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Rat Bite Incident in ICU Triggers Hospital Safety Concerns PG.3



Sneha Ullal opens up about first meeting with Aishwarya Rai Bachchan during 'Lookalike' buzz PG.6



Navneet credits teammates & coaching staff for her strong performances at Hockey WC Qualifiers PG.7



Sensex jumps 938 points, Nifty settles above 23,400 on bargain buying after three-day fall PG.8

BDD Chawl Redevelopment Project to Improve Residents' Living Standards - Chief Minister

Mumbai: Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the government is committed to fulfilling the dream of owning a home for middle-class families in Mumbai. He said the redevelopment of the BDD Chawl project in Mumbai will greatly improve the living standards of residents. He also appealed to the residents not to sell their new homes.

The keys of 864 rehabilitation flats from the first phase of the Naigaon BDD Chawl Redevelopment Project were distributed by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis through the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA).

Devendra Fadnavis said that



Fadnavis said that 900 square feet of space will be given to resolve the issue related to the Bhavani Mata Temple located there. He added that BDD Chawl has a rich history and important personalities such as Annabhau Sathe and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar once lived there. He also said that a book should be written about the history of BDD Chawl.

Devendra Fadnavis said that people living in Mumbai should get homes in Mumbai itself. He added that the government is working to provide proper houses to police personnel and the issue of housing prices will be discussed with Deputy Chief Minister and Housing Minister Eknath Shinde to find a solution. A comprehensive policy will also be prepared for this.

The program was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Ajit Pawar, Legislative Council Chairman Prof. Ram Shinde, Assembly Speaker Adv. Rahul Narvekar, Deputy Chairperson Dr. Neelam Gorhe, Skill, Employment, and Entrepreneurship Minister Mangalprabhat Lodha, Cultural Affairs Minister and Mumbai Suburban District Guardian Minister Adv. Ashish Shelar, Minister of State for Housing Dr. Pankaj Bhojwar, Mayor Ritu Tawde, MLAs Chitra Wagh, Kalidas Kolambkar and Manisha Kayande, Siddhivinayak Trust Chairman Sada Sarvankar, Housing Department Additional Chief Secretary Aseem Kumar Gupta and other public representatives. MHADA Vice President and Chief Executive Officer Sanjeev Jaiswal gave the introduction while Milind Borikar, Chief Officer of the Mumbai Housing and Area Development Board, gave the vote of thanks.

Government Committed to Providing Homes for Common People - Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said that the day of distributing the new homes is a historic moment that should be remembered with pride. He said that residents who lived in BDD Chawls will now move into modern towers, fulfilling a dream they had for many years. He said that generations of families lived in these chawls and shared emotional, cultural and social bonds there. Eknath Shinde said that the government's policy is to provide proper homes and facilities to ordinary citizens. Residents will celebrate Gudi Padwa on the 19th of the month with the joy of entering their new homes. He also announced that MHADA will pay the property tax of BDD residents for the last 12 years. He said police personnel perform their duties in all weather conditions and the government is making efforts to provide them with their own houses. He added that through the housing policy, an investment of ₹70 crore will be made and environmentally friendly homes will be provided to 30 lakh people.

Handing Over Keys to 864 Beneficiaries is a Golden Moment - Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar

Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar said that after nearly four decades of waiting, the first phase of the project has finally allowed 864 beneficiaries to receive the keys to their homes. She described the moment as a golden moment. She said these homes are not just buildings made of cement and bricks but symbols of people's dreams, hopes and aspirations. Sunetra Ajit Pawar said that the BDD Chawls were built during the British era around 1920 and have been witnesses to the development and history of Mumbai. She said the history of these chawls is not only about the buildings but also about the struggles, determination and unity of the hardworking families who lived there. For nearly four decades, residents were waiting for safer and better homes where they could live with dignity. She said that with the success of this project, a new chapter has begun in the lives of BDD residents.

Infrastructure Projects Worth ₹1,41,356 Crore Underway in Mumbai

Mumbai: Industry Minister Dr. Uday Samant said in the Legislative Council that development work worth about ₹1,41,356 crore related to infrastructure is currently underway in Mumbai. He said the government will provide the pending payments to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in phases. The issue was raised in the

Legislative Council by member Sunil Shinde. During the discussion, members Adv. Anil Parab, Jagannath Abhyankar and Sachin Ahir also asked supplementary questions.

Dr. Uday Samant said that several major infrastructure projects are progressing rapidly in Mumbai. These include the Coastal Road project, bridges and roads in the city, river rejuvenation projects, the Mithi River improvement project, an MLD water purification project, storm water drainage works, water supply and sewage projects.

Dr. Uday Samant said that a positive solution will be found regarding funds that the Primary Education Department has to pay to the BMC. He also said that ₹86 crore due to the BMC under the Right to Education (RTE) scheme



After 27 years in power, BJP charts 'Integrated Development' roadmap for Delhi

New Delhi: With the BJP returning to power in Delhi after nearly three decades, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta says the government is focusing on what she describes as an "Integrated Development" model, one that links infrastructure expansion with environmental sustainability and social services.

Responding to a question on how governance challenges today differ from those faced by previous administrations, Gupta said each era brings its own priorities.

"Every era of governance has its own challenges and priorities. Sheila Dikshit focused on large infrastructure projects that transformed Delhi's roads and transport network. Our vision is what I call 'Integrated Development for a Developed Delhi,'" she said.

According to the Chief Minister, the approach aims to ensure that infrastructure growth, environmental concerns, and public services move forward together.

"This means ensuring that infrastructure, environmental sustainability and social services grow together. For instance, we are simultaneously working on electrifying public transport, expanding charging infrastructure, improving water supply management, and upgrading healthcare systems," Gupta said.

She added that the government is also trying to ensure that development reaches all parts of the city rather than remaining concentrated in a few areas. "We have also introduced targeted development initiatives to ensure that growth is not concentrated in a few areas. Recently, the government announced a special development budget for each assembly constituency so that local infrastructure needs can be addressed more effectively. We have revived the trans-Yamuna and rural development boards," she said.

Environmental sustainability, Gupta said, is another key component of the model.

"At the same time, environmental sustainability is central to our model. Projects ranging from rooftop solar installations on government buildings to large-scale EV adoption are part of this approach. Our goal is to create a city where development is balanced, sustainable and inclusive."

Maha Freedom of Religion Bill scheduled for 3-day debate in Assembly

Mumbai: The political temperature in the Maharashtra Assembly in the ongoing budget session has heated up following the introduction of the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill 2026.

With a three-day debate scheduled in the Assembly, the state government has introduced the bill to prevent religious conversions carried out through force, coercion, or allurement. The demand for this law has been pushed by BJP MLA and Minister Nitesh Rane.

If passed, Maharashtra would become the 13th state in India to enact such a law. Congress legislature party leader Vijay Wadettiwar has launched a scathing attack on the bill, raising questions about the "intent" behind the legislation. He alleged that the Bill was designed to create a rift between religions and disturb social harmony.

Wadettiwar said the government was bringing the bill solely for political benefits and to consolidate its vote bank. He questioned the need for such a law in the current social and political situation, suggesting there are more pressing issues than the "divisive" legislation.

Opposition protests suspension of 8 MPs in Lok Sabha, calls move 'unfair'

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader KC Venugopal on Monday raised strong objections in the Lok Sabha over the suspension of eight Opposition Members of Parliament for the remainder of the current session, describing the action as unfair and a troubling precedent for parliamentary functioning.

Rising during the proceedings of the House, Venugopal said the suspension of the MPs undermines democratic norms and the right of elected representatives to raise issues on behalf of the public. He urged the government and the Chair to immediately reconsider the decision.

"Parliament has seen countless protests over the decades. Protests are part of the democratic functioning of the House," Venugopal said, addressing the Chair.

"But the suspension of eight Opposition MPs for the entire session is unfair and a disturbing new trend which risks weakening the role of the Opposition and reducing the scope for debate inside Parliament.

Suspensions of MPs are typically invoked under parliamentary rules to maintain order in the House, particularly when members are accused of disrupting proceedings. However, Opposition parties have frequently argued that such measures are sometimes used disproportionately, especially during politically charged sessions.

The issue of suspensions and disruptions has been a recurring feature of recent parliamentary sessions, reflecting the increasingly contentious relationship between the government and the Opposition.

Parliamentary experts note that while protests and adjournments have long been part of legislative politics in India, extended suspensions often trigger sharp debates about balancing discipline with democratic representation.

Venugopal demanded that the suspension be revoked without delay so that the affected members can participate in the legislative business of the session.

"This suspension should be revoked immediately," he said, stressing that dialogue and debate - not exclusion - should guide parliamentary proceedings.

Another parliamentary source said both the government and Opposition leaders emphasised the need to maintain decorum and prevent scenes that disrupt proceedings. "There was broad agreement that all members should follow the established parliamentary decorum and ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future," the source said.

The development comes amid repeated disruptions in recent days that had stalled proceedings in the Lower House.

Separately, the Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a bulletin reminding MPs about maintaining decorum within the Parliament

Consensus Reached to Revoke Suspension of 8 Opposition MPs After All-Party Meeting Convened by Lok Sabha Speaker

New Delhi: The suspension of eight Opposition Members of Parliament from the Lok Sabha is set to be revoked after an all-party meeting convened by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla reached a consensus on restoring normal functioning in the House. The matter will be formally taken up after Question Hour in the Lower House on Tuesday.

According to informed sources, leaders from various parties agreed during the meeting to revoke the suspension of eight Opposition MPs who had been barred from the service of the House for the remainder of the ongoing Budget session.

