series of crucial meetings to finalise their strategies.

Ahead of the NDA legislators' meeting scheduled for the evening, senior leaders of the alliance met at the residence of Janata Dal (United) working national president Sanjay Jha. Another meeting of NDA legislators is scheduled to be held this evening. In the meeting, the alliance is expected to finalise its last-minute strategy for the Rajya Sabha elections and also decide which MLAs will vote for which candidates.

Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and Sanjay Jha on Friday had a de-

tailed discussion regarding the election. After the meeting, Jha claimed that the NDA would win all five seats, adding that several opposition MLAs were also likely to support the NDA candidates.

The NDA constituent parties already held separate meetings with their legislators to discuss strategies.

The BJP state unit's core committee meeting took place at the party office in Patna in the presence of central observer Harsh Malhotra and Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma. After the meeting, Bihar Industry minister Dilip Jaiswal had said the meeting was convened to inform and train newly elected party legislators about the voting process for the Rajya Sabha elections.

Union minister Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Par-

ty (Ram Vilas) also held a separate meeting of its MLAs. Similarly, a meeting was organised at the residence of Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief Upendra Kushwaha in Patna. Kushwaha, an NDA candidate, is seeking re-election to the Upper House for a second consecutive term.

Voting for the Rajya Sabha election in Bihar will be held on Monday.

The NDA has fielded five candidates, including Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, BJP national president Nitin Nabin, union minister Ramnath Thakur, BJP leader Shivesh Ram and Upendra Kushwaha. The opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) has once again fielded A.D. Singh as its candidate. With six candidates contesting for five seats, the contest has become particularly interesting.

Meanwhile, the GA is scheduled to meet its legislators on Sunday evening to ensure the victory of its candidate. RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav is also likely to attend the meeting along with MLAs from the RJD, Congress, Left parties and other allies. During the meeting, legislators will be briefed about the voting process. AIMIM leader Akhtarul will be hosting an Iftar party this evening which is expected to be attended by RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav.

The event is being seen as an attempt to mobilise political support. RJD candidate A.D. Singh requires six additional votes to secure victory. The GA currently has 35 MLAs and the RJD candidate needs six votes to ensure his victory. AIMIM has five legislators while BSP and Inclusive Party (IP) has one candidate each.

DMK-led SPA stages protest demo across TN against Centre



Chennai: The alliance partners of the ruling DMK-led multi-party Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) on Sunday staged a massive protest demonstrations across Tamil Nadu slamming the Centre for withholding due share of funds to the state under various schemes, including under SSA for the school education sector, and failing to take precautionary measures anticipating a shortage of LPG following the conflict in the West Asia region. Leaders of all alliance partners, besides Ministers in the Cabinet headed by Chief Minister and DMK President M K Stalin, took part in the demonstration held in all the districts across the State against the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre for ignoring the state on various fronts. A total of 31 Ministers led the agitation in their respective districts in which alliance parties including Dravidar Kazhagam President K Veeramani, TNCC President K Selvaprathana, MDMK Founder and General Secretary Vaiko, CPI(M) State Secretary P Shanmugam, CPI State Secretary M Veerapandian, IUML Leader Abu Buckker, VCK Leader and Lok Sabha MP Thol Thirumavalavan, MMK General Secretary M H Jawahirullah, KMDK Secretary E R Eswaran, DMDK Treasurer L K Sudeesh, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha, took part across the state.

The protesters, carrying empty cylinders, shouted slogans denouncing the Centre for neglecting the State in the union Budget by not announcing any new projects and not releasing due share of funds to the State and blamed it for the present short supply of LPG cylinders. Highlighting the present LPG cylinder shortage crisis arising out of conflict in the West Asia, cadres of alliance parties, including Congress, MDMK, DMDK, CPI, CPI(M), VCK, MNM of actor and Rajya Sabha member Kamal Haasan, carrying their party flags and placards filed the Centre for ignoring TN on several fronts, besides squarely blaming it for the LPG cylinder crisis, which has resulted in several hotels and restaurants facing threats of closure. They also demanded that the Centre should take immediate steps to address the issue and ensure seamless availability of LPG cylinders across the country. Due to the "flawed" foreign policy of the BJP government and its failure to take necessary precautionary measures, there was a shortage of cooking gas cylinders across the country, causing severe hardship to the public, as restaurants and commercial establishments are facing difficulties to function normally and are facing threats of closure due to short supply in commercial LPG cylinders.

'Navya Project', special initiative for skill development of adolescent girls

Patna: A special pilot programme titled "Navya Project" has been launched to empower women and make them self-reliant under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana with the support of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

Official sources said here on Sunday that the main objective of the scheme is to train adolescent girls aged 14 to 18 years in vocational and employment-oriented skills so that they can become self-reliant and access better job opportunities. In the first phase, the programme has been launched in 27 districts across 19 states of the country. The sources said that the project is being implemented at five locations at Bodh Gaya, Guraru, Manpur,

Sherghati and Dumaria of Gayagi district.

Under the scheme, girls have been selected based on their registration on the Poshan Tracker and Aadhaar verification.

They are being trained in several sectors including fashion designing, software programming, beauty and wellness, solar PV installation (Suryamitra), merchandising, customer service, and food and beverage services.

Referring to an official data, the sources informed that by July last year, a total of 532 adolescent girls had been registered on the Skill India Digital Hub. Among them, 80 girls are receiving training in fashion designing at Anushka Skill Education Centre in Sherghati.

Training sessions in the

selected sectors are being conducted by institutions such as Skill Root EdTech, Posterity Consulting, Anushka Skill Education, Ambishine Skill, Aradhana Online Solution, and JSS Gaya.

According to the source, under the Navya scheme, girls will be trained not only in traditional occupations but also in modern and non-traditional fields like graphics designing which are in high demand.

In addition, training will also be provided in drone assembling, CCTV installation, smartphone technician work, and professional makeup artistry. The minimum educational qualification required to participate in the programme is passing Class 10, the sources stated.

Kavitha alleges 'selective demolitions' under Hydra, warns of legal action

Hyderabad: Telangana Jagruthi President Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Sunday accused the Congress government of targeting the poor through the "Hydra" demolition drive while allegedly ignoring violations by influential builders. Speaking to the media, Kavitha said her organisation had staged a protest against a private construction allegedly coming up within the prohibited zone of the Musi River. She claimed that despite submitting six complaints with evidence to Hydra officials, no action had been taken. Kavitha alleged that officials were selectively demolishing houses of the poor while avoiding action against large constructions by influential developers.

She cited a building



near the Musi which, according to her, had encroached into the restricted area and violated drainage norms, leading to flooding in nearby areas.

Warning of legal action, she said she would file a defamation case against Hydra official Ranganath if certain posts made by the agency on social media regarding the issue were not removed. Kavitha also questioned the government over the Musi

River rejuvenation project, alleging lack of transparency in the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and claiming the estimated project cost had increased significantly within a few months. She demanded that the government clearly explain the project details, engage with people likely to be affected by land acquisition and ensure that the homes of the poor are not demolished unnecessarily in the name of development.

Respecting the rules and traditions of every religious site is essential: Shia Maulana Kalbe Jawad

Lucknow: A video circulating widely on social media has sparked a major controversy regarding objections raised against a digital creator visiting Lucknow's historic Bara Imambara.

Reacting to the ensuing dispute over the issue of the hijab, prominent Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawad stated here on Sunday that every religious site possesses its own specific rules and traditions, and it is imperative to respect them.

Maulana Kalbe Jawad asserted that if an individual visits the Imambara as a tourist, they must adhere to the traditions observed at the site.

He noted that while entry for Muslims is permitted in many temples, the Imambara permits entry to everyone;



however, observing religious decorum remains a mandatory requirement.

According to him, the Imambara is a sacred religious space; therefore, the management retains the right to prevent individuals from entering the premises without covering their heads. The controversy stems from a

video recently shared on social media by digital creator Manya Singh, in which she alleged that she was asked to wear a hijab while inside the Bara Imambara complex and was also advised to button up her shirt. According to the creator, when she objected to these instructions, the atmosphere became tense, and

some individuals even went so far as to ask her to leave the premises. In her social media post, Manya Singh explained that she had visited Lucknow as a tourist with her friends and had purchased tickets to tour the Bara Imambara. She stated that she was not informed of any specific dress code requirements at the time of entry, yet upon reaching the interior of the complex, she was asked to cover her head. According to the creator, when she refused to wear a hijab, some individuals present at the site suggested that she use a "dupatta" (scarf) to cover her head instead. She further alleged that one individual asked her to button up her shirt—a request to which she objected, characterizing it as an infringement upon her personal liberty.

Two held after Odisha MLAs allege poaching attempt

Bengaluru: Two persons have been taken into custody after a complaint from Congress MLAs from Odisha who are currently staying at a resort in Ramanagara, police said on Sunday.

According to police sources, two persons were apprehended at a resort near Bidadi after they allegedly attempted to approach the MLAs and negotiate with them. In a written complaint submitted to the police, Ashok Kumar Das, Deputy Leader of the Congress Legislative Party in Odisha, alleged that four persons approached some of the party MLAs and attempted to bribe them with crores of rupees each to cross-vote in the upcoming Rajya Sabha election.

In the complaint ad-

ressed to the Station House Officer of Bidadi Police Station, Das said the Rajya Sabha election from Odisha is scheduled to be held on March 16, 2026, and since the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party government in Odisha had fielded an additional candidate, there were apprehensions of attempts to influence or poach Congress MLAs. He said that for the safety and security of the legislators, eight Congress MLAs had travelled to Bengaluru and had been staying in the state since March 12. According to the complaint, on Sunday, four unknown persons met a few of the MLAs and allegedly tried to bribe them by offering huge sums of money for cross-voting in favour of a candidate.

Lok Adalat In Mumbai Recovers ₹9.23 Crore In Settlements

Mumbai : The Debt Recovery Tribunal II Mumbai organised a special Lok Adalat in Colaba on March 14 as part of the nationwide National Lok Adalat initiative aimed at resolving financial disputes through amicable settlements.

The event focused on cases related to loan recovery and financial disputes that were pending before the tribunals. Officials said the initiative was designed to encourage negotiated settlements between lenders and borrowers, allowing disputes to be resolved without lengthy court proceedings.

During the Lok Adalat session, a total of 22 cases were successfully settled through mutual agreement between the parties involved. These settlements were achieved through dialogue and mediation conducted by the panel overseeing the proceedings.

According to officials, the settlements resulted in the recovery of approximately ₹9.23 crore for the tribunals. The recovered amount will be distributed among the concerned financial institutions and claimants as per the settlement terms agreed upon during the session.



The Lok Adalat was conducted under the guidance of Vivek Bharti Sharma, Chairperson of the Debts Recovery Appellate Tribunal Mumbai. The proceedings were also supervised by Harish Kumar Kaushik, who serves as the Presiding Officer of the tribunal.

The event was organised in coordination with the District Legal Services Authority, which plays a key role in facilitating alternative dispute resolution mechanisms across the country.

A dedicated panel was constituted to oversee the settlement proceedings and ensure fairness in negotiations. The panel included retired Additional District Judge Nandadevi T. Ghadge along with Bhavishyakumar Azad, who currently serves as Recovery Officer at DRT-II Mumbai.

Senior legal practitioner V. N. Kane also participated in the proceedings as part of the settlement panel. The panel worked closely with both parties in each case to facilitate mutually acceptable agreements.

Lok Adalats are widely recognised in India as an effective method of resolving disputes quickly and economically. These forums encourage compromise and voluntary settlements, helping parties avoid prolonged litigation.

Officials involved in the

event noted that such initiatives play an important role in reducing the backlog of cases pending before courts and tribunals. Debt recovery cases in particular often involve complex financial issues that can take years to resolve through traditional legal channels.

By resolving disputes through negotiation, the Lok Adalat process allows financial institutions to recover dues faster while also providing borrowers an opportunity to settle liabilities under agreed conditions.

Authorities said the successful recovery of ₹9.23 crore during the session demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach in handling financial disputes.

Legal officials also emphasized that continued use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms is essential for improving efficiency within the justice system.

They added that similar Lok Adalat sessions will continue to be organised periodically to address pending cases and encourage settlements between disputing parties.

SpiceJet Launches Special Flights From Fujairah Amid Middle East Tensions

Mumbai : SpiceJet has announced the operation of special flights from Fujairah to multiple Indian destinations in order to assist passengers affected by the escalating tensions in West Asia.

According to the airline, three special flights were scheduled for March 15 to help Indian travellers facing possible disruptions in the region. Two of these services will connect Fujairah with Delhi, while another flight will operate between Fujairah and Mumbai.

The airline stated that the additional services have been arranged to support Indian nationals who may be impacted by sudden travel restrictions or flight cancellations linked to the evolving geopolitical situation in the Middle East.

Earlier, SpiceJet had warned that the changing security environment in the region could affect commercial aviation routes, particularly those operating to and from Dubai. Any restrictions or airspace limitations could lead to schedule adjustments for flights operating in the area. To minimise inconvenience to passengers, the airline said it has been actively informing travellers about schedule

changes. Updates are being sent through SMS messages and email notifications to passengers using the contact details provided during ticket bookings.

Apart from the Fujairah operations, SpiceJet has also introduced an additional special flight between Dubai and Pune. The move is intended to ensure continued connectivity for travellers whose journeys may have been disrupted by flight cancellations or operational changes.

The airline said it has been coordinating closely with airport authorities and aviation agencies to ensure that these special flights operate smoothly. Arrangements have also been made to manage passenger handling efficiently during the increased travel demand.

The decision to operate additional services comes amid rising tensions across West Asia. Reports indicate that a drone strike targeted oil storage facilities near the Port of Fujairah on Saturday. According to regional reports, the incident resulted in a large fire at one of the key energy installations in the area. Images circulating on social media showed thick plumes of smoke ris-

ing near the port, which is considered one of the important oil export hubs in the region.

The attack was reportedly linked to escalating hostilities involving Iran and the United States. The strike occurred shortly after the United States carried out military action targeting Iran's Kharg Island, a major oil facility used for exporting crude.

Regional analysts said debris from an intercepted drone may have fallen near the Fujairah port area, triggering the blaze. Despite the dramatic visuals and the scale of the fire, authorities later confirmed that no injuries were reported in the incident.

Security experts noted that the episode highlights the strategic significance of the United Arab Emirates as a global logistics, trade, and financial hub. Any instability in the region has the potential to disrupt energy supplies, aviation routes, and commercial activity.

In light of these developments, airlines operating in the Gulf region are closely monitoring the situation and preparing contingency plans to maintain connectivity for passengers.

Cyber Blackmail Suspected Behind Kalyan Man's Death

Kalyan : A troubling case of alleged cyber blackmail has emerged from Kalyan after investigators discovered that a 45-year-old man who died by suicide may have been threatened with the circulation of obscene photographs.

Police said the possible motive came to light nearly two months after the man's death during an examination of his phone and email records.

The deceased has been identified as Hemant Dayashankar Pandey, a resident of Vitthalwadi. Officials from Kolsewadi Police Station said Pandey had died by suicide around two months ago at his former residence in Kailasnagar.

Investigators said Pandey had allegedly hanged himself from a ceiling fan using a scarf. At the time of the incident, the family was

unable to determine the reason behind his drastic step, leaving several unanswered questions.

Later, his elder brother Rajesh Pandey approached the police and filed a complaint expressing suspicion about the circumstances surrounding the death. Based on the complaint, officers began a detailed investigation. During the inquiry, a friend of the deceased informed the family that Pandey had recently been trying to urgently arrange around ₹2 lakh. He had requested ₹1.6 lakh from the friend, citing financial distress, though he could only receive around ₹40,000.

Police believe the accused warned Pandey that the images would be shared on social media if he failed to pay money. Fearing public embarrassment and damage to his reputation, he is

believed to have experienced severe mental stress.

Further examination of bank records indicated that several transactions had taken place between April 2025 and June 2026, suggesting that the victim may have transferred money repeatedly during this period.

Investigators suspect that the accused may have extorted more than ₹2 lakh by threatening him over the months.

Police believe the sustained harassment and financial pressure may have pushed Pandey into deep distress before he ultimately took the extreme step.

Kolsewadi Police have now registered a case of cyber blackmail and extortion against an unidentified person. Efforts are underway to identify and trace the accused as the investigation continues.

RPF Files Case After Namaz Video From Malad Station Goes Viral

Mumbai : The Railway Protection Force (RPF) has taken action against three individuals after they were allegedly seen offering namaz within the premises of Malad railway station. The incident came to light after a video circulated widely on social media, drawing significant public attention.

Officials said a case has been registered under Section 147 of the Railway Act, which pertains to trespassing on railway property or refusing to vacate the premises when instructed by authorities.

In addition, the Government Railway Police (GRP) issued preventive notices to the individuals under Section 168 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which allows police to intervene to prevent



potential offences.

According to railway authorities, the three men involved were hawkers who allegedly performed namaz under a temporary structure near Platform No.

1 of Malad railway station. The visuals from the location were widely shared online and sparked discussion among social media users.

The case was registered following a complaint sub-

mitted by the Malad railway station master. The matter also gained political attention after BJP leader Kirit Somaiya demanded strict action once the video surfaced online.

Somaiya later visited the location and reviewed the spot where the incident allegedly occurred. He also submitted a written complaint to the police urging them to take appropriate legal steps against those involved.

After examining the complaint and the viral footage, authorities proceeded with legal action under the relevant provisions of railway law.

The individuals named in the case have been identified as Mushtak Babu Lone, 35, a hawker living in Malad East; Soheb Saha Sadakat Saha, 25, a hawker from Vasai; and Bishmillah Din Mohammed Ansari, 43, also a resident of Malad East. Officials said further investigation into the incident is ongoing.

Registrar Orders Society To Cancel Fines On Dog Walker

Mumbai : The Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies has directed a housing society in Goregaon to withdraw penalties imposed on a resident who was fined for walking her pet dog within the premises.

She stated that she had already paid one fine amounting to ₹3,000 plus GST, while another penalty of ₹4,800 remained pending with accumulated interest.

Bajaj also claimed that the society had designated multiple areas within the complex—including parking levels, podium spaces and gardens—as “no-pet zones,” effectively preventing residents from walking their pets in these locations.

As a result, pet owners were allegedly forced to use a narrow stretch near the entrance and exit gates next to



a drain, which she described as unhygienic and unsafe.

In her complaint, Bajaj said that despite maintaining proper hygiene by cleaning up after her dog and regularly checking for

ticks, the pet later developed tick fever, which she believed was linked to the poor conditions in the designated area.

She further alleged that security personnel photo-

graphed her while she was walking her dog and that her name was displayed publicly in the building lift on a list of residents who had unpaid dues, which she described as humiliating.

Beacon Lights Removed From Mumbai Mayor's Car After Controversy

Mumbai : The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has removed red and blue flashing lights that had been installed on the official vehicle of Ritu Tawde following a controversy triggered on social media and through a Right to Information complaint.

The issue first came to public attention on March 11 when a social media user posted a photograph showing the mayor's official car fitted with flashing lights resembling those typically used by police vehicles.

The images circulated widely online and sparked debate about whether the installation violated regulations introduced by the government to curb the display of VIP privileges on official vehicles. Two days later, RTI activist Anil Galgali formally raised the issue in a letter addressed to the

mayor. In his communication dated March 13, he objected to what he described as the unauthorised installation of flashing lights on the vehicle.

Galgali stated that the lights appeared to resemble emergency beacons used by law enforcement agencies and questioned whether such equipment was permitted for municipal officials.

He also pointed out that the flashing lights were not limited to the mayor's car. According to his complaint, a second vehicle used as part of the mayor's convoy had been fitted with similar lights. The escort vehicle, reportedly a Mahindra Scorpio used by the mayor's personal assistants and protocol officer, was also seen carrying flashing lights.

Following the com-

plaint and the online discussion surrounding the issue, officials from the municipal corporation reviewed the matter.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation subsequently removed the red and blue beacon lights from the mayor's official vehicle as well as the escort vehicle.

The controversy comes in the backdrop of nationwide efforts to restrict the use of beacon lights on vehicles. In recent years, authorities have tightened regulations to discourage the display of VIP symbols on official cars except for emergency services such as police, ambulances, and fire brigades. Critics of the practice argue that such restrictions were introduced specifically to eliminate visible symbols of privilege associated with public offi-

cials. The incident attracted attention partly because the installation of police-style lights on non-emergency vehicles can create confusion among motorists and pedestrians.

Following the removal of the lights, municipal officials have not indicated whether any internal inquiry will be conducted regarding how the equipment was installed on the vehicles.

However, the swift removal suggests that the civic administration sought to address the controversy quickly after it was brought to public notice.

Observers say the episode highlights how social media scrutiny and citizen activism can influence administrative decisions related to public office and the use of official resources.

Woman Found Murdered Inside Navi Mumbai Residence

Navi Mumbai : A 45-year-old woman was found murdered inside her rented residence in Turbhe village on Friday evening, prompting police to launch a search for the unidentified attacker.

The victim, identified as Marjina Mandal, was discovered lying in a pool of blood inside her room in Sector 22. Following the discovery, the APMC police registered a case of murder and initiated an investigation.

The incident came to light around 6.50 pm when workers living in the same building noticed Mandal

lying motionless inside her room and alerted the authorities.

Police officers reached the location shortly after receiving the information, conducted a panchnama and sent the body for post-mortem examination.

According to investigators, Mandal lived alone in a room on the first floor of a building owned by Shankar Bhoir. She worked as a domestic helper to support herself.

Preliminary findings suggest that an unknown person may have entered the residence while she was alone and attacked her with

a sharp weapon.

Investigators are currently reviewing CCTV footage from nearby areas and collecting other technical evidence in an effort to identify the suspect.

Officials said the motive behind the murder has not yet been established and further investigation is underway.

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discovered lying in a pool of blood inside her room in Turbhe village's Sector 22 area. Following the discovery, police registered a case of murder and initiated an

investigation into the incident. Officials from APMC Police Station Navi Mumbai said the matter came to light at around 6.50 pm when

workers residing in the same building noticed Mandal lying motionless inside her room and immediately alerted the authorities.

Police personnel reached the spot soon after receiving the information and carried out the required procedures, including preparing a panchnama at the scene.

The body was later sent for post-mortem examination to determine the exact cause of death and gather further forensic evidence.

According to investigators, Mandal lived alone in a room on the first floor of a building owned by Shankar

Bhoir in the Turbhe village area.

Police said the woman worked as a domestic helper and had been living at the rented accommodation for some time while supporting herself through her work.

Preliminary findings suggest that an unidentified individual may have entered the residence while she was alone.

Investigators believe the attacker allegedly assaulted her with a sharp weapon before fleeing the location.

Authorities have begun examining surveillance footage from cameras installed in nearby buildings

and along surrounding roads to trace the suspect's movements.

Police teams are also questioning residents of the building and people in the neighbourhood to gather additional information that could help establish the sequence of events leading to the crime.

Officials said that so far no arrests have been made and the motive behind the murder has not yet been determined.

Investigators are also analysing technical evidence and other possible leads that may help identify the person responsible.

Editorial

Immaturity exposed!