The MPs whose suspension is set to be withdrawn are Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, Dean Kuriakose, Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, B. Manickam Tagore, Prashant Yadao, Padole, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and S. Venkatesan.

The eight MPs were suspended earlier after a motion moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju was adopted by the House amid disruptions during the ongoing session.

Sources present at the meeting said the decision to revoke the suspension followed assurances from leaders across party lines that members would adhere to the rules and traditions of Parliament and ensure orderly conduct in the

House.

"Leaders of all parties agreed that the dignity and established side will not cross over to the opposite benches in the Well of the House, tear papers and throw them towards the Chair, or climb onto the officials' table," a source familiar with the discussions said.

Another parliamentary source said both the government and Opposition leaders emphasised the need to maintain decorum and prevent scenes that disrupt proceedings. "There was broad agreement that all members should follow the established parliamentary decorum and ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future," the source said.

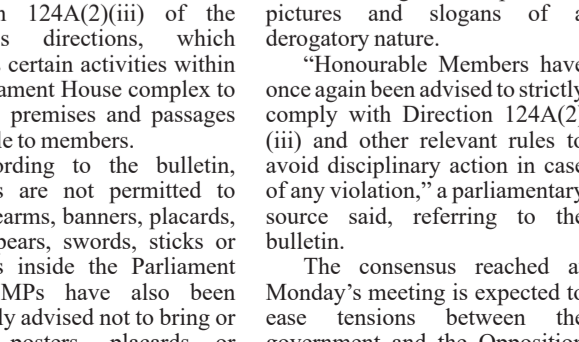
The development comes amid repeated disruptions in recent days that had stalled proceedings in the Lower House.

Separately, the Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a bulletin reminding MPs about maintaining decorum within the Parliament

instances, posters and placards displayed inside Parliament contained AI-generated portraits, pictures and slogans of a derogatory nature.

"Honourable Members have once again been advised to strictly comply with Direction 124A(2)(iii) and other relevant rules to avoid disciplinary action in case of any violation," a parliamentary source said, referring to the bulletin.

The consensus reached at Monday's meeting is expected to ease tensions between the government and the Opposition and help restore normal functioning of Parliament for the remainder of the session.



Akhilesh questions EC, BJP over removal of officials in Bengal after poll announcement

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party (SP) national president Akhilesh Yadav has questioned both the BJP and the Election Commission over the removal of senior officials in West Bengal just after the announcement of assembly polls.

Talking to the media on Monday, Yadav stated that whenever elections are held in a state where the BJP is not in power, the very first step taken is the removal of the Chief Secretary and other senior officials. Speaking to journalists, he raised the question as to why this practice is not followed in Uttar Pradesh. He pointed out that the DGP has never been removed in the state during an election period, de-



spite numerous complaints lodged with the Election Commission regarding the matter. He further asked whether officials whose own family

members were contesting the elections had been removed from their posts. The SP chief alleged that the Election Commission is not functioning in an impartial manner. He asserted that the entire nation is aware that the Election Commission is acting at the behest of the BJP, and its actions appear to be entirely consistent with that agenda.

Additionally, he cornered the government over the issues of rising inflation and the cost of gas cylinders. He remarked that those who are unable to even ensure the availability of gas cylinders to the public are talking about leading the country to the forefront of the global stage.

EC taking cues from BJP: Priyank Kharge

Bengaluru: Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday alleged that the Election Commission of India appears to be "seeking advice" from the BJP while structuring elections in poll-bound states.

Speaking to reporters, Kharge said the Congress would abide by whatever decision the poll body takes but questioned the manner in which elections are being scheduled. "Whatever the Election Commission decides, we will follow. But it looks like the Election Commission is seeking advice from the BJP," he told reporters.

The Election Commission on Sunday announced the schedule for Assembly elections in several states, with polling in Assam, Kerala and the union Territory of Puducherry to be held in a single phase on April 9, while voting in Tamil Nadu will take place on April 23.

Polling in West Bengal will be conducted in two



phases on April 23 and April 29. The counting of votes for all states is scheduled for May 4.

He further alleged that the way the election schedule is being structured seems to favour the ruling party's preparedness for polls.

Kharge also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that the latter has been focusing primarily on election campaigns rather than addressing pressing national issues.

Referring to the Prime Minister's recent visits to election-bound states such as Tamil Nadu and Assam,

the minister said Modi had been "hopping around" these states over the past week to ten days. "He is least bothered about the current LPG crisis and other crises prevalent in the country. He has turned a blind eye to these issues," Kharge alleged.

The Congress leader further claimed that the Prime Minister's priority appeared to be electoral victories rather than governance. "I think his only job is to ensure that he wins an election. I don't think the Prime Minister knows his responsibilities," Kharge added.

EC orders police reshuffle in Bengal; DGP and Kolkata CP replaced

Kolkata: Hours after ordering the removal of the state's chief secretary and home secretary, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday carried out another major administrative reshuffle ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections, replacing the Director General of Police (DGP), the Kolkata Police Commissioner and several other senior officers.

The move is seen as part of the Commission's effort to tighten administrative oversight and ensure a neutral machinery in the run-up to the polls.

According to the Commission's directive, Piyush Pandey has been removed from the post of Director General of Police.

Senior IPS officer Siddh Nath Gupta, a 1992-batch officer, has been appointed as the new DGP and will serve as Director General and Inspector General of Police (in charge).

The Election Commission has also replaced the Commissioner of Kolkata Police. Supratim Sarkar Ajay Nanda, a 1996-batch

officer, has been appointed in his place.

Ajay Nanda is considered an experienced officer who has played an important role in anti-Maoist operations. He had earlier served as the Commissioner of the Asansol-Durgapur Police Commissionerate and also held several assignments in Kolkata Police.

He was also appointed as the first Inspector General of the West Bengal Special Task Force (STF).

The Commission has also made changes in other key positions in the state police. ADG (Law and Order) Vineet Goyal has been replaced with Ajay Mukund Ranade, a 1995-batch IPS officer, appointed as the new ADG and IGP (Law and Order). In another change, Natarajan Ramesh Babu, a 1991-batch IPS officer, has been appointed as the Director General of Prisons. The latest reshuffle follows a significant administrative decision taken by the Election Commission late on Sunday night, when it removed West Bengal Chief Secretary Nandini Chakraborty and Home

Secretary Jagdish Prasad Meena from their post.

Dushyant Narijala had been appointed as the new Chief Secretary, while Sanghamitra Ghosh has been given charge as Principal Secretary of the Home and Hill Affairs Department.

The Commission said the changes were made after reviewing the state's election preparedness and were aimed at ensuring neutrality in the administration during the electoral process.

The announcement of the reshuffle came shortly after Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar declared the schedule for the West Bengal Assembly elections at a press conference in New Delhi on Sunday.

The elections to the 294-member Assembly will be held in two phases on April 23 and April 29, while the counting of votes will take place on May 4. While announcing the poll schedule, the Commission had stated that despite the reduction in the number of phases, it was committed to ensuring a free, fair and violence-free election in West Bengal.

HAM refutes speculation over MLAs' visit to Tejashwi's chamber

Patna: Amid heightened political activity surrounding the Rajya Sabha elections in Bihar, the (HAM) on Monday dismissed speculation regarding the visit of two of its MLAs to the chamber of the Leader of the Opposition.

The party clarified that the incident had no political significance and reaffirmed its continued commitment to the (NDA). The clarification came after reports suggested that HAM MLAs Deepa Kumari and Jyoti Devi had visited the chamber of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, Tejashwi Yadav. The development had sparked political speculation in the state at a time when parties are closely monitoring alignments ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls. Responding to the reports, HAM spokesperson Shyam Sundar Sharan said that attempts were being made to create unnecessary confusion by linking the visit to possible political developments. He stated that the incident was being misinterpreted and that there was no reason to draw political con-



clusions from it. According to Sharan, the two MLAs had inadvertently entered the chamber of the Leader of the Opposition and there was no deliberate intention behind the visit. He said the leaders had gone there unknowingly and the episode should not be seen through a political lens. "Some people are trying to spread unnecessary confusion by claiming that Deepa Kumari and Jyoti Devi went to the chamber of the Leader of the Opposition and that political conclusions should be drawn from it," Sharan said while addressing the media.

He further clarified that the MLAs had no political motive behind their presence in the chamber and that the situation was being exaggerated by those seeking to create speculation during the ongoing election process.

Nitish Kumar directs officials to expedite ongoing development works at Patna Collectorate

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday directed officials to expedite the completion of various ongoing development projects at the Patna Collectorate. After inspecting the Patna Collectorate building and reviewing the ongoing development works there, Kumar asked the authorities to adhere to the stipulated time frame while maintaining the quality of construction. During the inspection, the Chief Minister reviewed the newly developed infrastructure facilities and arrangements at the Collectorate. He also assessed the progress of the proposed road construction from Collectorate Ghat to Sabhyata Dwar. He said that once the road is completed, it will provide convenience to devotees during the Chhath Festival and will also benefit people who go for morning walks. The project, he said, will further enhance the grandeur of Collectorate Ghat. Kumar directed officials to complete

the road construction work at the earliest. The Chief Minister also instructed officials to complete the construction of the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) office being built within the Collectorate premises as soon as possible. He further inspected the double-decker bridge and directed that the remaining work be completed quickly. Kumar asked officials to coordinate with the Patna Metro Rail Corporation to expedite the project so that connectivity with the metro system can be improved.

The new Patna Collectorate building has been constructed on the banks of the Ganga River after demolishing the old dilapidated structures. Special attention has been paid to environmental considerations in the construction of the new building. It is equipped with modern facilities, including a water treatment plant, a sewerage treatment plant, and a 40-kilowatt solar power system.

Omar Abdullah throws open Tulip Garden, pins hope on spring boost for Kashmir tourism

Srinagar: J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday expressed hope that the arrival of spring would revive the tourism sector in Kashmir as he threw open famed Tulip Garden in Srinagar.

Invoking a popular Kashmiri saying — "Wande Tzale Sheen Gali, Beyi Yi Bahaar" (winter will flee, the snow will melt, and spring will come again), Omar said the changing season symbolises hope and renewal for the people associated with the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing reporters after throwing open the tulip garden to visitors, Omar said Kashmir's natural beauty becomes more vibrant during spring that attracts tourists from across the country and beyond.

"It is beautiful weather. There is snow, there is rain, and the fragrance of flowers everywhere. Where else will we see this beauty? We hope the spring season that has begun this week becomes a new spring for all those people in Jammu and Kashmir who are connected with tourism," he said.

The Tulip Garden in the foothills of Zabarwan range was traditionally thrown open to visitors in the last week of March, but its opening was advanced this year

due to the noticeable rise in temperatures during February.

Last year, Tulip Garden recorded a footfall of around



8.25 lakh visitors in April. However, the Pahalgam terrorist attack on April 26 that left 26 civilians dead, including 25 tourists, dealt a severe blow to the valley's tourism sector, causing a sharp decline in tourist arrivals for several months.

The chief minister noted that the tourism sector had gone through a difficult period but expressed optimism that conditions would improve with the change in weather.

"We hope people will benefit from the beauty of Jammu and Kashmir. Tourists will start coming to the garden and by the time the flowers fully bloom, the gar-

den will be filled with local visitors and tourists," he added.

Responding to a question about new additions to

Kashmir's main tourist season.

"Our winter tourism is largely limited to Gulmarg, though tourists also visited Sonmarg this year. But the main season usually starts from here. ... I hope that the situation will be good. And a good season will be given to the people who belong to the tourism industry," he said.

Omar also appreciated the efforts of the Floriculture Department staff who worked hard to prepare the garden for the season.

On the possibility of developing tulip bulbs locally instead of importing them from the Netherlands, he said institutions such as Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) were already working on proposals to propagate tulip bulbs within the Valley.

"If we are able to develop tulip bulbs locally, it will help save foreign exchange currently spent on imports from the Netherlands and further boost the floriculture industry here," he said.

Regarding security arrangements for tourists, Omar said the agencies responsible for security were performing their duties and would ensure the safety of visitors at all tourist destinations across the Valley.

Mokama MLA Anant Singh announces retirement from electoral politics, says son will contest next Assembly polls

Patna: In a significant political development in Bihar, strongman JDU MLA from Mokama Anant Singh on Monday announced his decision to retire from electoral politics and anoint his son to take his political legacy forward.

Speaking to reporters at the Bihar Assembly premises after casting his vote in the Rajya Sabha elections, Singh said that the present term as MLA would be his last and that he had decided to step away from active electoral politics.

"I have already made it clear that

this will be my last election. I will not contest the Assembly polls again. My son will contest the next election and serve the people of Mokama," he said.

The jailed Mokama legislator also linked his decision with the political future of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar saying that if Nitish Kumar was no longer active in state politics, there would be little reason for him to continue. Singh also sought to reassure his supporters regarding his incarceration, expressing confidence that he would be released soon. He said there was no need for his supporters to wor-

ry and claimed that he expected to come out of jail within a month. When asked about who could succeed Nitish Kumar as the next Chief Minister of Bihar, Singh said that the decision would ultimately be taken by the Chief Minister himself.

The incarcerated ruling JD(U) MLA from Mokama assembly seat, Anant Singh was brought from Beur Central Jail Patna to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in an ambulance amid tight security arrangements and was escorted back to the jail after casting his vote.

WB, Centre & UP govt sign MoU for clean air management program in UP of \$299.66 million

Lucknow: The World Bank, the Government of India and Government of Uttar Pradesh on Monday signed an agreement to support the Government of UP's Clean Air Plan which focuses on integrated solutions to improve the state's air quality and create job opportunities for youth and women. The Uttar Pradesh Clean Air Management Program will focus on clean air transition across key sectors like transport, agriculture and industry with clean air benefits spilling over to other states. Almost 200 new air quality monitors will be installed with data received from the U.P. Pollution Control Board. The agreement was

signed by Ms. Juhi Mukherjee, Joint Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of India; Ms. B. Chandrakala, CEO, Clean Air Management Authority and Secretary of Forest, Environment and Climate Change on behalf of the Government of Uttar Pradesh; and Paul Procee, Acting Country Director, India on behalf of the World Bank. "Uttar Pradesh is on course to become a \$1 trillion economy because we believe that economic growth, productivity, and ecological balance go hand in hand. Through the Uttar Pradesh Clean Air Management Program, our pursuit of

prosperity will be measured not by GDP alone, but by clean skies, healthier and more productive citizens, and a flourishing environment that sustains our people and our planet," said Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. "The program will leverage almost \$150 million in private capital in the transport and MSME sectors," said Paul Procee, Acting Country Director, World Bank India. "By investing in electric buses and 3-wheelers, and emissions monitoring systems and cleaner technologies in industries, the program will help to improve firm productivity and growth, as well as provide

greater access to jobs to young men and women in the state." The program will also help 3.9 million households gain access to clean cooking. More than 700 brick kilns will transition to resource-efficient technology. Farmers will adopt efficient fertilizer use to improve crop productivity in the state. The Uttar Pradesh program is part of the World Bank's Regional Air Quality Management Program in the (IGP-HF), a global air pollution hotspot. It has a maturity of 10 years including a grace period of two years and will receive support from the multi-donor Energy Sector Management Assessment Program.

Naveen Patnaik slams second ballot to BJP MLA in Odisha Rajya Sabha polls, calls it "undemocratic"

Bhubaneswar: Leader of the Opposition in the Odisha Legislative Assembly, Naveen Patnaik, on Monday strongly objected to the issuance of a second ballot paper to a BJP MLA during the ongoing Rajya Sabha elections in the state, describing the move as "undemocratic and unconstitutional."

The controversy arose during voting for four Rajya Sabha seats in the Odisha Assembly when Upasana Mohapatra, the BJP MLA from Brahmagiri, was reportedly allowed to cast her

vote again after making an error while marking her ballot.

Speaking to reporters inside the Odisha Legislative Assembly, Patnaik alleged that the MLA had clearly made a mistake while casting her vote and that established election procedures should have been followed in such a situation.

According to him, once a legislator marks the ballot incorrectly, the rules do not permit issuing a fresh ballot paper to cast the vote again. He said the decision to pro-

vide another ballot was against the accepted norms governing the Rajya Sabha election process.

Patnaik described the action as "highly illegal" and said it violated the basic principles of democratic electoral procedures. He also accused the authorities conducting the election of ignoring objections raised by members of his party.

The president of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) said several party MLAs had strongly protested at the time when the second ballot was issued, but their con-



cerns were not taken into consideration.

Senior BJD leader and former minister Ranendra Pratap Swain also objected to the move, saying the mat-

ter required a thorough investigation to ensure transparency in the election process.

Swain stated that the incident had raised serious

questions about the conduct of the Rajya Sabha elections and called for accountability from those responsible for supervising the voting procedure.

Another BJD MLA and former minister, Dibya Shankar Mishra, said the party would formally raise the issue with the Election Commission of India and demand appropriate action.

Mishra also said the party leadership was considering taking the matter beyond the Assembly if necessary, including organising protests to highlight

what it described as a serious violation of election norms.

He further demanded that the CCTV footage of the voting process be examined carefully so that the exact sequence of events could be verified and responsibility fixed if any irregularities were found.

The controversy has drawn attention from other political parties as well. The Indian National Congress also criticised the alleged issuance of a second ballot paper. Congress leaders described the move as a clear

violation of election procedures and said such actions could undermine the credibility and transparency of the electoral process.

Meanwhile, the issue has intensified the political atmosphere in the state Assembly during the Rajya Sabha elections, with opposition parties demanding strict adherence to election rules. With the BJD raising strong objections and calling for a probe, the matter is likely to be taken up at higher levels, including before the Election Commission, in the coming days.

Rat Bite Incident in ICU Triggers Hospital Safety Concerns

Mira Bhayandar : A shocking incident at Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Hospital in Mira Bhayandar has raised serious concerns about hygiene and safety after an elderly patient in the Intensive Care Unit was reportedly bitten by a rat.

The patient, 89-year-old Suhasini Mathekar, had been admitted to the hospital on March 12 due to health complications and was placed on a ventilator in the ICU located on the fourth floor of the building.

According to family members, they were shocked to discover on the morning of March 13 that a rat had bitten the elderly woman's hand while she was lying in the ICU.

The patient's relatives have raised serious questions about how such an incident could occur in a highly sensitive and controlled environment like an ICU.

They have also alleged negligence on the part of hospital staff, asking how doctors and nurses on night duty failed to notice the



presence of a rat or the distress caused to the patient.

Family members said it was disturbing that such an event could take place in a supposedly sterile and closely monitored hospital ward.

The incident has sparked public outrage, with many people demanding accountability from the hospital administration.

Critics have said the

presence of rodents in a critical care unit indicates serious lapses in sanitation and pest control measures.

The patient's family has demanded a thorough investigation into the matter, including a review of the conduct of staff on duty at the time of the incident.

They have also called for an immediate audit of the hospital's hygiene standards and pest control

systems, along with strict action against those found responsible for the lapse to ensure that such incidents do not occur again.