In a democratic system, the parliamentary chamber is not merely an arena for political conflict; it is regarded as the supreme platform that upholds discipline, tradition, and accountability. However, following the rejection of the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition parties against the Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla, questions have been raised regarding the political maturity of the opposition. Despite being fully aware that this motion stood no chance of success, the very intent behind moving it—and the inconsistencies it exposed—has sparked intense criticism directed at the leadership style of the Congress party, and specifically that of Rahul Gandhi. In this "temple of democracy," preserving parliamentary traditions and conventions is a moral imperative shared by both the ruling party and the opposition. Yet, the manner in which the recent no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla was—predictably—rejected has cast a significant shadow of doubt over the political astuteness of the opposition. Given that the opposition was fully cognizant that the motion would be defeated, the situation has created the impression that they have perhaps developed a perverse habit of inviting self-inflicted humiliation. Moving a no-confidence motion against a Speaker as composed and erudite as Om Birla was not only unnecessary but amounted to an act of sheer mischief. As the adage goes—"When ruin looms, judgment fails"—it became abundantly clear following the prolonged debate on this motion that the Congress and other opposition parties had merely made a laughingstock of themselves by tabling it. During the debate on this no-confidence motion, several members of the BJP—including Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju and Home Minister Amit Shah—delivered scathing speeches that absolutely shredded the stance adopted by the Congress, and particularly that of Rahul Gandhi. The manner in which the ruling party articulated its arguments—combining logic with aggressive counter-attack—during the debate left Rahul Gandhi and his fellow members of parliament looking utterly discomfited. While politically tearing into the Congress party, Kiren Rijju and Amit Shah simultaneously exposed to the world the hollowness of the allegations leveled against Birla. Significantly, during their speeches, several members of the opposition parties themselves reiterated the warm personal rapport they share with Birla. The inherent inconsistency—of moving a no-confidence motion on one hand while vouching for the Speaker's amiable nature on the other—effectively deflated the allegations put forth by the Congress. Conducting the proceedings of Parliament is the constitutional responsibility of the Speaker. While presiding over the Lok Sabha, the Speaker cannot make decisions arbitrarily, as both Houses of Parliament function in accordance with established rules, traditions, conventions, and precedents. When disorder erupts in the House—characterized by slandering or deliberate obstruction of proceedings—the Speaker is compelled, albeit reluctantly, to adopt a firm stance. When members persist in their defiance despite repeated warnings, it becomes the Speaker's duty to either adjourn the House or suspend those engaging in unparliamentary conduct. Regrettably, the behavior of members of the opposition parties often brings to mind the unruly and mischievous students found in a classroom. While a school-teacher might wield the threat of a cane, the Speaker presiding over the supreme temple of democracy finds themselves in a position akin to a college professor who is compelled, by necessity, to rely solely on the 'verbal cane.' The elected representatives in the Lok Sabha represent a constituency of anywhere between one to two million people. The public has sent them to Parliament specifically to articulate their concerns; yet, when these members squander the House's precious time merely to appease their party leadership, they fail to realize that they are, in fact, betraying the very people of their constituencies. Although the (BJP) has been in power since 2014, the party spent a significant period prior to that occupying the opposition benches. BJP members, too, were assertive during that era; they staged protests and demonstrations, yet they never engaged in any conduct that would bring shame or dishonor upon the people of their constituencies. Viewed against this backdrop, one is compelled to observe with regret that Rahul Gandhi, through his conduct, has severely devalued the stature of the Leader of the Opposition. Prior to him, stalwarts such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, and Sushma Swaraj held this office, and in doing so, they upheld its dignity and prestige. Rahul Gandhi's conduct within the House often appears irresponsible and puerile. Actions such as winking in the hallowed precincts of Parliament, abruptly leaving his seat to rush toward the treasury benches, or embracing the Prime Minister, undermine the solemnity of parliamentary proceedings. It appears that Rahul Gandhi has yet to grasp the fundamental truth that freedom of expression does not equate to unbridled license. Although his behavior has by now become a familiar spectacle to all, many members even within his own party and alliance still do not take him seriously. While Congress members may tolerate him as the heir to the Gandhi dynasty, a latent sentiment persists in the minds of many: a sense of bewilderment as to why they have been saddled with such a leader. Rahul Gandhi's perennial grievance is the lament that he is "not allowed to speak in the House." It is astonishing that despite being a five-time Member of Parliament, he appears to lack even a rudimentary understanding of parliamentary rules. The Speaker holds the absolute authority to determine who speaks in the House, when they speak, and for how long. The Speaker is not merely the conductor of parliamentary proceedings but also the supreme authority within the Parliament complex. Why does Rahul Gandhi lack the basic general knowledge that even the country's Prime Minister cannot speak without the Speaker's permission? It was, therefore, entirely appropriate when BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad remarked that Rahul Gandhi needs to go back and learn the very ABCs of parliamentary rules. Rahul Gandhi ought to scour the Parliament library and read the speeches delivered by effective Leaders of the Opposition from bygone eras. Of course, for that, he would actually need to find the time—a scarce commodity, given that he is frequently away on foreign tours precisely when critical national issues are being debated within the country. Although Kiren Rijju's remark—made with a touch of irony—suggesting that Priyanka Vadra would have made for a far more effective Leader of the Opposition than Rahul Gandhi within the Congress party, it contains a significant kernel of truth. For the bright future of a parliamentary democracy, just as the ruling party must be competent, the Leader of the Opposition must be intelligent, composed, and respectful of parliamentary norms. Leadership cannot be demonstrated merely by raising one's voice or creating a ruckus. Through this futile exercise of a no-confidence motion, the Congress party has only inflicted political damage upon itself. Rahul Gandhi's immaturity is tarnishing the Congress party's image, and it is imperative that loyalists within the party point this out to him in a timely manner. The day Rahul Gandhi grasps the true essence and discipline of parliamentary democracy will truly be a 'priceless' day for the Congress party. If Rahul Gandhi genuinely aspires to become an effective Leader of the Opposition, it is absolutely essential that he remains mindful of parliamentary discipline, rules, and political maturity. Otherwise, such incidents will only serve to further weaken his public image, and the Congress party, too, will have to pay a political price for it.

Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth holds 29th Convocation & Shishyopanayaniya Samskara Ceremony at BHU

The 29th Convocation and Shishyopanayaniya Samskara Ceremony of Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth (RAV), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, was held today at Swatantra Bhawan, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. The ceremony celebrated the achievements of scholars trained under the Certificate of Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth (CRAV) programme and reaffirmed the enduring Guru-Shishya tradition of Ayurveda.

Shri Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Ayush and Minister of State in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, addressed the gathering through a virtual message as the Chief Guest.

In his address, Shri Jadhav said it was a matter of great pride to address such an august gathering of scholars in the sacred city of Kashi, the ancient seat of Ayurvedic knowledge and the land associated with Dhanvantari Divodasa, regarded as the originator of surgical science in Ashtanga Ayurveda. He paid tribute to Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University, whose vision made BHU one of the historic centres of Ayurveda education. The Minister emphasised that Ayurveda is not merely a system of medicine but a holistic knowledge system that offers comprehensive insights into health and life. He highlighted the significance of the Guru-Shishya tradition, which has preserved and transmitted Ayurvedic wisdom across generations. He noted that legendary figures such as Dhanvantari, Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata emerged through this tradition.

Shri Jadhav appreciated the efforts of Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth in sustaining this tradition by enabling young physicians to learn directly from eminent and experienced Vaidyas through structured programmes such as CRAV and MRV. He also commended the leadership of Padma Bhushan



awardee Vaidya Devendra Triguna, President of the Governing Body of RAV, and Dr. Vandana Siroha, Director of RAV, for strengthening Ayurveda education and training.

Highlighting the growing reach of Ayush systems under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Minister said that Yoga and Ayush have gained global recognition and are increasingly contributing to India's healthcare diplomacy. He stated that the Ministry of Ayush is working to strengthen education, research, and training in the recognised systems of traditional medicine—Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, and Homoeopa-

thy. Addressing the graduating scholars, Shri Jadhav said the convocation marked not just an academic milestone but the beginning of a new responsibility. He urged them to integrate traditional knowledge with modern scientific research and contribute to making Ayurveda evidence-based and globally accepted. He also emphasised the importance of compassion, ethics, and soft skills in medical practice. Padma Shri Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, congratulated the graduating scholars and encouraged them to actively engage in research and scientific writing, stress-

ing that evidence-based studies are essential for strengthening the credibility and global acceptance of Ayush systems. He also highlighted the Ministry's initiatives, including the development of All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) institutions and the upgradation of the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre, aimed at advancing research and global collaboration in traditional medicine. Prof. Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi, Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University, emphasised the need for students to maintain academic focus and dedication while contributing to the advancement of the Ayush sector. Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri awardee

Vaidya Devendra Triguna, President of the Governing Body of RAV, expressed satisfaction that the institution has been fulfilling its vision of producing skilled Ayurvedic practitioners. He noted that the future of the Ayush sector is promising, with increasing numbers of colleges and universities dedicated to traditional medicine. He encouraged young practitioners to feel proud of the title "Vaidya" and to contribute to the global recognition of Ayurveda.

Earlier, Dr. Vandana Siroha, Director of Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth, welcomed the dignitaries and participants and highlighted the institution's role in promoting advanced training and preserving the Guru-Shishya lineage of Ayurveda. The ceremony was attended by several distinguished dignitaries, including Dr. Manisha Upendra Kothekar, Chairperson, National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM); Prof. S. N. Sankhwar, Director, Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU; Prof. Amit Patra, Director, IIT (BHU); and Prof. (Dr.) P. K. Goswami, Dean, Faculty of Ayurveda, BHU. On the occasion, Lifetime Achievement Awards were conferred upon eminent personalities for their outstanding contributions to Ayurveda, including Vaidya Nirmala Sharma, Keval Krishna Thakral, and Girdhari Lal Mishra. Several other distinguished scholars and practitioners who were also awarded with Fellow of RAV include Vaidya Yogendra Kumar Sharma, Vaidya Dinesh Chandra Katoch, Vaidya Tanuja Manoj Nesri, Vaidya Bhrigupati Pandey, Vaidya Murlidhar Sharma, Vaidya B. Srinivas Prasad, Vaidya Umesh Shukla, Vaidya Milind Kulkarni, Vaidya P. K. Goswami, Vaidya M. Mohan Alva, Vaidya P. L. T. Girija, Vaidya Rama Jaysundar, and Vaidya Vaidhnav Pradi U. The event marked an important milestone in promoting traditional knowledge and reaffirmed the Ministry of Ayush's commitment to advancing Ayurveda as a globally respected healthcare system.

Model villages and recognition of best-performing panchayats

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has been encouraging high-performing Panchayats across the country through its scheme called Incentivisation of Panchayats (IoP). The initiative is one of the key components of the revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at strengthening grassroots governance and improving the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Under this initiative, the best-performing Panchayats in the country are recognised through the prestigious National Panchayat Awards. These awards are presented every year after a nationwide evaluation and competition process designed

to identify and honour Panchayats that demonstrate excellence in governance, development and service delivery.

The awards not only recognise outstanding performance but also provide financial incentives to the winning Panchayats. The incentive amount ranges from ₹50 lakh to ₹5 crore, depending on the tier of the Panchayat and the specific category of the award received.

The Ministry has aligned the awards with the Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) framework. This alignment ensures that Panchayats are assessed based on their contributions to achieving the global development goals at the grassroots lev-

el. The evaluation process examines the performance of Panchayati Raj Institutions across several critical sectors that are directly linked to sustainable development. These include poverty reduction, livelihood generation, health services, women and child development, water sufficiency, climate action, environmental protection and infrastructure development. In addition, Panchayats are assessed on their efforts to strengthen social security programmes and promote transparent, accountable and participatory governance. These indicators help determine how effectively local governments are implementing development initiatives for rural communities. Every year, Panchayats

that demonstrate exceptional performance across these parameters are honoured with the National Panchayat Awards. The awards recognise innovative governance practices, effective implementation of development programmes and community participation at the village level. The Ministry has released a detailed list of Panchayats that received the National Panchayat Awards during the award years 2023, 2024 and 2025. The list is provided in Annexure-I of the official report issued by the Ministry.

Apart from the awards, the Ministry has also developed a comprehensive evaluation framework known as the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI). This index is de-

signed to measure the progress of Panchayats in achieving development targets related to the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Panchayat Advancement Index uses a set of well-defined key performance indicators that assess the performance of Panchayats across multiple development sectors. These indicators include poverty reduction and livelihood support, women and child welfare, water availability, climate action and environmental sustainability. Additional indicators also evaluate progress in infrastructure development, delivery of social security benefits and the promotion of good governance practices within Panchayats.

One-day interactive workshop with Union Territories in New Delhi

The Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education organised a One-day Interactive Workshop with Union Territories at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), New Delhi.

The workshop brought together senior officials from the Ministry of Education, representatives from other Ministries/Departments and officials from all Union Territories to deliberate on key administrative, financial and legal issues relating to school education in the UTs.

Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, DoSEL, inaugurated the workshop, emphasising the importance of continuous engagement with Union Territories to strengthen coordination and improve the implementation of education programmes. He highlighted the need for timely filling of vacancies in teaching and non-teaching positions, strengthening of academic institutions such as SCERTs, DIETs and SIEs, and ensuring prompt responses to parliamentary

matters and financial proposals.

Smt. A. Srija, Economic Advisor, DoSEL, set the context for the workshop, stating that the platform would facilitate the exchange of ideas and enable the resolution of operational challenges faced by the Union Territories in the education sector.

During the inaugural session, Shri Dheeraj Sahu, Additional Secretary, DoSEL, addressed the participants and emphasised the importance of strengthening institutional capacity and improving administrative efficiency across Union Territories. This was followed by remarks from Shri Ajay Gupta, Joint Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, who spoke on key aspects relating to the handling of litigation and court cases.

Smt. Prachi Pandey, Joint Secretary, DoSEL, emphasised that all schools in the Union Territories should be affiliated with CBSE.

Shri Bhupal Nanda, Principal Chief Controller of Accounts, Ministry of



Education, also addressed the gathering and highlighted issues relating to financial management and accounting systems in the education sector.

The technical sessions covered key topics including, the implementation of Section 12(1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act,

2009, educational indicators and data reporting for evidence-based policy formulation, onboarding of Union Territories with legislature to the SNA-SPARSH platform and related accounting matters to strengthen digital financial management systems. In addition, sessions highlighted the role of the Legal Information Manage-

ment and Briefing System (LIMBS) in effective monitoring of court cases and addressed procurement-related issues on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal, focusing on improving transparency and efficiency in government procurement.

Representatives from Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Puducherry, Andaman &

Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep and Delhi made presentations highlighting the status of court cases, vacancies of teaching and non-teaching staff including special educators, vacancies in SCERTs, DIETs and SIEs, release of funds under Samagra Shiksha, submission of annual reports and audited accounts, parliamentary matters and issues faced on the GeM portal. The discussions enabled Union Territories to share their experiences and seek guidance from the Ministry and other stakeholders.

The workshop concluded with an interactive discussion and a summary of key takeaways. The deliberations reaffirmed the collective commitment of the Ministry of Education and the Union Territories to strengthen coordination, enhance institutional capacity, and ensure effective implementation of school education initiatives for improved learning outcomes across the UTs.

Parle-G production halted due to gas shortage; 500 workers face uncertainty



Mumbai : Biscuit production at Shivangi Bakers in Khangaon has come to a complete halt since last Thursday due to a severe shortage of cooking gas. The factory manufactures the popular Parle-G biscuits, including cream and glucose varieties. The production process

has been disrupted as the ovens used in the factory operate on gas, and the supply has been interrupted. As a result, the entire manufacturing unit has been forced to suspend operations. Around 500 workers are employed at the facility, and concerns are being raised about their livelihoods if the

shutdown continues for a longer period. Meanwhile, the company is reportedly suffering losses worth lakhs of rupees every day due to the production stoppage.

There are also fears that a shortage of biscuits could arise in the market if the situation persists.

Government Committed to Ensuring Smooth Gas and Fuel Supply: Bhujbal

Mumbai: The state government is taking all steps to ensure that gas and fuel are supplied smoothly across Maharashtra, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, Chhagan Bhujbal said here on Sunday. He stated that arrangements have been made

to give priority to essential services in the supply process. Bhujbal said that control rooms will be set up at the taluka and district levels

to address any difficulties related to supply. In addition, a WhatsApp facility will be introduced to enable quick communication and reso-

lution of issues. He assured that the government remains committed to maintaining an uninterrupted supply of gas and fuel throughout the state.

World Carrom Champion Rashmi Kumari Inaugurates PNG supply under National PNG Drive 2.0 in Aundh, amidst LPG crisis

Pune: To promote eco-friendly fuel, the 'National PNG Drive 2.0' has been organized through a joint initiative by Maharashtra Natural Gas Limited (MNGL) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB).

As part of this campaign, the formal inauguration of domestic Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connections was held with great enthusiasm at the 'Sylvan Heights' housing society in Aundh here, a release stated on Sunday. World Carrom Champion Rashmi Kumari who was the chief guest, said, "Due to the situation in Middle Eastern countries, many are facing gas shortages. PNG is an



excellent alternative that eliminates the hassle of managing gas cylin-

ders. I urge more citizens to adopt MNGL's PNG facility. Residents of the society in Aundh, an upscale neighbourhood, expressed their satisfaction with the start of a safe and uninterrupted Piped Natural Gas (PNG) supply provided by MNGL, especially given the global fuel and gas shortages caused by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. During the event, officials pledged to reach more households through the 'National PNG Drive 2.0' to encourage fuel conservation, the release said. The residents thanked MNGL, noting that with 300 families living in the society, the facility has arrived at the perfect time.

Union Minister Murlidhar Mohol Undergoes Successful Leg Surgery; Doctors Advise One Month Rest

Pune: Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation and Cooperation, Murlidhar Mohol, successfully underwent a leg surgery at a private hospital here on Sunday. Doctors have advised him complete rest for at least one month.

Mohol has had a strong connection with wrestling since his student days. He used to train rigorously in traditional wrestling arenas and later underwent professional training in Kolhapur. During that period, he suffered a serious leg injury. Although he received treatment at that time and the condition was brought under control, the injury eventually forced him to give up wrestling. After enduring recurring pain for a long time, Mohol recently consulted medical specialists. Following medical evaluation, doctors recommended surgery to address the issue.

Lok Adalat in Parli resolves 86 cases through mutual settlement; Civil, criminal & bank recovery cases disposed amicably

Beed: A total of 86 cases were settled amicably during a Lok Adalat organised in Parli of Beed District through the joint efforts of the Parli Taluka Legal Services Committee and the Parli Bar Association today. The cases included civil and criminal matters as well as disputes involving various

banks, credit societies and the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (Mahavitaran). According to officials, the Lok Adalat disposed of 24 pre-litigation matters along with 62 pending cases, taking the total number of resolved cases to 86. Through these settlements, banks and credit

institutions were able to recover a total amount of Rs 68,85,284. The Lok Adalat proceedings were conducted by panel members including Parli court judicial officers Justice D. R. Borde and Justice D. Y. Rairikar, along with advocates V. D. Dhumbane and V. M. Jagatkar, who served as conciliators during

the hearings. Several members of the legal fraternity and administrative staff contributed to the successful organisation of the Lok Adalat. Those who participated included Parli Bar Association President Advocate D. B. Kadbane, Advocate R. V. Gite, Advocate Pradip Giram,

Advocate R. V. Deshmukh, Advocate Mirza Manzur Ali, Advocate Madhavrao Munde, Advocate Vajinath Nagargoje, Advocate Dilip Swami, Advocate Prabhakar Satbhai, Assistant Superintendent Giridhar Joshi, and bank recovery officers Rahul Gopnapale and Raghunath, among others.

Two injured after car plunges 80 feet into gorge in Pirangut Ghat near Pune

Pune: Two people were injured after a speeding car plunged nearly 80 feet into a deep gorge in the Pirangut Ghat section of Pune on Saturday, officials said.

The accident occurred in the hilly stretch near Pirangut in Mulshi, triggering panic among motorists travelling through the area. The stretch is known for its winding roads and steep slopes, which often require careful driving.

According to preliminary information, the driver lost control of the vehicle while navigating the ghat road. The car subsequently veered off the road and plunged into a deep valley below.

Officials said the vehicle fell nearly 80 feet into the gorge, suffering severe damage due to the impact. Parts of the car were reportedly crushed as it landed at the bottom of the slope.

Two occupants travelling in the car sustained injuries in the accident. Their identities had not been immediately disclosed at the



time of reporting.

Local residents and motorists passing through the area quickly rushed to the spot after witnessing the accident. Some of them alerted emergency services and helped coordinate rescue efforts.

Rescue teams, along with local residents, worked together to reach the vehicle in the gorge. The difficult terrain made the operation challenging and required careful coordination.

Using ropes and other equipment, rescuers managed to pull the injured individuals out of the deep valley.

The operation took some time due to the steep slope and rocky surroundings.

Minor married girl abducted and assaulted in Beed village

Beed: A shocking case of kidnapping and sexual assault involving a minor married girl has been reported from a village in Beed district, leaving residents deeply disturbed and angry.

The 17-year-old victim was allegedly abducted from her home during the night, assaulted, and later tied to a pillar in the village square before being abandoned there, an official said on Sunday.

According to available information, the victim was

sleeping at home with her husband when the accused allegedly kidnapped her during the night. The man reportedly took her outside the village to the bank of a river, where he sexually assaulted her.

After committing the assault, the accused brought the victim back to the village and tied her to a pillar in the village square, locally known as the chawdi, before leaving the spot.

The incident came to light the following morning

when villagers noticed the young woman tied to the pillar.

They immediately freed her, and the shocking crime soon became known across the village, triggering strong resentment among residents.

The Pimplner police took swift action and arrested the main accused in connection with the case. The investigation is currently being carried out by Assistant Police Inspector Atulkumar Landge of the Pimplner police station.

Veteran Actress Madhu Malhotra Passes Away at 72

Mumbai: Veteran Bollywood actress Madhu Malhotra, known for her roles in popular films like Satta Pe Satta, Karz and Vishwanath, has passed away at the age of 72.

She breathed her last recently, leaving behind a legacy of memorable performances in Hindi cinema.

Although Malhotra appeared in only a limited number of films, many of them turned out to be successful at the box office. During her career, she shared screen space with

several leading stars of the industry, including Amitabh Bachchan and Hema Malini.

Madhu Malhotra was part of notable films such as Ghulam, Karz and Satta Pe Satta. She also appeared in movies like Sambandh, Hero, Rishta Kagaz Ka and Qayamat, working alongside several prominent actors.

In Karz, she worked with the late actor Rishi Kapoor. The film also featured Tina Ambani, Simi Garewal and Prem Nath in key roles, while Malhotra played a supporting character.

Maha Guv Jishnu Dev Varma confers DSc on CM Fadnavis

Mumbai: In his first public function since coming to Maharashtra, the Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of the State's public universities Jishnu Dev Varma conferred the honorary Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) degree upon the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis.

The honorary degree was awarded to the Chief Minister in recognition of his efforts in promoting digital technology in the agriculture sector at the 39th Convocation Ceremony of Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Rahuri.

On this occasion, the Governor also awarded degrees to 4,182 graduates, 346 postgraduate degrees, 74 doctoral degrees, and 39 medals to students. The Governor said that

this was his first public programme in the State, and it was taking place at a university named after the great social reformer and pioneer of women's education, Mahatma Phule.

He added that the ceremony was especially memorable for him as the young and dynamic Chief Minister of the State, Devendra Fadnavis, was being conferred the Doctor of Science degree on this occasion.

The Governor recalled that Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had given the nation the slogan "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan."

Later, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee added "Jai Vigyan," and Prime Minister Narendra Modi further expanded it with "Jai Anusandhan."

The Governor observed



that the present era is the age of technology, and that artificial intelligence can play an important role in it.

Congratulating the university, the Governor noted that since its establishment

it has produced over 1.5 lakh skilled human resources, developed 320 high-yielding crop varieties and 56 agricultural implements, and transferred 1,925 improved farming techniques to farm-

ers.

The Governor said human life is incomplete without service to the nation, and therefore urged the students to dedicate their lives to serving the country while working in their respective fields.

Chairman of Maharashtra Legislative Council Ram Shinde; Minister for Agriculture and Pro-Chancellor of the University Dattatraya Bharane; Minister for Water Resources (Godavari and Krishna Valley Development Corporation) and Guardian Minister of Ahilyanagar district Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil; former Chairman of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research Ashok Kumar Singh; and the Vice-Chancellor of the university Vilas Kharche, were among those present.

LPG hoarding racket busted in Bhiwandi raid, Flying squad seizes 84 cylinders from illegal stock

Bhiwandi : Authorities in Maharashtra have stepped up action against illegal hoarding and black marketing of LPG cylinders amid concerns that fuel supplies could tighten because of rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. As part of this intensified drive, the rationing department carried out a major operation in Bhiwandi where officials seized 84 LPG cylinders allegedly stored for illegal sale and began legal proceedings against those linked to the suspected network.

According to the official, the raid was conducted by the rationing department's flying squad under the supervision of Prashant Kale, Deputy Controller of Rationing for the Thane 'F' Division.

Officials said the operation was launched after the squad received specific information about a stock of

LPG cylinders being stored without authorisation at a warehouse in the Vardhman Compound located in the Valpada area of Bhiwandi taluka.

Acting on the tip-off, the flying squad reached the premises and carried out a surprise inspection. During the search, the team found 84 LPG cylinders loaded in three tempos parked at the location. According to officials, the cylinders were allegedly being stored and transported without the required permissions.

The cylinders seized during the operation were from several companies including Bharat Gas, Hindustan Petroleum, Go Gas and Gas One. The stock included both domestic and commercial cylinders of different capacities such as 4 kg, 12 kg, 17 kg and 19 kg, officials said.

During verification, officers found that 33 cyl-

inders were filled while 51 were empty. Authorities believe the cylinders were being gathered and stockpiled so they could be sold illegally during the ongoing uncertainty over gas supply.

The action was carried out by flying squad inspector Bhagwan Khanderao along with Bhiwandi Rationing Officer Ratnadeep Sawant and team members Ganesh Harane and Manish Shastri. Two tempo drivers present at the site were taken into custody for questioning.

Officials confirmed that a case is being registered against the drivers at Narpoli Police Station under provisions of the Essential Commodities Act.

Authorities also warned that strict enforcement measures will continue against anyone found hoarding, illegally storing or black marketing LPG cylinders.

Acclaimed painter Prakash Bal Joshi takes Art Appreciation Class

Mumbai: In an initiative to take Abstract art to the people, acclaimed painter and writer, Prakash Bal Joshi conducted a master class here asking the uninitiated to understand the inner world of the artist instead of focussing on just the colourful exterior.

"When you look at a painting you should feel what artist has expressed rather asking what is the meaning of the painting," he said explaining, "a painting is not merely a colourful frame hanging on a wall; rather, it is a reflection of

the emotions, experiences, and thoughts that arise in the mind of the artist."

Joshi made the observation while conducting a master class organised by the Maharashtra Seva Sangh (MSS) at Mulund in North-east Mumbai on Saturday to help people understand and appreciate the art of painting.

In the field of Indian painting, Prakash Bal Joshi is known as an artist who has not only created paintings through colours but has also expressed the diverse experiences and emotions of

life through his art.

He is a multifaceted personality—besides being a painter, he is also recognized as a writer, thinker, and a guide who helps art lovers understand the deeper essence of painting, a release stated.

While addressing an audience with his power point presentation, he said, "While viewing a painting, it is not enough to focus only on its colours or forms; it is equally important to understand the feelings, the story, and the dialogue of the artist hidden behind it. The process

of understanding a painting is much like listening to a song—one must feel its melody, rhythm, and emotion."

Joshi also highlighted a deep connection between painting and music. According to him, just as melody, rhythm, and tempo are essential in music, colours, composition, and balance are equally important in a painting.

He expressed his belief that a person who understands music can often feel the sensitivity and emotional depth of paintings more profoundly.