A disturbing incident at a civic hospital in Mira Bhayandar has raised serious concerns about hygiene and patient safety after an elderly woman admitted to the Intensive Care Unit was reportedly bitten by a rat.

The incident occurred at

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Hospital, where the patient had been undergoing treatment for serious health complications. The episode has triggered public outrage and renewed debate about sanitation standards in health-care facilities.

The patient, identified as Suhasini Mathekar, is 89 years old. She had been admitted to the hospital on March 12 after experiencing medical complications that required intensive care.

Doctors placed her on a ventilator in the Intensive Care Unit located on the fourth floor of the hospital building due to the seriousness of her condition.

According to her family members, the shocking discovery was made on the morning of March 13 when they noticed injuries on the patient's hand that they believe were caused by a rat bite.

Relatives claim that the elderly woman was lying in her ICU bed when the rodent allegedly attacked her during the night.

LPG Crisis Forces Closure of Iconic Mumbai Eatery for a Day

Mumbai : The ongoing shortage of commercial LPG cylinders has begun affecting several restaurants across the city, forcing some establishments to temporarily suspend operations. Among them is the iconic eatery Shree Thaker Bhojanalay, which announced that it would remain closed on Monday, March 16, due to the ongoing gas supply crisis.

Known for its traditional Gujarati thali, the restaurant has been a popular culinary landmark in South Mumbai for decades. Located in Fanaswadi in the Kalbadevi area, the establishment has built a strong reputation among food lovers for serving authentic Gujarati cuisine.

The eatery was founded in 1945 by Manganlal Purohit and has since become one of the city's most recognised dining destinations. For generations of patrons, the restaurant has symbolised the rich culinary heritage of Gujarati cuisine in Mumbai.

The management of the restaurant informed customers about the temporary closure through its official social media account. In a message posted online, the restaurant stated that kitchen operations had been affected due to the shortage of LPG gas.

The statement said that the restaurant would remain closed for the day and that an update regarding operations for March 17 would be shared later. The management also thanked customers for their continued support and understanding during the disruption. The LPG shortage has been linked to global supply disruptions caused by tensions in West Asia involving the United States, Iran and Israel. The situation has reportedly affected the supply chain of commercial gas cylinders in several parts of India.

Hotels and restaurants across Mumbai have started facing operational challenges due to the shortage. Many establishments have resort-

ed to limiting menu options, slowing down cooking operations, or seeking alternative fuel sources to continue serving customers.

According to the Association of Hotels and Restaurants (AHAR), the situation has already forced a significant number of businesses to halt operations temporarily.

Vijay Shetty, president of the Association of Hotels and Restaurants (AHAR), said that nearly 20 per cent of hotels and restaurants in Mumbai have already shut down because of the LPG shortage. He warned that if the supply situation does not improve soon, as many as half of the city's restaurants and hotels could be forced to close their kitchens in the coming days, which would have a major impact on the hospitality sector.

The ongoing shortage of commercial cooking gas has begun affecting restaurants across Mumbai, forcing several establishments to temporarily suspend their operations.

Food Stall Inside Public Toilet Structure Sparks Outrage

Mumbai : A viral video circulating on social media has sparked outrage after allegedly showing a food stall operating inside a women's public toilet structure near the Fashion Street market in South Mumbai.

The video, shared online by the Instagram handle "Maharashtra Bandhu News," appears to show a makeshift stall functioning within a pink ladies' toilet unit placed along the footpath.

According to the footage, the food stall was operating from one end of the structure while the entrance to the women's washroom was located at the opposite side.

The person recording the video repeatedly questioned how such an arrangement could be permitted in a public place, asking whether it was allowed for food preparation to take place inside a washroom facility.

The clip was captioned with remarks criticising the situation and raising questions about hygiene standards and the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative.

Soon after being uploaded online, the video spread widely across social media platforms, drawing strong reactions from users.

Many people expressed shock



and anger, questioning how food could be prepared and sold in such proximity to a public toilet.

Several users also raised concerns about potential health hazards and the risks such conditions might pose to public hygiene and food safety.

Others demanded immediate intervention by civic authorities and called for stricter monitoring of food vendors operating on foot-

paths across the city.

Fashion Street, located near Azad Maidan and close to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus area, is one of Mumbai's busiest shopping destinations and attracts thousands of visitors every day.

A controversy has erupted in Mumbai after a viral video on social media allegedly showed a food stall operating from within a wom-

en's public toilet structure near the well-known shopping hub Fashion Street.

The video, which circulated widely online, has triggered strong reactions from residents and internet users who expressed concern over hygiene and public health standards in the city.

According to the footage shared on social media, a makeshift food stall appeared to be

functioning inside a pink structure that houses a women's public toilet facility located along a footpath near the market area.

The clip was reportedly posted by the Instagram handle "Maharashtra Bandhu News," which highlighted the unusual arrangement and questioned how such a situation could occur in a busy public location.

In the video, the person recording the scene can be heard repeatedly questioning whether it is permissible to prepare and sell food from inside a toilet facility.

The footage appears to show the stall set up at one end of the structure, while the entrance to the women's washroom was located at the opposite side.

This unusual setup led to immediate criticism from viewers who said the arrangement raises serious questions about sanitation and food safety.

Many social media users expressed shock at the idea that food preparation could take place in such close proximity to a public restroom.

Several commenters said the situation could pose significant health risks, particularly if proper hygiene standards are not maintained.

Safety Concerns Raised Over Borivli-Gorai Ro-Ro Jetty

Mumbai : Commuters using the Borivli-Gorai ferry route have raised safety concerns regarding the newly developed jetty where roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) ferry services are expected to be introduced soon.

The upcoming service is designed to allow vehicles along with a larger number of passengers to travel across the Gorai Creek, improving connectivity between Borivli and Gorai. However, residents claim that several safety issues at the jetty remain unresolved.

According to local commuters, safety monitoring at the jetty has reduced significantly in recent months. They said staff members who earlier regulated passenger movement and supervised vehicle loading are no longer regularly present at the site.

Residents said that the absence of monitoring personnel has resulted in passengers ignoring basic safety measures such as wearing life jackets before boarding ferries. Earlier, the Maharashtra Maritime Board had deployed staff at the jetty to prevent overcrowding and

ensure that safety guidelines were followed by passengers using the ferry service.

Rossi D'Souza, a Gorai resident and member of the Gorai Gaothan Panchayat, said the lack of supervision has made the situation concerning during busy hours.

He stated that earlier security personnel used to manage the crowd and ensure that passengers followed safety rules, but such monitoring is rarely visible now, especially during peak morning and evening periods.

D'Souza added that in the absence of staff, many passengers are boarding ferries without wearing life vests and overcrowding is not being effectively controlled.

Commuters have also raised concerns about the approach road leading to the jetty, which has reportedly become narrower due to ongoing construction work in the area. They warned that the reduced road width could create difficulties for vehicles and may delay emergency response if an incident occurs at the jetty or nearby areas.

Probe Ordered Over Fake Vidhan Bhavan Entry Passes

Mumbai : The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly has ordered an investigation after allegations surfaced that entry passes to the Vidhan Bhavan were fraudulently issued using forged official documents.

The controversy emerged after Industries Minister Uday Samant raised the issue in the Assembly, claiming that fake passes were created using a forged letterhead of the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC).

According to Samant, the fraudulent document appeared to be a colour photocopy of the department's official letterhead and included forged signatures to make it look authentic.

He informed the House that around 50 entry passes were allegedly issued using this method and that individuals were reportedly charging between ₹2,000 and ₹5,000 for each pass.

Samant also lodged a complaint with Assembly Speaker Ram Shinde, stating that the misuse occurred despite strict instructions that passes should be issued only according to official procedures.

is completed.

He said the panel is expected to submit its findings before the conclusion of the ongoing Assembly session.

Minister of State for Home (Rural) Pankaj Bhojar said the government would take an appropriate decision after reviewing the report submitted by the investigating authorities.

The issue gained further attention when MLA Amol Mitkari raised concerns about how certain individuals were able to enter the Vidhan Bhavan premises despite restrictions on entry passes. Mitkari pointed out that some activists were seen inside the complex during the Assembly session, where they reportedly attended a gathering, obtained day-long passes and distributed books within the premises.

He questioned how such individuals managed to access the high-security area even after security protocols had been tightened.

Security around Vidhan Bhavan had been increased earlier in the week after an anonymous email threatened to blow up the complex when received on the official website of the Mumbai Vidhan Bhavan office.

Police carried out an extensive search operation across the premises, but later confirmed that the threatening email turned out to be a hoax.

However, the alleged pass scam has once again raised concerns about security procedures and access control within the state legislature complex.

An investigation has been ordered into allegations of fraudulent entry passes being issued for the Vidhan Bhavan in Mumbai. The controversy surfaced during the ongoing session of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly after concerns were raised about the misuse of official documents to gain access to the high-security premises.

The issue was brought to attention by Uday Samant, who claimed that fake entry passes had been generated using forged official documents.

Samant alleged that the fraudulent passes were prepared using a forged letterhead of the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation, commonly known as MIDC. According to the minister, the document used in the alleged fraud appeared to be a colour photocopy of the department's official letterhead.

He further stated that forged signatures had been added to the document to make it appear authentic and to facilitate the issuance of passes. Samant informed the Assembly that approximately 50 entry passes were reportedly issued using this method.

He also alleged that individuals involved in the scheme were charging between ₹2,000 and ₹5,000 for each pass.

The minister raised the matter formally inside the House, describing it as a serious breach of security procedures.

In the complaint, he stated that the misuse of passes had occurred despite clear guidelines that entry permits should only be issued through official procedures.