Grand Conference of Women Farmers and Labourers Held in Wagholi

Pune: A mega conference of women farmers and labourers was organised at Wagholi by Santulan Sansha Maharashtra as part of the International Women's Day week.

The 28th edition of the conference witnessed the presence of Maharashtra Legislative Council Deputy Chairperson and Shiv Sena leader Dr. Neelam Gorhe as the chief guest.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Gorhe said that the social empowerment of women has increased significantly in recent years. She noted that the fi-

nancial assistance provided under the Ladkya Bahini scheme has helped many women become economically independent, with several positive examples of beneficiaries using the scheme effectively.

She also mentioned that the state government has decided to implement a dedicated policy for single women in the budget.

Dr. Gorhe stated that the issue of providing houses in the name of women and issuing tribal land titles jointly in the names of husband and wife has been raised in the legislature.

The government has assured strict implementation of these measures.

In cases where a woman is the sole owner, steps are being taken to register land in her name. She appealed to women to share further suggestions regarding policies related to land rights.

She further said the government would follow up on issues such as pension schemes for elderly women, housing for the poor, and consolidation of various welfare schemes for senior citizens.

Consideration will also be given to including women

labourers, particularly those working in stone quarries, in vigilance committees. Free halls will be made available for programmes related to quarry workers.

She advised women from self-help groups to prioritise loans against their bank deposits rather than taking fresh loans and to avoid falling into the trap of high-interest schemes. Dr. Gorhe also stated that if the committee of the Construction Development Corporation is not functioning, the matter will be discussed with Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

New track 'Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke' from 'KD: The Devil' unveiled

Mumbai: The makers of the upcoming action spectacle KD: The Devil have released a vibrant new track titled Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke, further heightening the excitement surrounding the film. The energetic song has quickly caught the attention of fans and music lovers, adding momentum to the film's promotional campaign.

The song has been filmed on popular dancer and actress Nora Fatehi, who delivers a high-energy performance packed with stylish choreography and striking visuals. Her dynamic presence is expected to make the track one of the standout highlights of the film.

Music for the song has been composed by renowned music director Arjun Janya, who is known for delivering several chart-topping tracks in the Kannada film industry. The composer has described the number as a powerful and mass-appeal track designed to connect with audiences across different regions.

The film itself is directed by Prem, a filmmaker known for his grand storytelling style and visually striking cinematic presentations. His reputation for mounting large-scale productions has generated significant anticipation for the project.

The song also features veteran Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt sharing the screen with Nora Fatehi. The duo is seen delivering an engaging dance performance that blends glamour with high-energy choreography.

The grand launch of the song took



place at AMB Cinemas, where the cast and crew gathered for the special event. The launch ceremony attracted significant attention from fans, media representatives and members of the film industry.

During the launch event, Nora Fatehi expressed her gratitude to the film's director and the team for the opportunity to be part of the project. She also spoke about her experience working on the film and entering a new film industry.

"Thank you, Prem sir, for inviting me. After watching the trailer on the big screen, now I know why they call you the Showman," Nora said while addressing the audience at the event.

She revealed that she had joined the project at a relatively late stage but immediately felt excited after interacting with the team. According to her, the scale and vision of the film made a strong impression on her

during the shoot.

Nora also shared that working on the project gave her the opportunity to make her debut in the Kannada film industry, popularly known as Sandalwood. She described it as a proud and honourable moment in her career.

"For me to be able to debut in the Sandalwood industry with this project is quite an honour," she said, adding that the film appears to be a grand cinematic experience for audiences.

The song has been released in five languages — Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam — allowing it to reach audiences across India. This multilingual release strategy reflects the makers' ambition to position the film as a pan-Indian entertainer.

The track has been sung by popular playback singer Mangli, whose powerful voice adds energy and vibrancy to the composition. The lyrics

for the song have been written by Raqeeb Alam.

The composition, arrangement and overall music production were handled by Arjun Janya, who has crafted the number to match the grand scale and high-energy tone of the film.

The film is being produced by Venkat K. Narayan under the banner of KVN Productions. The project has been mounted on a large scale and aims to deliver a visually rich cinematic experience.

The film stars action hero Dhruva Sarja in the lead role and is expected to showcase him in an intense and action-packed avatar. The actor enjoys a strong fan following, particularly in the Kannada film industry.

Apart from the lead cast, the film features an ensemble lineup including Shilpa Shetty, Reeshma Nanaiah, V. Ravichandran and Ramesh Arvind, all of whom will appear in significant roles.

With its star-studded cast, high-energy music and large-scale production, the film is expected to deliver an action-packed cinematic experience. The makers have indicated that the project aims to usher in a new style of action storytelling in Indian cinema.

KD: The Devil is scheduled for a worldwide theatrical release on April 30, 2026, and is expected to attract audiences across multiple language markets. Fans are eagerly awaiting the film as the promotional campaign continues to gather momentum.

Vijay Sethupathi reveals why saying yes to Jawan was easy: "I like the way Atlee makes his films"

Mumbai: Actor Vijay Sethupathi recently spoke about his experience of working with filmmaker Atlee in the blockbuster film Jawan, sharing what impressed him most about the director's unique storytelling style.

Released in 2023, Jawan emerged as one of the biggest cinematic successes of the year. The high-octane action entertainer was headlined by Shah Rukh Khan and created a massive box office wave across India and international markets.

The film combined large-scale action sequences, emotional drama and social themes, which resonated strongly with audiences. Its success further strengthened Atlee's reputation for delivering commercially successful entertainers.

In the film, Vijay Sethupathi portrayed the powerful antagonist Kalee Gaikwad. His intense performance added depth to the storyline and created a strong on-screen rivalry with Shah Rukh Khan's character.

The movie also featured prominent actors including Nayanthara and Deepika Padukone in key roles, contributing to the film's star-studded ensemble cast.

During a recent conversation, Sethupathi opened up about his experience working with Atlee and explained



what makes the filmmaker's approach stand out.

The actor said he appreciates the director's ability to carefully shape the emotional and dramatic impact of every scene. According to him, Atlee has a clear understanding of how to build momentum in storytelling.

"I like the way Atlee makes his films," Sethupathi said while speaking about the director's style of filmmaking.

He further explained that the director knows exactly where a particular scene or shot should reach its peak in order to create excitement for the audience.

"He knows where the scene or shot should rise and how to make it engaging," the actor said, highlighting the filmmaker's sense of narrative timing.

Sethupathi also noted that Atlee approaches filmmaking with strong confidence in his creative vision. This confidence, he said, plays a significant role in shaping the film's overall impact.

"And he's very confident about his scenes. So I like the way he works," Sethupathi added while describing the director's working style on set.

The actor also revealed another major factor that influenced his decision to join the project. He said the opportunity to work alongside Shah Rukh Khan was one of the main reasons he accepted the role.

Sethupathi expressed admiration for the Bollywood superstar and said sharing screen space with him was a special experience.

Sharman Joshi returns in 'Golmaal 5'

Mumbai: Actor Sharman Joshi has officially joined the cast of the upcoming comedy film Golmaal 5, marking his reunion with filmmaker Rohit Shetty nearly two decades after the first film in the popular franchise.

The announcement was made by Sharman Joshi himself through a social media post while wishing Rohit Shetty on his birthday. His message quickly grabbed the attention of fans and film enthusiasts, sparking

excitement across social media platforms.

In his post, the actor confirmed that he will be part of the much-awaited installment of the Golmaal series. The revelation has been seen as a special moment for long time fans of the franchise.

Sharing a fun message along with his birthday wishes for the filmmaker, Sharman wrote, "Happy Birthday Rohit!

Wishing you another year of bigger stunts, louder laughs and blockbuster entertainment."

He further added, "Excited that the madness has begun with Golmaal 5 already on floors!" indicating that the film's shooting has already started.

Sharman Joshi was an important part of the first film in the series, Golmaal: Fun Unlimited, which was released in 2006 and became a major comedy hit.

In that film, he played the character of Laxman, a quirky and lovable role that quickly became one of the most memorable characters of the movie.

His performance was widely appreciated for its comic timing and energetic screen presence. The character contributed significantly to the humour and charm of the film. Sharman's on-screen chemistry with Ajay Devgn was particularly well received by audiences and played a key role in the film's popularity. Over the years, the Golmaal franchise has grown into one of the most successful comedy

series in Indian cinema, with several sequels entertaining audiences with its signature blend of slapstick humour and ensemble storytelling.

Although Sharman Joshi did not appear in the later installments of the series, his character from the first film remained a fan favourite.

His return to the franchise after nearly two decades is therefore being seen as a nostalgic moment for fans who fondly remember the original film.

Social media platforms were quickly filled with reactions from fans celebrating the announcement and expressing excitement about seeing Sharman back in the Golmaal universe.

Many viewers believe that the actor's return could bring back some of the original charm and humour that made the first film such a memorable comedy.

With the film now officially on floors, expectations are high that Golmaal 5 will deliver another dose of the chaotic humour and entertaining performances that the franchise is known for.

The reunion of Sharman Joshi and Rohit Shetty has further heightened anticipation, with audiences eagerly waiting to see how the beloved comedy series evolves in its upcoming installment.

Ravie Dubey wakes up Sargun Mehta for a smile before work: "Her face is lucky for me"

Mumbai: Ravie Dubey and Sargun Mehta are widely regarded as one of the entertainment industry's most admired couples. Known not only for their acting careers but also for their success as producers, the duo has steadily built a strong creative and business presence across multiple platforms.

Over the years, the couple has transitioned from being television stars to influential content creators and producers. Their production ventures have delivered several successful projects across film, television and digital platforms.

Recently, Ravie Dubey offered fans a glimpse into a deeply personal ritual that he shares with his wife. In a heartfelt social media post, he revealed a simple morning habit that holds special meaning for him.

According to Ravie, whenever he leaves early for work while Sargun is still asleep, he gently wakes her up just enough to ask for a smile. Despite being half-asleep, she always responds with a warm smile.

Sharing the moment with fans, Ravie wrote that the small ritual gives him a positive start to the day. The post quickly resonated with followers, who praised the couple for their affectionate

bond. In his caption, Ravie wrote, "M going to let u in on a little ritual. Sometimes when I leave for work early morning and Sargun's sleeping, cruel as it may seem, I wake her up and tell her to smile just a little bit at me."

He added



when she is still half-asleep, Sargun warmly smiles back at him. Ravie also shared that he repeats an old line to her that he remembers hearing decades ago in a Santoor advertisement. The emotional revelation once again highlighted the couple's strong personal connection, something that fans have long admired about their relationship. Apart from their personal life, Ravie and Sargun have also been making significant strides professionally through their production ventures. Their creative company Dreamiya-

Entertainment has emerged as a major content producer in recent years.

The year 2025 proved particularly significant for the couple as producers. Under their banner, they delivered the year's highest-grossing Punjabi film, Saukhan Saukhane 2, which

achieved major commercial success. Sargun Mehta also had a remarkable year as an actor, starring in two of the year's top-performing Punjabi films and further strengthening her position as one of the industry's leading stars. The couple has also expanded into digital entertainment through their YouTube-focused platform Dreamiyata Drama. The platform has gained massive popularity for its long-format original dramas.

According to available figures, Dreamiyata Drama has crossed more than 1.1 billion views and accumulated over 9 billion minutes of watch time, setting new benchmarks for digital storytelling in India.

Their musical venture has also seen remarkable success. Their original track Ve Haaniyaan crossed more than 700 million streams, becoming a major digital hit and further strengthening their creative brand.

Meanwhile, the couple's television productions under Dreamiyata Entertainment have also delivered several successful shows. These include popular series such as Udaariyaan, Swaran Ghar, Junooniyat, Badal Pe Paon Hain, Dalchini, Ganga Mai Ki Betiyaan and Tu Juliet Jatt Di.

These projects have helped the couple establish a strong presence in the television industry while continuing to experiment with diverse storytelling formats.

In what could become their most ambitious venture yet, the couple earlier announced that Dreamiyata is producing its first pan-India film project. The upcoming film will feature Sargun Mehta in the titular role, marking a significant step in expanding the Dreamiyata brand beyond regional and television content into large-scale cinema.