Responding to the concerns, Speaker Ram Shinde announced the formation of a special committee to investigate the allegations.

He assured members of the Assembly that strict action would be taken against those found responsible for the irregularities.

Shinde also said that the committee has been asked to submit its findings before the conclusion of the current Assembly session.

The matter also drew comments from Pankaj Bhojar, who stated that the government would take appropriate action once the investigation report is submitted.

Bhojar said the authorities would carefully review the findings before deciding on further steps.

The controversy gained further attention after Amol Mitkari raised additional concerns about security at the legislative complex.

Viral Thane Video Shows Language Row at Gas Agency

Thane : A video showing a heated argument between a customer and employees at a gas agency in Anand Nagar, Thane, has gone viral on social media amid the ongoing LPG shortage concerns. The footage reportedly shows a man visiting the agency to inquire about a gas cylinder booking, which soon turned into a dispute over language.

According to the video, the customer repeatedly insisted that a Hindi-speaking employee communicate in Marathi. During the exchange, a female employee appeared frustrated with the repeated demands. Although she herself was speaking in Marathi, she defended the colleague who was communicating in Hindi. At one point in the argument, the woman employee was heard saying, "Marathi madhe nahi bolnar, chal negh, sarkarla jaun saangh," indicating that she would not speak in Marathi and telling the customer to leave if he wished to complain.

The situation escalated further when the customer questioned how people were expected to manage without gas cylinders during the shortage, asking whether they were supposed to starve.

The video also suggested that the customer was allegedly trying to obtain a cylinder through unofficial



means, which added to the tension during the conversation.

The incident comes at a time when many residents have reported long queues at gas agencies due to panic buying, even though the Maharashtra government has stated that there is no official shortage of LPG.

Earlier, Nationalist Congress Party MP Supriya Sule had raised concerns about the situation and questioned why both the central and state governments were not openly acknowledging the issue. The shortage has affected several establishments, including restaurants and catering services.

The canteen at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation headquarters recently switched to greater

use of electric cooking appliances, while the IRCTC West Zone directed catering licensees to adopt alternative cooking methods such as microwaves and induction stoves.

Some caterers have also stopped accepting new bookings since March 12 because of the uncertainty surrounding LPG availability. A video capturing a heated exchange between a customer and staff members at a gas agency in Anand Nagar, Thane, has been widely circulated on social media amid ongoing concerns over LPG availability. According to the footage, the man had reportedly visited the agency to inquire about a gas cylinder booking. However, the interaction soon turned into a verbal dispute regarding

the language used by one of the employees.

The customer repeatedly insisted that a staff member who was speaking in Hindi should instead communicate in Marathi. This demand sparked a tense exchange between the customer and the agency staff.

During the argument, a woman employee appeared visibly irritated by the repeated insistence. Although she herself was speaking in Marathi, she defended her colleague who was conversing in Hindi. At one stage in the video, the woman is heard saying, "Marathi madhe nahi bolnar, chal negh, sarkarla jaun saangh," suggesting that she would not speak in Marathi and asking the customer to leave if he wished to raise a complaint.

Editorial

The Triumph of Non-Violent Struggle

The people of the Himalayan region have received immense relief following the eventual release of Sonam Wangchuk—an environmental activist and educationist from Ladakh. His detention under the National Security Act had sparked widespread debate across the country. The decision taken by the Central Government—after a prolonged wait spanning several months—is viewed not merely as the liberation of a single activist, but as a development that has lent renewed strength to the cause of non-violent movements, democratic rights, and environmental conservation. The Central Government has issued orders for the release of Sonam Wangchuk—the renowned environmental activist and educationist from Ladakh—by revoking the decision to detain him under the National Security Act (NSA). This decision represents not merely the release of an individual from prison, but a victory for India's Himalayan heritage, constitutional rights, and, above all, the path of non-violent democracy. The government took this step after a long wait of 170 days, and against the backdrop of ongoing hearings in the Supreme Court. It is hoped that this decision will serve as a milestone in fostering peace, stability, and constructive dialogue with all stakeholders within the Ladakh region. Wangchuk was arrested on September 26, following violent demonstrations held in Leh on September 24, 2025; these protests demanded that Ladakh be granted full statehood and be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. While the violence claimed the lives of four innocent individuals, it was repeatedly asserted that Wangchuk had absolutely no connection to the incident. The government has now rectified its error by ordering his release—a development being hailed as a moral victory of Himalayan proportions. The true magnitude of this victory cannot be fully appreciated without first understanding the persona of Sonam Wangchuk and the nature of his work. Born in 1966 in the remote village of Alchi in Ladakh, Wangchuk earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Srinagar. However, instead of applying his intellect to the corporate world, he dedicated himself to improving the education system in the remote regions of Ladakh. At the young age of twenty-two, he founded the 'Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh' (SECMOL). Witnessing a staggering 99 percent failure rate among Ladakhi students—a result of being educated in languages other than their mother tongue—he established schools run through active student participation. These schools operate out of solar-powered earthen buildings, where students manage their own administration, radio station, and newspaper. This movement continues to empower thousands of Ladakhi youth, fostering self-reliance and creativity. In 2015, he launched the 'Himalayan Institute of Alternatives' (HIAL), an institution offering higher education courses designed to be in harmony with the mountain environment. Through his work, he has provided a new paradigm—not only for Ladakh but for the entire world. The 'Ice Stupa' technology developed by Wangchuk represents a revolutionary solution to the crisis of climate change, rooted in indigenous knowledge. During the winter, water that would otherwise flow away from higher altitudes is channeled through pipes and sprayed into the air, where it freezes to form cone-shaped ice structures. These mounds of ice resemble Buddhist stupas. In the summer—when there is an acute need for water for agriculture—these stupas melt gradually, making thousands of liters of water available. A single small stupa can store 150,000 liters of water, while larger ones can hold millions of liters. Today, more than 52 such stupas are operational in Ladakh, and this technology has been adopted by 14 countries across the globe. This technology does not merely conserve water; it also provides stability to agriculture and animal husbandry in border regions, thereby bolstering both national border security and the environment. Regrettably, certain narrow-minded elements on social media attempted to label this world-class researcher and Gandhian thinker as a traitor. By misinterpreting his speeches, attempts were made to implicate him under draconian statutes such as the National Security Act. Some sensationalist media outlets also targeted him; however, truth ultimately prevailed. The message Wangchuk sent while incarcerated in Jodhpur Central Jail offers a glimpse into the noble character and lofty ideals of the man. He stated that he was physically and mentally in good health. He expressed his condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in acts of violence and demanded an independent judicial inquiry into these deaths. Significantly, he issued a resounding declaration: "I am prepared to remain in prison until this inquiry is conducted." His involvement in the ongoing struggle for the inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution—and for the granting of statehood—remains entirely non-violent and strictly within constitutional frameworks. He has consistently demonstrated to the world that this demand for Ladakh's autonomy is not merely political, but is fundamentally aimed at safeguarding the region's fragile ecosystem. The fact that the Buddhist and Muslim communities of Ladakh stand united behind him constitutes the true strength of this movement. Wangchuk is not alone in this struggle; he is actively supported by numerous veteran activists, such as Thupstan Chhewang and Chering Dorjay Lakruk from the Ladakh Apex Body, and Sajjad Kargili, a prominent Muslim leader from Kargil. Tsering Dorjay of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, along with women activists Diskit Gangjor and Nardan Shunu, have also made significant contributions toward preserving Ladakh's cultural identity. Sonam Wangchuk's wife, Geetanjali Angmo, is likewise working with equal vigor in the fields of education and environmental conservation. This unshakable unity among people of diverse faiths in Ladakh has served to compel the Central Government to initiate a dialogue. All these activists are demanding their rights by adhering to Gandhiji's path of non-violence. Through a *padyatra* (foot march) and a 21-day hunger strike, Wangchuk effectively conveyed the urgency and intensity of his demands to the government. The fact that international publications have hailed him as a 'Climate Guardian' is a matter of immense pride for the entire nation of India. Sonam Wangchuk's release is not merely a victory for Ladakh, but represents the very breath of democracy. By facilitating this release, the government has created an opportunity to forge a renewed dialogue with the people of Ladakh. Preserving the Himalayan environment is not solely the responsibility of Ladakh; it is, in fact, indispensable for the water security and climatic stability of the entire South Asian region. Wangchuk is a true guardian of the Himalayas; he has inspired hope for water, education, and a brighter future in the hearts of millions of Indians. It is hoped that the tension sparked by his arrest will now subside, and that the government will take concrete steps to extend the protection of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to Ladakh. This struggle led by Sonam Wangchuk serves as the very foundation of India's Himalayan future. Preserving the tranquility of the Himalayas and the distinct identity of Ladakh is, in the truest sense, the ultimate objective of this struggle. This resounding voice of the Himalayas has now been liberated once again—a voice that will remain ceaselessly dedicated to safeguarding our rivers, mountains, and democracy.

BCCL Organizes Interaction with NRS Linkage and CIL SWMA e-Auction Consumers

With the objective of promoting better coal dispatch and ensuring effective clearance of available coal stocks, Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) organized an interaction with NRS Linkage and CIL SWMA e-Auction consumers on Saturday. Coal traders associated with the company, representatives from various industries, and consumers participated in large numbers, actively sharing their suggestions and views during the meeting.

The meeting was chaired by BCCL Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) Shri Manoj Kumar Agarwal. Senior officers of BCCL were also present on the occasion. In his presidential address, CMD Shri Manoj Kumar Agarwal interacted with the consumers and stated that BCCL remains fully committed to safeguarding the interests and meeting the requirements of all its consumers and stakeholders. He emphasized that providing quality coal with transparency and ensuring timely dispatch are key priorities of the company, and continuous efforts are being made at every level to achieve these objectives. He also assured the consumers that the company is constantly working to further improve facilities in line with their requirements. Shri Agarwal thanked all the consumers present for their participation and remarked that such interactive platforms play a significant role in strengthening coordination and trust between the company and its consumers. During the meeting, several important issues were discussed in detail. Information was shared regarding the provisions, facilities, and promotional initiatives being made available by BCCL for its consumers. In this context, it was highlighted that besides the power sector consumers, the company is expanding its consumer base and is making efforts to enhance coal dispatch to NRS Linkage and auction consumers. To encourage NRS consumers, a large quantity of coal is being offered under the NRS Linkage Auction, and in the recently conducted Tranche-



IX, approximately 20 million tonnes of coal were offered for various sectors. The meeting also included discussions on various aspects

tonne for above 80,000

tonnes or more than 20 rakes. The discount will be determined based on billed quantity or number of rakes, and the adjustment will be made at the time of final settlement after completion of coal lifting.

The meeting also discussed measures to streamline and ensure timely coal lifting. In this regard, it was informed that all areas are ensuring timely issuance of quotas and allotments to avoid any delay in the lifting process. To expedite the approval of mining challan permits, coordination has been established with the District Administration, Dhanbad, and the District Mining Officer, enabling approvals to be processed within two to three days. A wallet system has also been introduced to facilitate faster approval of permits. Issues related to coal quality were also discussed in detail. It was informed that all areas have been sensitized to maintain strict quality standards, and Area General Managers are regularly inspecting mine faces and monitoring the movement of coal up to the sidings to ensure that quality is maintained. Additionally, Area General Managers are also addressing issues faced by consumers during coal lifting, including challenges arising from local law-and-order situations or other operational constraints.



IX, approximately 20 million tonnes of coal were offered for various sectors. The meeting also included discussions on various aspects

GCWAS-2026 Concludes with Renewed Global Commitment to Empower Women in Agri-Food Systems

The Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems (GCWAS-2026) concluded on Saturday in New Delhi with a strong call for strengthening women's leadership, participation, and innovation across agriculture and agri-food systems. The valedictory session marked the culmination of three days of global dialogue focused on advancing gender-responsive policies, inclusive innovations, and sustainable agricultural development. The session was graced by Dr. M. L. Jat, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR, as the Chief Guest.

Other eminent dignitaries present at the valedictory session included Dr. R. S. Paroda, Chairman, TAAS; Dr. Renu Swarup, Former Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India; Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Chairman, PPV&FRA; and Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Extension), ICAR.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. M. L. Jat emphasized that the conference marks not the end of discussions but the beginning of renewed action to advance gender-responsive agri-food systems. He highlighted the need to strengthen social science research and develop a robust gender-disaggregated data ecosystem across agri-food value chains to support evidence-based policymaking and address persistent gender gaps.

Announcing a significant initiative, Dr. Jat informed that ICAR is developing a national gender platform that will connect more than 900 institutions, including ICAR institutes, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and agricultural universities, to strengthen research, extension, and capacity-building initiatives focused on women in agriculture. He noted that empowering women with knowledge, data, and decision-making roles can significantly enhance farm productivity, profitability, and sustainability, and called for stronger inter-institutional collaboration to translate conference deliberations into tangible outcomes.

Dr. Renu Swarup presented the summary of the conference's major recommendations and announced the adoption of the Delhi Declaration, which calls for establishing a Global Alliance on Women in Agri-Food Systems. The declaration commits stakeholders to champion gender-responsive policies and institutional reforms across agri-food value chains, strengthen enabling environments ensuring women's access to land, finance, technology, markets, and digital innovation, promote leadership and entrepreneurship among women farmers and agri-business leaders, ensure gender-responsive budgeting and systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data, establish robust accountability mechanisms including periodic gender audits



and transparent progress reporting, and foster global exchange of scalable innovations and successful models of women-led transformation.

Dr. R. S. Paroda emphasized that empowering farm women must move beyond dialogue to decisive action through stronger institutional support, gender-responsive policies, and strategic partnerships that place women farmers at the center of agri-food system transformation. Noting that women contribute nearly 60-70 percent of agricultural labour, he stressed that ensuring women's access to knowledge, markets, credit, and training is essential for achieving food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable agri-food systems.

Dr. T. Mohapatra highlighted that many women who play a vital role in conserving plant genetic resources and biodiversity often remain unrecognized despite their invaluable contributions to sustainable agriculture. He called for stronger institutional and financial support to identify and empower these grassroots custodians whose efforts are critical for preserving traditional knowledge and biodiversity.

Earlier, delivering the welcome address, Dr. Rajbir Singh emphasized that empowering women farmers is not merely a matter of equity but a strategic imperative for ensuring sustainable agricultural growth, food security, and rural prosperity. He noted that women play a vital role across the entire agri-food value chain and their leadership is essential for building resilient and sustainable food systems. He further stated that the deliberations and recommendations emerging from the conference will help shape future policies, research priorities, and collaborative initiatives to strengthen women's participation and leadership in agri-food systems at national and global levels.

GCWAS-2026 witnessed participation from several distinguished international experts and leaders representing global research and development organizations. These included Dr. Bram Goovaerts, Director General, CIMMYT; Agnes Kalibata, Founder and Chair, Connect4Impact Advisory Group; Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted, World Food Prize Laureate, WorldFish; Julie Borlaug, President, Borlaug Foundation; Maureen Miruka, Director, Gender Equity, Youth and Social Inclusion, CIMMYT; Josephine Okot, Vice Chair, IFDC and Managing Director, Victoria Seeds Ltd.; and Nitya Rao, Professor of Gender and Development, University of East Anglia, among others.

The three-day international conference GCWAS-2026 emerged as a significant global platform dedicated to strengthening the role of women in agriculture and food systems. The event brought together policymakers, scientists, development partners, entrepreneurs, and women leaders from across the world to deliberate on strategies for empowering women across the agri-food value chain and building more resilient and inclusive food systems.

A total of 18 countries participated in the conference, reflecting the growing global recognition of women's crucial contributions to agriculture, food production, and rural development. Delegates from various regions shared experiences, research findings, and policy perspectives, making the event a truly impactful forum for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange.

The conference generated several important recommendations aimed at strengthening women's leadership, entrepreneurship, and active participation in agri-food systems. Experts emphasized that empowering women farmers and professionals is essential for achieving food security, sustainable agriculture, and inclusive economic growth.

Participants stressed the importance of encouraging women to take leadership roles in science, policymaking, and development initiatives. They noted that women must be actively involved in shaping agricultural policies and research agendas to ensure that development efforts are equitable and responsive to ground realities.

Delegates also highlighted the need to promote science-based policymaking and impact-driven research in agriculture. They pointed out that innovation, evidence-based decision-making, and strong research systems are key to addressing challenges such as climate change, food security, and rural poverty.

Another major theme discussed during the conference was the integration of agriculture, nutrition, health, and environmental sustainability. Participants emphasized adopting the One Health framework, which recognizes the interconnection between human health, animal health, and environmental well-being.

Strengthening women's economic empowerment emerged as a central focus of the discussions. Experts recommended simplifying regulatory processes within seed value chains so that women can move beyond traditional roles as custodians of seeds and become successful entrepreneurs and innovators.

Delegates further emphasized the importance of expanding women's access to credit, growth finance, and markets. Financial inclusion, they noted, is critical for enabling women-led enterprises to scale their operations and contribute more effectively to rural economies. The conference also called for stronger institutional convergence among government programmes, research institutions, universities, and the private sector. Such collaboration was seen as essential for building integrated support systems that can provide women farmers and agri-entrepreneurs with technical guidance, financial support, and better market access.

Universities were identified as key hubs for innovation, incubation, and entrepreneurship development. Participants noted that higher education institutions can play a transformative role by nurturing young researchers, developing new technologies, and supporting women-led start-ups in the agricultural sector.

Discussions also highlighted the importance of mainstreaming gender equality within agricultural policies and development programmes. Ensuring women's land rights and improving their access to productive resources such as land, water, credit, and technology were considered critical for strengthening their role in agriculture.

Participants also stressed the need to promote women-friendly agricultural technologies and strengthen gender-responsive extension services. Such systems can help ensure that women farmers receive timely information, training, and support to adopt modern and sustainable farming practices.

Bridging the digital divide was another key recommendation emerging from the conference. Delegates highlighted the importance of developing localized digital tools, advisory platforms, and digital literacy programmes to ensure that women farmers can fully benefit from technological advancements.

The conference further emphasized strengthening climate-resilient agriculture and creating non-farm livelihood opportunities for rural women. Participants also recommended embedding gender-responsive impact metrics to better measure progress in women's empowerment across agri-food systems.

GCWAS-2026 also served as an important platform for recognizing and celebrating the contributions of women in agriculture. During the event, successful women farmers, participants of technical sessions and youth forums, school students, and several other contributors to the agricultural sector were felicitated for their achievements.