Janhvi Kapoor rates Jacobi Jupe's performance in 'Hamnet' as the best performance of the year

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor recently took to social media to praise young actor Jacobi Jupe for his powerful performance in the historical drama Hamnet, saying the role left a lasting impression on her. Sharing her thoughts through an Instagram story, Janhvi openly expressed her admiration for the young actor's work in the film. Her post quickly drew attention from fans and film enthusiasts across social media platforms. In her message, Janhvi wrote, "This boy's performance in Hamnet, PEAK. Has my heart. Best performance of the year, hands down. Can't stop thinking about it." The actress' enthusiastic praise reflected the strong emotional impact the performance had on her. Her spontaneous appreciation soon became a talking point among cinema lovers online. Many users shared her story and joined the discussion about the film and the young actor's performance. The reaction also brought additional attention to Jacobi Jupe, who has been receiving critical acclaim for his role in the film. His portrayal has been widely praised for its emotional depth and maturity. Industry observers noted that recognition from established actors like Janhvi Kapoor often helps spotlight emerging talent. Her public endorsement further amplified the ongoing positive buzz around the young actor's work. The film Hamnet

is a historical drama released in 2025 and directed by acclaimed filmmaker Chloe Zhao. The director is known for her distinctive storytelling style and visually rich cinematic narratives. The movie is based on the best-selling 2020 novel Hamnet written by Maggie O'Farrell. The novel received widespread praise for its emotional storytelling and historical depth. The story explores the life of legendary playwright William Shakespeare and his wife Agnes Shakespeare, offering an intimate look into their personal lives beyond the world of theatre. The narrative particularly focuses on the couple's deep emotional struggle after the death of their young son, Hamnet. The tragedy forms the emotional core of the film's storyline. According to the film's narrative, their son Hamnet died in 1596 at the age of eleven. The devastating loss deeply affected the family and is believed to have influenced Shakespeare's later creative work. The film portrays how grief and personal tragedy shaped the emotional world of the famous playwright. It attempts to explore the human experiences behind the creation of one of the greatest works in literature. The story draws a connection between the family's loss and the creation of the famous tragedy Hamlet, suggesting that the emotional pain experienced by William Shakespeare

may have influenced the creation of the iconic play. The film also stars Anne Hathaway, who portrays Agnes, the wife of Shakespeare. Her portrayal of the grieving mother has been widely appreciated for its emotional depth and sensitivity. Critics and audiences alike have praised Hathaway's performance, noting how she captures the emotional complexity of a woman coping with personal tragedy during a difficult period in history. Through its emotional storytelling and powerful performances, the film Hamnet has resonated strongly with viewers. The narrative explores themes of grief, family bonds and the emotional struggles faced by the Shakespeare family.

The project has particularly been noted for its sensitive portrayal of loss.



Ektaa Kapoor says her talent management vertical Hoonur aims to help artists "evolve, experiment, and reach their full potential"

Mumbai: Balaji Telefilms, led by renowned producer Ektaa Kapoor, has announced the launch of Hoonur, a new talent management company aimed at nurturing artists and strengthening the culture of storytelling and performance in the entertainment industry.

The initiative marks a new chapter for Balaji Telefilms as it expands beyond content production into artist representation and development. Through Hoonur, the company aims to create a platform that supports creative talent while helping them navigate opportunities across film, television and digital media. Hoonur is designed to bring together a diverse roster of actors and creators from across Bollywood and the Indian television industry. The company plans to represent both established names and emerging artists, offering them professional guidance and strategic career support. The platform will focus on nurturing artistic growth by connecting talent with meaningful projects and creative collaborations. Industry observers say such initiatives can help bridge the gap between artists and opportunities in a rapidly evolving entertainment landscape. Rooted in Balaji Telefilms' long-standing legacy of storytelling, the new venture aims to extend the company's influence in shaping creative careers. Over the years, Balaji has played a major role in launching and supporting

many well-known faces in the Indian entertainment industry.

Through Hoonur, the company intends to provide artists with focused representation and strategic guidance. The goal is to create an ecosystem where creativity can thrive and performers can build sustainable careers.

Speaking about the new venture, Ektaa Kapoor shared her vision of creating a supportive environment where artists feel understood and empowered to grow. She emphasised that nurturing talent has always been a core value of Balaji Telefilms. "At Balaji, we have always believed that talent flourishes when it finds the right environment and encouragement," Kapoor said while discussing the idea behind Hoonur.

She further explained that the aim of the platform is not just to represent artists but to truly understand their strengths and aspirations. According to her, thoughtful guidance is essential in helping artists make the right career choices.

"With Hoonur, we want to build a platform where artists are not just represented but truly understood," she said, highlighting the company's focus on long-term growth and creative development.

Kapoor added that the platform would help artists explore opportunities that align with their abilities and interests while supporting their evolution as performers. "It's about creating journeys that allow talent to evolve, experiment and reach their full potential," she noted, outlining the philosophy behind the venture.

To celebrate the launch, the company will host an exclusive Hoonur Launch Party at Fairmont Mumbai.

Ponting dissects Suryakumar's captaincy after India's T20 World Cup triumph

Sydney: Big tournaments often reveal the subtleties of leadership, and the ICC Hall of Famer Ricky Ponting saw plenty of that in the way India navigated their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 campaign under skipper Suryakumar Yadav.

India entered the tournament as favourites, carrying expectations and navigating form concerns within the squad.

The captain himself endured a challenging campaign with the bat – apart from a rescue act of 84 not out off 49 in the opener against USA, Yadav managed 158 runs across the other eight innings – yet steered the side to peak when it mattered most.

Ponting believes the real measure of captaincy lies behind closed doors.

Speaking in the latest edition of The ICC Review, Ponting said, "It's about a lot more about what they do off the field, the things that people don't see and how they interact with their players."

The Australian great also underlined how leading a side becomes tougher



when personal form dips, which is a situation Yadav navigated through the tournament.

"He didn't have a great time himself as a player, but still he's standing at the end holding up a World Cup trophy," Ponting noted.

"I know as a former captain, when you're not batting at your absolute best, captaincy can become really difficult. And when you are batting well, captaincy can become really easy."

Ponting also pointed to how Yadav managed players under pressure, particularly

those fighting form and confidence.

"It would have been really interesting to see how Surya has interacted with Abhishek (Sharma) and Sanju (Samson) over the last few weeks. That's where the real stories will come out on true leadership." Abhishek Sharma, the ICC No.1 ranked T20I batter, endured a turbulent run. Three straight ducks, low-string scores of 15, 10 and 9, and just one fifty before the final.

Yet on the biggest stage of the Final, he rediscovered his form, smashing 52 off 21

balls and registering the fastest fifty of the 2026 edition in just 18 deliveries.

"You don't have to worry about the staples, it's more the guys on the fringe and the younger guys going up and down with their emotions and battling with their form, the ones you have to spend the most time with."

A defining tournament call came at the top of the order when Sanju Samson was handed renewed trust. His first opportunity came as a cover to Sharma early in the campaign, dropped again, and

then recalled for a crucial fixture against Zimbabwe. Samson turned opportunity into dominance.

A blazing 97 not out in a virtual knockout against West Indies sparked his run. Scores of 89 (42) in the semi-final against England and 89 (46) in the final against New Zealand followed. In just five innings, Samson amassed 321 runs, the most by an Indian in a single T20 World Cup.

Ponting highlighted the significance of India's faith in him.

"For India to stick with him at the top there, that was a big call to make. A big decision, but one that worked out really well in the end," he said.

"If you get the backing of the coaching staff and the captain, then that's all you need... Just a pat on the back or an arm around the shoulder to say, 'we're sticking with you, we believe in you.'"

"When you've got the quality that Sanju's got, and the confidence of the captain and coach behind you, that's when great things can happen."

Former Pak captain Sarfaraz Ahmed retires

Karachi: Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed on Sunday announced his retirement from international cricket, bringing an end to a distinguished career that spanned nearly two decades and included one of Pakistan's most memorable white-ball triumphs.

The Karachi-born wicketkeeper-batsman, who debuted in an ODI against India at Jaipur in November 2007, featured in 54 Tests, 117 ODIs, and 61 T20Is, scoring 6,164 runs, including six centuries and 35 half-centuries. Behind the stumps, Sarfaraz claimed 315 catches and 56 stumpings.

Sarfaraz also captained Pakistan in 100 international matches across formats, comprising 50 ODIs, 37 T20Is, and 13 Tests. Under his leadership, Pakistan reached the No. 1 ranking in T20Is and recorded a world-record streak of 11 consecutive T20I series victories.

His captaincy is most celebrated for Pakistan's 2017 ICC Champions Trophy triumph in England, where they defeated India by



180 runs in the final, ending an eight-year ICC title drought. With this victory, Sarfaraz became the only captain to lead Pakistan to ICC titles at both junior and senior levels, having earlier captained the U19 team to the 2006 World Cup win in Sri Lanka.

During his tenure, Sarfaraz played a pivotal role in nurturing young talents including Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, and Shadab Khan.

In recognition of his contributions, he was awarded Pakistan's Pride of Performance in 2018, becoming the youngest Pakistan captain to receive the

honour.

Sarfaraz's appearances declined following the emergence of Mohammad Rizwan, with his last international appearance coming in the Perth Test of December 2023. He is now widely expected to take up coaching duties with the national team, as Pakistan prepares for another overhaul following their Super Eight exit in the recent T20 World Cup 2026.

Reflecting on his career, Sarfaraz said, "It has been the greatest honour of my life to represent Pakistan. From leading the U19 team to a world title in 2006 to lifting the ICC Champions Trophy in 2017, every moment in Pakistan colours has been special."

"Captaining Pakistan across all formats was a dream come true.

I always tried to play fearless cricket and build a united team. Seeing players like Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi, Hasan Ali and others grow into match-winners during my captaincy is one of my proudest achievements," he added.

Mokoena's fiery spell powers SA T20I win over NZ

Mount Maunganui: Nqobani Mokoena announced himself as a genuine pace threat in T20 cricket, delivering a spell of high-intensity fast bowling that completely dismantled New Zealand's batting lineup in the opening T20I of the South Africa tour of New Zealand. His 3-wicket haul for 26 runs in just 3.3 overs was the cornerstone of South Africa's 7-wicket win at Bay Oval.



Mokoena's impact began in the 12.1 over when he removed James Neesham, inducing an outside edge that was smartly pouched by wicketkeeper Connor Esterhuizen. Just a few balls later, he struck again, dismissing Zakary Foulkes with a perfectly angled short-of-length delivery that rose sharply and caught Foulkes off-guard, leading to a simple catch behind the stumps. His final wicket—Cole McCon-

chie in the 14.3 over—was pure pace and cunning. McConchie, attempting a pull, misjudged a short delivery and lofted it high into the night sky, only for Rubin Hermann to complete the catch. Mokoena's spell was not just about wickets but the relentless pressure he created. His combination of pace, bounce, and subtle variations forced New Zealand into a string of poor shots, allowing his teammates—Ottneil Baartman and Keshav Ma-

Doggett in frame after SA secure Shield final berth

Hobart: Queensland's batting capitulation has sealed South Australia's place in the Sheffield Shield final against Victoria, with the reigning champions now hoping Test quick Brendan Doggett will be fit for the decider.

SA's hopes of clinching consecutive Shield titles for the first time remains alive with the five-day final (beginning March 26) set to be a rematch of their ongoing contest with runaway ladder-leaders Victoria.

The Bulls went into round 10 sitting third and needing to make up ground on second-placed SA, who were 5.78 points ahead but well behind Victoria, who sewed up hosting rights with two matches to play. SA added an extra 0.05

points to their advantage over Queensland after scoring 305 against Victoria on Saturday, despite the Bulls taking full bowling points as they knocked Tasmania over for 198.

It left Marnus Labuschagne's men needing a solid first-innings effort with the bat at Bellerive Oval. But after top-order guns Matthew Renshaw (10) and Labuschagne (10) were dismissed cheaply, Queensland folded for just 178 on day two.

The five wickets SA had taken against Victoria at the Junction Oval by stumps on Sunday afternoon left them with enough of a buffer to ensure they will now finish second regardless of the results in Hobart and Melbourne. An outright win is worth six points.

SA's advantage over Queensland was 6.33 points by stumps on day two.

"They came off at tea and asked straight away and we told them," SA coach Ryan Harris told reporters after play.

"It's a unique scenario. It's nice to be back in the final. We've had a pretty tough year with injuries, but it's nice to be coming back here in a couple of weeks and challenging for the Shield again.

"It's been a nerve-racking week. We've played good cricket after Christmas.

"I haven't had a lot of sleep thinking about it the last couple of nights, it's been pretty hectic. I didn't just want to win it last year and have another big break at having a crack at another

one. So it means a lot to me and my staff and the organisation."

SA's chances of upsetting the Vics in the final will be boosted significantly if Doggett recovers from the hamstring injury he suffered last month while fielding against NSW.

The speedster, who made his Test debut during the recent Ashes series, was initially given little chance of playing again this season. Australian selectors will be keen to ensure he is fit for August's two-Test series against Bangladesh.

But Harris is hopeful Doggett's rehabilitation continues to progress ahead of schedule after thigh-armor recently resumed bowling in Adelaide. "He's come back quite

quick compared to what I was originally told (the return timeline was)," said Harris.

"So if we play him it's going to be a risk – but no doubt, if he thinks he can do it, we'll play him.

But if it pings again ... there's stuff in August that potentially is pretty big for him. So we'll weigh all that up over the next week."

Queensland falling out of contention brings Usman Khawaja's first-class career to a close with the veteran (who is sitting out this ongoing Shield round due to the pending birth of his third child) having pulled the pin on Test cricket during the summer.

He recently confirmed this will be his final season for the state.

Barcelona hosts Sevilla as title race, presidential vote converge

Madrid: Barcelona has more than three points at stake when it hosts Sevilla in La Liga on Sunday.

Hansi Flick's side will try to protect its place at the top of the table against a Sevilla team that handed Barcelona its heaviest league defeat of the season, a 4-1 loss in October.

Sunday will also bring a major day off the field, with club members set to vote in Barcelona's presidential election. Joan Laporta and

Victor Font are the leading figures in the race, although

Marc Ciria is also on the ballot, according to Xinhua.

Laporta has pointed to the club's recent progress on the field and what Barcelona describes as an improving financial picture, while Font has focused on the club's debt burden, delays to the Camp Nou redevelopment and questions over Laporta's leadership.

Font's campaign was boosted this week by support

from former Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez, who accused Laporta of blocking Lionel Messi's return to the club in 2023.

The election campaign does not appear to have disrupted Barcelona on the pitch, although the team looked weary at times in Tuesday's 1-1 draw away to Newcastle United in the first leg of its Champions League round-of-16 tie.

Barcelona was rescued by a stoppage-time penalty

from Lamine Yamal after Dani Olmo was fouled. With the return leg to come on Wednesday, Flick could rotate if fitness allows.

Barcelona's options are limited by injuries in defense.

And Flick may again need to rely on squad players such as Marcus Rashford, Olmo and Ferran Torres.

Torres, however, has struggled for goals, while the physical demands of Barcelona's recent schedule are

beginning to show. That could offer encouragement to a Sevilla side that has edged away from the relegation fight after putting together an unbeaten run in its last five league matches.

Sevilla coach Matias Almeyda will again serve his suspension from the stands. His side is likely to stay compact and look to break quickly, with Akor Adams offering a direct threat in attack and Chidera Ejuke providing pace out wide if fit.

Hockey India congratulates women's team Captain Salima Tete on completing 150 International caps

Hyderabad: Hockey India on Saturday congratulated Captain Salima Tete on making her 150th appearance for the Indian Women's Hockey Team during the Final clash of the FIH Hockey World Cup Qualifiers 2026 Hyderabad, against England at the G. M. C. Balayogi Hockey Ground (Gachibowli Hockey Complex).

Known for her blistering pace and tireless work ethic in midfield, Salima made her debut for India in the 2016 Test Matches against Australia held in Melbourne in November 2016. Since then, the

25-year-old Jharkhand-born midfielder has developed into one of the most influential players in the national setup, creating numerous scoring opportunities for her teammates while also netting 16 goals herself.

Salima attained Olympian status at just 19 years of age when she was part of the historic Indian team that finished fourth at the Tokyo Olympics 2020.

The experience proved to be a major turning point in her career, as she emerged as one of the team's standout performers in the years that followed.

Soon after, she was named the Rising Player of the Tournament at the Women's Asia Cup 2022 in Muscat, where India secured a third-place finish. Salima also captained the Indian side at the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2021 in Potchefstroom, South Africa, where the team finished fourth.

At the 2022 Commonwealth Games, Salima scored a crucial goal in the 3rd/4th place match against



New Zealand, helping India script their first official victory over the Kiwis through a penalty shootout and clinch the Bronze medal.

She was also an integral part of the Indian Women's Hockey Team that won the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup Spain 2022 in December that year.

In 2023, Salima continued her rise by playing a key role in India's Bronze medal-winning campaign at the Hangzhou Asian Games. Her finest individual performance came later that year at the Jharkhand Women's Asian Champions Trophy Ranchi 2023, where she scored five goals in seven matches and was named Player of the Tournament.

In addition to her contributions on the field, Salima was appointed as an AHF Athletes Ambassador in March 2023, a role that further underlined her growing stature in international hockey and her commitment to athlete representation and development.

Her consistent performances and leadership quali-

ties were rewarded in 2024 when she was appointed Captain of the Indian Women's Hockey Team. Under her leadership, India went on to win Gold at the Bihar Women's Asian Champions Trophy Rajgir 2024 and followed it up with a Silver medal at the Women's Asia Cup Gongsu 2025.

Salima's rise in international hockey has also been reflected in the recognition she has received off the field. In 2021, she was honoured with the Hockey India Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Women Under 21), underlining her emergence as one of the brightest young talents in the country. Her continued excellence was further acknowledged in 2023 when she received the prestigious Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year.

In 2024, Salima's outstanding contribution to Indian hockey was recognised at the national level with the Arjuna Award, marking another major milestone in her inspiring career.

Former athletes should return as coaches to strengthen Indian sport: Anurag Thakur

New Delhi: Member of Parliament and former union Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur on Saturday said India must bring former athletes back into the sporting ecosystem as coaches and mentors to strengthen the country's sports development structure.

"Many players who got jobs through sports are now working in offices, while many of them could be involved with the game again as coaches or mentors. They may contribute far more to sports in those roles," Thakur said while addressing sports journalists on Day 2 of the Golden Jubilee edition of the Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) National Convention at the Constitution Club of India, hosted by the Delhi Sports Journalist Association (DSJA).

Emphasising the need for better systems to nurture talent, Thakur also stressed the importance of structured athlete development and data-driven

monitoring.

"We need to analyse data and create a proper tracking system for the entire journey of an athlete so that talent can be identified early and groomed with the right support," he said, adding that sports science and rehabilitation centres must be utilised more effectively.

He called on state governments to play a larger role in strengthening the country's sporting ecosystem. "Sports is largely a state subject and states must increase their budgets, build infrastructure and hire more coaches if we want better results in the future," Thakur said, while also underlining the importance of evaluating sports institutions and policies regularly to ensure accountability and long-term impact.

Thakur also emphasised the need for stronger institutional accountability in sports administration. "Institutions are very important. We must evaluate what has been achieved

after recommendations are made and assess whether our systems are actually producing results," he noted, calling for continuous review and improvement of sports policies and programmes. Welcoming delegates earlier, DSJA president Abhishek Tripathi highlighted the significance of the gathering during SJFI's landmark year. "It is a proud moment as the SJFI celebrates its Golden Jubilee. We are delighted to welcome sports journalists from across the country to Delhi and grateful to Anurag Thakur ji for interacting with the fraternity," he said. Several dignitaries and stakeholders from the sports and corporate ecosystem were felicitated during the Day 2 proceedings of the convention. Among those honoured were Shivalika Chadha Malik of Hero MotoCorp, Manva Sudarshan Hunsawadkar of KRAFTON India and Udit Dutta, founder and CEO of ArtSmith, recognising their contributions to sport and

the broader sporting ecosystem.

The sporting competitions held as part of the convention added to the vibrant atmosphere of the gathering. The JK Bose Inter-Zonal T20 Cricket Trophy saw North Zone and South Zone register convincing victories in their respective matches played at Roshanara Cricket Club and the Delhi Police Ground. Meanwhile, The AC Bali Table Tennis Tournament, held at the same venue, saw Delhi Sports Journalists Association (DSJA-1) defeat the Sports Writers Association of Bengaluru (SWAB-1), while the Sports Journalists Association of Mumbai (SJAM-1) overcame the Tamil Nadu Sports Journalists Association (TNSJA-1) to book their place in the final. The DSJA-1 trio of Kushan Sarkar, Bharat Sharma and Norris Pritam will face SJAM-1's Amol Karhadkar, Ashwin Ferro and Akush Dhavre in the title clash scheduled to be played on Monday at the same venue.

AI adoption could unlock over USD 3 trn opportunity for India's MSMEs by 2047: Report

New Delhi: Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly transform India's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), unlocking economic opportunities worth over USD 3 trillion by 2047, according to a joint report by PwC India and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

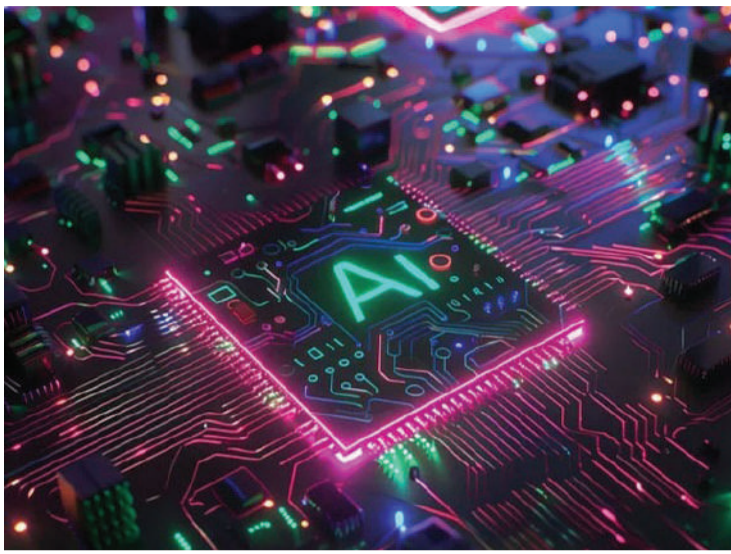
The report "Unlocking the AI Edge for MSMEs," highlighted that India's MSMEs play a crucial role in the country's economic and industrial landscape and could emerge as a major driver of manufacturing growth with the adoption of advanced technologies such as AI.

"If India succeeds in increasing manufacturing's share of GDP to 25pc, and MSMEs raise their contribution to India's manufacturing gross value added (GVA) from 35.4pc in FY 2023-24 to 50pc by 2047, they stand to unlock growth opportunities in the range of USD 3.13-3.21 trillion by 2047" it said.

According to the report, MSMEs currently contribute 35.4 percent of India's manufacturing value added and about 48.6 percent of the country's total exports, while employing more than 33 crore people across the country.

The sector, therefore, holds significant potential to support India's ambition of becoming a global manufacturing hub.

The study noted that if manufacturing expands to account for 25 per-



cent of India's GDP and MSMEs increase their share in manufacturing value added to 50 percent by 2047, the sector could generate economic opportunities worth USD 3.13 trillion to USD 3.21 trillion.

Artificial Intelligence, the report said, could act as a powerful enabler for MSMEs by improving operational efficiency, strengthening decision-making processes and enhancing product quality.

AI-driven technologies such as predictive maintenance, intelligent supply chain management, demand forecasting and automated quality inspection could help businesses re-

duce costs and boost productivity.

The report estimated that AI adoption alone could contribute USD 135.6 billion to USD 149.9 billion to the growth of manufacturing MSMEs by 2035, provided the sector strengthens its participation in India's manufacturing ecosystem.

It also pointed out that the rapid expansion of AI infrastructure, including data centres and computing systems, could create an additional USD 100 billion to USD 150 billion demand opportunity for MSMEs involved in supplying components, cooling systems and other industrial equipment required for AI ecosys-

tems.

However, the report observed that several barriers continue to hinder the widespread adoption of AI among MSMEs. These include limited digital readiness, lack of technical expertise, high costs associated with new technologies and concerns about the reliability and long-term returns of AI investments.

To address these challenges, the report suggested a structured adoption model that focuses on improving access to AI tools, building awareness and acceptance among business owners and workers, integrating AI solutions into operational workflows and eventually embedding them into core business processes.

The study also recommended the development of a comprehensive ecosystem that can help MSMEs identify appropriate AI solutions, test them in controlled environments and scale them effectively across industries.

It emphasised that collaboration between the government, technology providers, financial institutions and industry bodies would be crucial to accelerate AI adoption among small businesses.

According to the report, enabling MSMEs to harness AI technologies could not only strengthen their competitiveness but also help India position itself as a global hub for advanced manufacturing and innovation in the coming decades.

Coal Minister G. Kishan Reddy visits mine closure process at Murpar underground mine

Chandrapur: union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy today visited the mine closure process of the Murpar Underground Mine of Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) on the second day of his visit to Chandrapur district.

During the visit, the minister reviewed various activities and the progress related to the closure of the Murpar Underground Mine.

Coal production at the mine began in 2003, and operations were discontinued in 2022, after the area was declared part of the Eco-Sensitive Zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

Addressing the gathering, Reddy said that mine closure should not be viewed as the end of a project but as the beginning of a new phase aimed at sustainable development.

He emphasised that the closure process must be carried out in a scientific and systematic manner so that the environmental balance in the region can be restored and natural resources conserved after mining activities cease. He also stressed that the interests of local communities must be given priority in mine closure plans.

According to him, through various initiatives promoted by the central government, ef-



orts are being made to transform closed mines into assets that are socially, economically and environmentally beneficial. Providing details about the Murpar Underground Mine, WCL Chairman-cum-Managing Director Harish Duhan said the mine, located in Chimur tehsil of Chandrapur district in Maharashtra, produced approximately 9,95,926 tonnes of coal since its inception.

The Final Mine Closure Plan for the mine was approved by the WCL Board on January 19, 2026. Around 426 employees working at the mine have been redeployed to other mines in the Umrer Area. Duhan further said that all mining infrastructure at the Murpar Mine has been dismantled in accordance with regulations, while the Manager's Office and the Canteen Building have been retained for social use on the recommendation of the district administration. All physical mine closure activities, along with three years of environmental monitoring,

have already been completed.