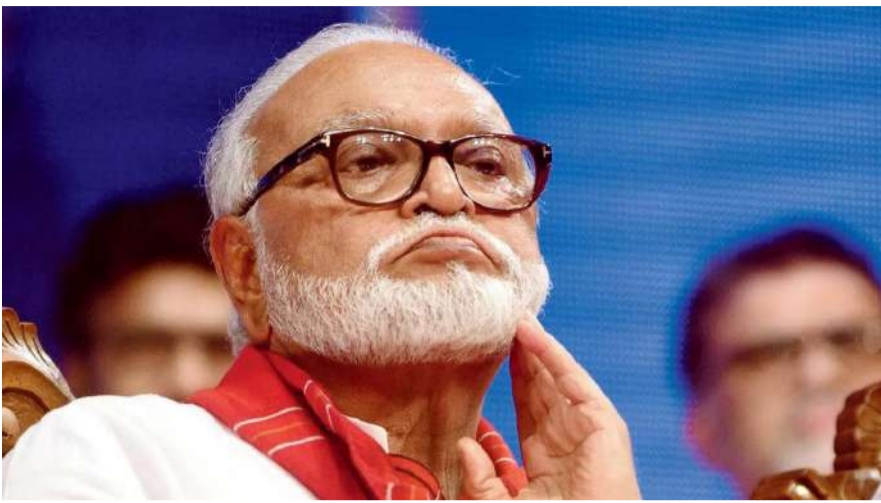
The conference concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Rishi Tyagi, Conference Convener of the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), who expressed gratitude to all dignitaries, participants, partners, and organizing teams for making the global event both successful and impactful. The conference was inaugurated on March 12, 2026, by Droupadi Murmu, the President of India, in the presence of Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development. The inauguration highlighted India's strong commitment to recognizing and strengthening the pivotal role of women in agriculture and food systems worldwide.

Adequate LPG stock in Maharashtra despite Iran-Israel-US War: Minister Chhagan Bhujbal

Mumbai: Amid concerns over a possible oil shortage due to the Iran-Israel-US conflict, Maharashtra Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal on Monday assured the Legislative Council that the state has sufficient stock of LPG and PNG and there is no need for panic.

Bhujbal said the state government has taken necessary steps to ensure an uninterrupted supply of LPG across Maharashtra. After meeting domestic gas demand, any remaining supply has been prioritised for distribution through district administrations.

He also informed the House that the High Court has been apprised of the kerosene distribution arrangements. The minister added that prices of edible oils, in-



cluding groundnut and sunflower oil, have witnessed a rise, with groundnut oil increasing by rupees 6 per litre.

Stating that gas supply falls under the jurisdiction

of the central government, Bhujbal said adequate reserves of LPG and PNG are available. He urged citizens not to panic-buy or create long queues and warned against black marketing.

Committees comprising district collectors and superintendents of police have been formed to monitor the situation.

"So far, authorities have conducted 2,029 inspections

and seized 1,208 gas cylinders. Goods worth 33.66 lakh have been confiscated. A total of 23 cases have been registered and 18 people have been arrested," Bhujbal said.

He further said the price of a domestic LPG cylinder has increased from ₹852.50 to ₹912.50, while the price of a commercial cylinder has risen from rupees 1,720.50 to 1,835.

Bhujbal added that discussions have been held with representatives of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, who have increased daily LPG production from 9,000 metric tonnes to 11,000 metric tonnes to meet demand. Authorities are addressing any logistical issues on priority, he said.

Unseasonal thunderstorms forecast across Marathwada from March 17 to 20

Ch. Sambhajinagar: Marathwada is set to experience an abrupt spell of unseasonal weather as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a weather watch for all eight districts of the region between March 17 and March 20.

The alert covers Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (Aurangabad), Beed, Hingoli, Jalna, Latur, Nanded, Dharashiv (Osmanabad) and Parbhani, where thunderstorms, intermittent rain, lightning and gusty winds are expected to develop, particularly during evening and night hours following afternoon cloud formation.

Wind speeds during these storms may reach around 30-50 kmph, and certain isolated areas could also experience hailstorm.

The sudden shift in weather comes during the ongoing rabi harvesting

season and only days after several parts of Maharashtra recorded heatwave-like conditions, with maximum temperatures rising beyond 40 degrees Celsius in many cities.

After days of intense heat and clear skies, the weather has turned unstable, forcing farmers as well as urban residents to reconsider their immediate plans.

Meteorological officials said the weather disturbance will not be limited to Marathwada alone. Similar conditions are expected across Vidarbha, Khandesh and parts of central Maharashtra, where cloud formation during the afternoon may lead to scattered to moderate rainfall across different districts in phases during the four-day period.

Weather experts believe the activity could intensify between March 18 and

20, when a combination of strong surface winds, increased moisture inflow and upper-air instability may trigger heavier showers and even hail in some locations.

While interior regions may witness this unstable weather, coastal areas, including most parts of Konkan, are expected to remain largely dry. This indicates a clear contrast in weather patterns across the state. Daytime temperatures may fall slightly due to cloud cover, but they are still expected to remain above the normal average for March.

In Marathwada, the weather system may provide temporary relief from the heat, though it also raises concerns about possible crop damage, interruptions in electricity supply and transport difficulties, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve receives death threats; files police complaint

Mumbai: In a written complaint to the Police, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve has informed about several threat calls from unidentified persons in the last few days.

Danve has informed the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Police Commissioner about the matter through a written complaint, highlighting the seriousness of the situation. According to Danve, he has been receiving threatening phone calls continuously between 12 midnight and 2 a.m. for the past three to four days. Initially, he did not pay much attention to the calls, but as they continued repeatedly, he decided to approach the police and lodge a complaint.

Speaking about the incident, Danve said that the threats could pose a risk to the safety of both him and his family members. However, he clarified that he is not intimidated by such threats. He has requested the police to take precautionary



measures and ensure necessary security. Danve also stated that such threats are not uncommon in politics and sometimes people issue them in anger or under the influence of alcohol without realising the consequences.

He further revealed that he received threatening calls on March 12, 13, 14, and 15. "I did not take them very seriously at first. When the phone rang in the middle of the night while I was asleep, I cut the call. It rang again and I cut it again. After that, I simply listened to the call, and later there were two to three missed calls before I went back to sleep," he said.

Police have started investigation on the matter to trace the caller.

Maharashtra Govt assures strict implementation of Ayushman Bharat, Mahatma Phule Health Schemes

Mumbai: Maharashtra Government held an important discussion on Monday regarding government health schemes during the state legislative session.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Babanrao Lonikar raised serious questions in the House concerning the implementation of the Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana and the Ayushman Bharat Yojana.

He complained that many patients are not receiving the expected benefits from these schemes. Citing the example of a patient from his constituency who is not receiving the necessary financial aid for a bypass surgery, he demanded clarification from the government.

In response, Health Minister Prakash Abitkar provided a detailed reply, outlining the government's firm stance on the effective implementation of these schemes.

Lonikar stated that the Central Government's

Ayushman Bharat Yojana and the State Government's Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jeevandayee Yojana are being implemented jointly.

These schemes are intended to provide financial assistance to the poor and



needed for major surgeries.

He noted that, in practice, complaints are emerging that beneficiaries are not receiving full assistance. A farmer named Vitthal Kadam from his constituency requires bypass surgery, which costs approximately ₹11 lakh.

While the scheme provides a total of ₹6 lakh (₹3

lakh from the Centre and ₹3 lakh from the State), the concerned hospital informed the patient that only ₹1 lakh would be approved. As a result, the surgery has been pending for two months.

Lonikar directly ques-

tioned the government: "When there is a provision of ₹6 lakh under the schemes, why is the beneficiary being given only ₹1 lakh?"

He emphasized that such issues put poor families under severe distress and defeat the very purpose of these welfare schemes. Responding to these

questions, Health Minister Prakash Abitkar clarified that there are well-defined criteria for major surgeries like bypass procedures under both the Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana and the Ayushman Bharat Yojana.

Since the Ayushman Bharat scheme has been integrated with the state scheme, the limit for approved medical expenses has been increased.

The minister firmly stated that under these schemes, a patient should not have to spend a single rupee for surgeries such as bypass operations.

He warned that if any hospital fails to follow the rules or demands money from patients, the government must be informed and immediate action will be taken against such institutions. He also urged all public representatives to help implement the scheme more effectively through Primary Health Centres, Rural Hospitals, and Sub-District Hospitals.

Five huts destroyed in fire in Nagpur; no injuries reported

Nagpur: A massive fire that broke out in the early hours of Monday gutted at least five huts in the Sangam Chawl slum settlement located near the bus depot close to Yashwant Stadium in Nagpur, officials said.

The incident occurred at around 4 am when most residents of the settlement were asleep. The blaze spread rapidly through the densely packed cluster of huts, sending thick smoke and flames across the area. Residents woke up to the smell of smoke and rushed out of their homes in panic. Many people scrambled to move their family members and belongings to safety as the fire intensified. The narrow lanes and close proximity of the huts made the situation more challenging, allowing the flames to spread quickly through the settlement. After receiving information about the incident, teams from the fire brigade rushed to the spot and immediately launched firefighting operations to contain the blaze. Firefighters worked for a

considerable period to control the flames and prevent the fire from spreading to nearby structures and residential areas.

Following sustained efforts, the fire brigade succeeded in bringing the blaze under control, averting what could have been a larger disaster in the crowded locality. However, at least five huts were completely destroyed in the fire. The structures were reduced to ashes, leaving families without shelter. Residents of the affected huts lost several household belongings in the incident. Items such as clothes, utensils, food grains and other daily essentials were completely burnt. Despite the scale of the fire, officials confirmed that no casualties or injuries were reported. Residents managed to evacuate in time after noticing the flames. Authorities said the exact cause of the fire has not yet been determined. Preliminary assessments are being conducted to identify what may have triggered the blaze.

Ajit Pawar crash not discussed in Maharashtra Assembly yet: Mitkari

Mumbai: Despite expectations that the death of former Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar would be discussed during the ongoing session of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, the issue has not yet been taken up in the House. Pawar died in a plane crash near Baramati on January 28, 2026, an incident that shocked political circles across the state.