As part of environmental protection initiatives, plantation will be carried out over five hectares of land in the mine area between June and September 2026 in collaboration with the Tropical Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur. In addition, eight free medical camps were organised for residents of nearby villages, benefiting around 715 people. Among those present on the occasion were Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Coal Sanoj Kumar Jha, Private Secretary to the union Minister Dr. Pan-kaj Jain, IAS, Chandrapur Collector Vinay Gowda, Coal India Limited Chairman B. Sairam, Coal Controller Sajeesh Kumar N, Director (Technical) in the Ministry of Coal Birendra Kumar Thakur, Additional Private Secretary to the Minister A. Venkateshwar Reddy, I.P.O., WCL CMD Harish Duhan, Director (Finance) Bikram Ghosh, Director (Technical-Operations) Anandji Prasad, Director (Human Resources) Dr. Hemant Sharad Pande, Director (Technical-Projects & Planning) Sandeep Paranjpe, Chief Vigilance Officer Ajay Madhukar Mhetre, and Umrer Area General Manager Avinash Prasad.

Geopolitical tensions may keep markets volatile; experts advise selective investing

New Delhi: Escalating tensions between the United States and Iran are likely to keep financial markets volatile in the near term, with market experts highlighting both risks and potential opportunities for investors amid the uncertainty.

N. Aruna Giri, CEO of TrustLine Holdings, said that historical trends suggest markets often witness the sharpest corrections in the initial days of geopolitical conflicts.

"Almost without exception, in most crises, the bulk of the price damage—particularly in the Indian markets—tends to happen within the first few days of the outbreak of the conflict. After the initial shock, markets may remain volatile for some time, but historically the sharpest correction usually occurs in those early days," he said.

According to him, the current tensions between the United States and Iran could follow a similar pattern, though volatility may be higher due to the strong link between the crisis and global crude oil supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

"The current crisis triggered by the US-Iran tensions may not be very different in that sense. However,



since the situation has strong linkages to crude oil prices via the Hormuz Channel, the volatility could be more intense this time around," Aruna Giri said.

He added that the worst of the price damage may have already occurred during the initial phase of the crisis.

"Having said that, it is quite likely that the worst of the price damage may already have played out in the initial phase. What may follow from here is continued volatility, but not necessarily sustained or deeper price declines, particularly in the broader small and mid-cap space," he said.

Aruna Giri also noted that geopolitical crises have historically presented investment opportunities for long-term investors.

"But if history is any guide, almost every geopolitical crisis has eventually turned out to be a compelling

buying opportunity, especially in the broader small and mid-cap segments in the Indian context," he said.

"It is time to invest, not to time the bottom. However, the approach needs to remain selective, bottom-up, and gradual. In the current environment, disciplined stock pickers are almost spoilt for choice, with no dearth of compelling opportunities emerging across the broader market," he added.

Meanwhile, Aditya Agrawal, CFA and Chief Investment Officer at Avis Wealth Creators, said the escalating tensions between Iran and the United States could influence investors through several channels beyond the immediate impact on oil prices. "Escalating tensions between Iran and the United States can influence investors in multiple ways beyond just oil prices," Agrawal said.

"First, market swings—

geopolitical unrest triggers immediate 'risk-off' behaviour, leading to short-term equity volatility as investors seek clarity," he said.

He further noted that rising crude prices could fuel inflationary pressures and affect monetary policy.

"Second, inflation and rates—rising oil prices drive up inflation, often forcing interest rates higher and hurting both stock and bond returns," Agrawal said.

Highlighting trade risks, he said threats to the Strait of Hormuz could disrupt global supply chains.

"Third, trade bottlenecks—threats to the Strait of Hormuz spike shipping costs and disrupt global supply chains, slowing overall economic growth," he said.

Agrawal added that geopolitical tensions also tend to trigger capital outflows from emerging markets.

"Fourth, currency shifts—foreign capital often flees emerging markets like India for 'safer' shores, weakening local currencies in the process," he said.

He also pointed to asset reallocation during such periods of uncertainty. "Finally, asset rotation—investors pivot toward safe havens like gold, while cyclical industries face significant selling pressure," Agrawal added.

Tata Motors CV bags orders for 5,000 buses across India

Mumbai: Auto major Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles Ltd has informed in a regulatory filing to the stock exchanges that it has won a cumulative pan-India order of over 5,000 buses from multiple state transport undertakings. However, Tata Motors has not disclosed the exact value of these cumulative orders. These orders pertain to the delivery of more than 5,000 buses and bus chassis, spanning across various states in India. Each of the tenders was won through a competitive e-bidding process, according to the statement issued here today.

Some of the state transport undertakings that have issued orders to Tata Motors include the (MSRTC), (GSRTC), (NWRTC), (TGSRTC), and Bihar State Road Transport Corporation (BSRTC), among others. The majority of these orders are concentrated around the



Southern and Western parts of India, although the Chandigarh and Bihar road transport undertakings have also placed orders.

The cumulative orders would see Tata Motors offer a wide range of vehicles, including Tata Magna, Tata

Cityride, Tata Starbus, Tata LPO 1618 and 1622 and LPO 1822, among others. These buses are configured for intercity, long-haul or intracity operations.

"This recognition by multiple State Transport Undertakings reflects the deep trust placed in Tata Motors' mobility solutions. These cumulative orders strengthen our position as the country's preferred mobility partner and reinforce our commitment to shaping India's public transport of tomorrow," Tata Motors Ltd Vice President & Head of Commercial Passenger Vehicle Business Anand S said.

Market valuation of top 10 firms erode sharply by Rs 4.48 lakh Cr.

New Delhi: Last week, the combined market valuation of top 10 domestic firms eroded sharply by Rs 4.48 lakh Crore. Banking majors including State Bank of India and HDFC Bank took the biggest hit.

The market valuation of State Bank of India tumbled Rs 89,306.22 Cr. to Rs 9,66,261.05 Cr. while the HDFC Bank faced an erosion of Rs 61,715.32 Cr. to Rs 12,57,391.76 Cr.

The valuation of Bajaj Finance dived Rs 59,082.49 Cr. to Rs 5,32,053.54 Cr. while the market capitalisation of ICICI Bank dropped by Rs 42,205.04 Cr. to Rs 8,97,844.78 Cr.

The M-cap of LIC diminished by Rs 31,245.49 Cr. to Rs 4,88,985.57 Cr.

The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tanked Rs 53,312.52 Cr. to Rs 8,72,067.63 Cr. and that of Infosys declined by Rs 24,230.96 Cr. to Rs

5,06,315.58 Cr. Hindustan Unilever's M-cap dipped by Rs 15,401.57 Cr. to Rs 5,07,640.94 Cr. while that of Reliance Industries' valuation fell by Rs 33,289.88 Cr. to Rs 18,68,293.17 Cr.

In a rank-wise analysis, Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and LIC.

Waaree Energies announces India's largest 10 GW integrated ingot, wafer manufacturing facility in Nagpur

Nagpur: Waaree Energies Limited, a leading global clean energy transition company, has marked a major milestone in India's push toward energy security and manufacturing self-reliance with the groundbreaking ceremony of its upcoming integrated solar ingot and wafer manufacturing facility at Butibori in Nagpur. The project reflects the country's growing focus on strengthening domestic renewable energy manufacturing and building a resilient supply chain for the rapidly expanding solar sector. The upcoming facility will have a production capacity of 10 gigawatts each for solar ingots and wafers, making it the largest integrated ingot and wafer manufacturing complex in India. The development is expected to significantly enhance India's upstream solar manufacturing capabilities, which are crucial for supporting the country's ambitious renewable energy targets.

The project is being developed on a sprawling 300-

acre site in Butibori, an industrial hub near Nagpur in Maharashtra. With a planned investment of around ₹6,200 crore, the facility represents one of the largest clean energy manufacturing investments in the region and highlights the growing role of Maharashtra in India's renewable energy ecosystem. The plant will focus on producing high-purity solar ingots and wafers, which form the fundamental building blocks of the solar photovoltaic value chain. These components are used in the manufacturing of solar cells and modules, making them critical to the entire solar power production process. By strengthening domestic production of these upstream components, the project is expected to significantly reduce India's dependence on imported solar materials. Currently, a large portion of the global supply of solar wafers and ingots is concentrated in a few countries, making domestic manufacturing vital for long-term energy security. Industry ex-

perts believe that such large-scale investments will help stabilise supply chains and protect the solar sector from global disruptions. The facility will therefore contribute to building a more reliable and self-sufficient renewable energy ecosystem in India. Once operational, the plant is expected to generate more than 8,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities. The project will also stimulate regional economic development by creating demand for local suppliers, logistics services, and technical manpower. The initiative is likely to boost industrial activity in the Butibori region and strengthen Nagpur's position as an emerging manufacturing hub. It is also expected to support skill development



and provide new career opportunities for engineers, technicians and skilled workers in the renewable energy sector. Speaking on the occasion, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that Nagpur is gradually emerging as a key centre for solar module manufacturing in the country. He noted that the new facility represents a significant step in expanding India's clean energy manufacturing capabilities. Fadnavis highlighted that the integrated ingot and wafer facility is a unique project and one of the few such large-scale facilities outside China. According to him, the project will strengthen India's global competitiveness in solar manufacturing while supporting the nation's renewable energy goals. When asked about the safe passage of two Indian-flagged vessels carrying LPG from Gulf countries through the war-affected Strait of Hormuz, the Chief Minister expressed confidence in the leadership of Narendra Modi. He said that the Prime Minister con-

sistently demonstrates his leadership through action and diplomacy. Fadnavis also referred to remarks made by a prominent American political leader who reportedly said that Prime Minister Modi has the ability to bring different nations together. He added that such international recognition reflects India's growing global stature. Hitesh Doshi, Chairman and Managing Director of Waaree Energies Limited, said that India's clean energy transition will be driven not only by the deployment of renewable energy projects but also by building strong domestic manufacturing capabilities across the solar value chain. He stated that the groundbreaking of the integrated ingot and wafer facility in Nagpur marks an important step in strengthening India's upstream solar manufacturing ecosystem. According to him, developing large-scale domestic capacity for these components will reduce import dependence and enhance supply chain resilience.

US based Cambridge Isotope Laboratories & Chemtatva Chiral Solutions to invest Rs 300 Cr in Telangana

Hyderabad: Cambridge Isotope Laboratories, Inc. (CIL), a global leader in stable isotope-labelled compounds, in collaboration with Hyderabad-based speciality chemicals manufacturer Chemtatva Chiral Solutions Pvt Ltd., on Saturday announced a strategic joint venture to establish advanced manufacturing capabilities in Telangana.

The joint venture plans to invest up to Rs 300 crore over the next three years in Genome Valley Phase 4 in Hyderabad, creating over 250 direct, high-skilled jobs and strengthening India's position in manufacturing isotopically labelled molecules used in pharmaceutical research, diagnostics, advanced electronics, OLED materials, and semiconductor applications. The announcement follows a meeting between the company delegation and Telangana's Minister for IT and Industries, Duddihalli Sridhar Babu, along with CEO of Telangana Life Sciences, Shakthi M. Nagappan, in Hyderabad. The company delegation included Cliff Caldwell, CEO

CIL Inc., along with John Bakke, CFO CIL Inc., Gregory Whitney, VP-Sales and Marketing CIL Inc., Vishal Rajput, CEO Chemtatva Chiral Solutions Pvt Ltd., and Vinod Kumar, Director Chemtatva.

Despite receiving interest from several other states, the companies chose Telangana, citing the state's strong life sciences ecosystem, availability of skilled scientific talent, robust infrastructure, and proactive government support for advanced manufacturing sectors. Welcoming the investment, Sridhar Babu said: "Telangana is steadily emerging as a global destination for high-value manufacturing in life sciences and speciality chemicals. The partnership between Cambridge Isotope Laboratories and Chemtatva reflects the confidence global innovators have in Telangana's ecosystem. This investment will strengthen our capabilities in advanced chemistry and materials while creating high-skilled jobs and expanding our industrial base." Shakthi M. Nagappan, highlighting the

strategic importance of the investment said, "Stable isotopes and labelled molecules are essential tools for modern pharmaceutical research, diagnostics, and emerging electronics applications. The proposed facility will manufacture a wide range of stable isotope-labelled compounds that are critical for drug discovery, metabolic studies, diagnostics, and advanced materials research. This investment will also help reduce India's dependence on imports in this highly specialised segment of the life sciences and advanced materials industry." Vishal Rajput said: "Over the past few years, Chemtatva has grown into a leading player in the stable isotopes space while creating more than 100 direct jobs. Partnering with Cambridge Isotope Laboratories enables us to combine global expertise with India's scientific talent to build world-class manufacturing capabilities in Telangana. This investment will significantly expand our capacity and allow us to serve global pharmaceutical and advanced materials customers."