The delay in discussing the matter in the legislature has drawn criticism from members of his party as well as other leaders who have been demanding clarity on the circumstances surrounding the crash.

Amol Mitkari, Member of the Legislative Council from the Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar faction), expressed grief and frustration over the delay through a post on social media. He said it was unfortunate that a leader who spent his life fighting for justice for the common man was not receiving justice himself.

Mitkari questioned why the issue

had not yet been raised in the Assembly despite the ongoing session. According to him, the matter deserved urgent attention and discussion in the House.

In his remarks, he also raised concerns about whether an "invisible power" was preventing the issue from being brought up in the legislature. He further asked whether the government was "asleep" while such an important matter remained pending.

Mitkari demanded that the truth behind the plane crash be placed before the public and that responsibility be fixed if any wrongdoing was found. He emphasised that the circumstances of Pawar's death required a transparent investigation.

Earlier, Mitkari and MLA Rohit Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) had suggested that the crash might not have been a mere accident. Both leaders had indicated the possibility of a larger conspiracy behind the incident.

In his latest post, Mitkari tagged the

Mumbai Police and the Central Bureau of Investigation, alleging that investigative agencies had so far failed to uncover the facts surrounding the crash.

He also shared an image of Ajit Pawar along with a file labelled "Plane Accident File," drawing attention to what he described as the lack of progress in the investigation.

According to Mitkari, despite the Assembly session entering its third week, no substantial discussion had taken place regarding the circumstances of the crash or the status of the investigation. Reports indicate that the matter has been postponed for discussion in the Assembly for the past two weeks. This delay has further fuelled criticism from leaders demanding that the issue be formally taken up in the House. In an emotional appeal through his social media message, Mitkari expressed helplessness over the situation. Addressing the late leader, he wrote, "Dada, please forgive us for being unfortunate and helpless."

Civic activist welcomes anti-encroachment stand, says ground situation unchanged in Pune

Pune: While welcoming the Pune Municipal Corporation's (PMC) recently announced tough stance against encroachments, Creative Foundation president Sandeep Khardekar has alleged that the situation on the ground remains largely unchanged and that citizens are yet to see any real relief.

In a letter addressed to Pune Municipal Commissioner Naval Kishore Ram and Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar, Khardekar said the joint press conference held by the civic and police administration last week had raised hopes among Pune residents that footpaths would be cleared and traffic congestion would ease.

However, he claimed that the actual situation

in several parts of the city continues to remain the same.

Khardekar pointed to the condition at City Post Chowk on Sunday evening, stating that pedestrians had barely any space to walk as footpaths were occupied by hawkers, while autorickshaws and cars were parked haphazardly on the road.

He said similar scenes were visible in many areas of the city despite repeated announcements of strict action against encroachments. According to him, stories of alleged token action on busy roads such as Ferguson College Road and Jangli Maharaj Road have already become familiar to citizens. Citing examples, Khardekar claimed that a newly repaired road along the riverbed has effectively

turned into a marketplace, while the stretch between Mhatre Bridge and Rajaram Bridge is also heavily occupied by vendors and irregularly parked vehicles, creating hurdles for traffic movement. He further alleged that misuse of front and side margins and parking spaces by commercial establishments often leads to vehicles spilling onto the roads, but the construction department tends to overlook such violations. Khardekar said local representatives have repeatedly raised the issue with the administration but effective action is yet to be seen. He expressed suspicion that a lack of administrative will and possible nexus between staff and encroachers could be contributing to the problem. Firefighters worked for a

He urged the authorities to take strict action against officials who allegedly alert hawkers before enforcement drives and against officers responsible for areas where encroachments repeatedly occur. Khardekar also demanded that if public representatives are found obstructing action, their names should be made public. He suggested stronger legal measures, including delaying the return of seized goods and filing cases against repeat offenders, to ensure that encroachments do not recur. Khardekar said Pune residents now expect the administration to demonstrate that its anti-encroachment announcements are not merely symbolic but will translate into visible action on the ground.

Supriya Sule Demands Parliamentary Discussion on Gulf Crisis, Raises Concerns Over Energy Security

Pune: Amid escalating tensions and war-like conditions in the Gulf region, Member of Parliament Supriya Sule has demanded an urgent discussion in Parliament on the impact of the situation on India, particularly concerning energy security and economic stability.

Speaking to reporters in Pune, she also called for an all-party meeting to deliberate on measures needed to address the emerging challenges.

Sule said the ongoing conflict in the Gulf has created economic, social and political instability across the world.

She warned that global energy security is under threat and its impact is already being felt by ordinary citizens. This is not a political issue but a serious chal-

lenge facing the nation," she said, alleging that the Central government does not appear to be taking the gravity of the situation seriously.

She further claimed that the government is reluctant to acknowledge the possibility of fuel shortages in the country.

Emphasising that the current situation demands unity rather than political confrontation, Sule said the opposition is ready to cooperate with the government during this crisis. However, she urged the government to be transparent about the situation and take opposition parties into confidence while formulating a response strategy.

Raising concerns about fuel and fertilizer supply, Sule noted that while global circumstances have led



to fuel shortages, farmers in India have long been struggling with recurring fertilizer scarcity. She questioned the implementation of government initiatives such as the Rs 8,000-crore green ammonia scheme, the nano-fertilizer programme and policies promoting organic farming, asking what concrete results these initiatives have delivered so far.

At the same time, Sule appreciated the efforts of External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar for ensuring the safe evacuation of Indians stranded in conflict-affected regions. She publicly thanked Jaishankar and the Ministry of External Affairs for their prompt response during the crisis.

Sule also stated that

MLA Rohit Pawar has been making sustained efforts to ensure a transparent investigation into the plane crash that claimed the life of former Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar. She said these efforts are receiving positive support from opposition leaders not only in Maharashtra but across the country. "Our intention is not to level allegations; we only want to ensure that what happened to our family should not happen to anyone else in the future," she said.

Regarding the upcoming by-election in the Baramati Assembly constituency, Sule clarified that the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) will not field a candidate against Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar under any circumstances.

CM Devendra Fadnavis Calls for Unopposed By-Elections in Baramati and Rahuri

Ahilyanagar: Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, on Sunday called for consensus among all political parties so that the upcoming by-elections for the Baramati and Rahuri Assembly seats can be conducted without contest.

The two seats fell vacant following the demise of former Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and Shivajirao Kardile, a legislator from the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Speaking to reporters after attending the 39th convocation ceremony at Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth in Rahuri, Fadnavis said efforts are being made to build consensus among all parties regarding the by-elections.

He emphasised that the government would prefer the elections to be held unopposed as a mark of respect to the departed leaders whose passing led to the va-



tor of Science degree on Devendra Fadnavis in recognition of his contributions to public service and governance.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, academicians and students of the university, marking an important occasion for the institution.

Meanwhile, political discussions have intensified regarding the potential candidates for the upcoming by-polls.

It is almost certain that Sunetra Pawar, who currently serves as Deputy Chief Minister, will contest the by-election from the Baramati Assembly constituency. Baramati has long been considered a politically significant seat in Maharashtra, and the by-election is expected to attract considerable attention from across the state.

It's a matter of shame that Dharmendra wasn't named in the 'In Memoriam' segment: Shatrughan Sinha

Mumbai: Veteran Hindi film actor and politician Shatrughan Sinha on Monday expressed strong displeasure over the omission of late Bollywood legend Dharmendra from the 'In Memoriam' segment at the latest Academy Awards ceremony. The senior actor said the absence of Dharmendra's name from the tribute segment had disappointed many admirers of Indian cinema across the world.

Speaking to Variety India, Sinha said that such omissions raise serious questions about how global platforms acknowledge legendary figures from Indian cinema. According to him, Dharmendra's contribution to films over several decades made him one of the most respected and beloved actors in the industry.

Sinha also recalled similar instances in the past when prominent Indian personalities were overlooked during the Oscars' tribute segment. He remarked that it was unfortunate when artists of immense stature failed to receive recognition on international stages.

"It is a matter of shame for them if they don't honour Dilip Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar and now, Dharmendra,"



Sinha said. He pointed out that these icons were not just celebrated in India but had also earned admiration globally for their work and influence.

However, Sinha also questioned why Indians should place too much importance on validation from international award platforms. He suggested that the legacy of such legendary personalities does not depend on

whether they are acknowledged by Western institutions.

"Why does it matter to us?" Sinha asked. "They are entrenched in our hearts forever."

The actor emphasised that the love and respect these legends receive from millions of fans in India and abroad far outweigh formal recognition at award ceremonies.

Meanwhile, Dharmendra's daughter and actor Esha Deol also reacted to the controversy surrounding the omission. She said that such oversights could never diminish the stature and legacy of her father.

Deol stated that Dharmendra was never someone who chased accolades or recognition. According to her, his focus throughout his life remained on spreading love, kindness and positivity among people around him.

She further added that her father's personality and generosity of spirit were far greater than any award or tribute could represent. For his fans and family, Dharmendra will always remain a towering figure in Indian cinema.

The 98th edition of the Academy Awards was held on Monday at the iconic Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. As part of the ceremony, the traditional 'In Memoriam' segment honoured several notable personalities from the global film industry who had passed away in the past year.

Among those remembered during the emotional tribute were Hollywood legends such as Robert Redford, Rob Reiner and Diane Keaton.

Salman Khan starrer 'Battle of Galwan' retitled 'Matrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace'

Mumbai: The forthcoming film headlined by Bollywood star Salman Khan, which was earlier titled Battle of Galwan, has now been renamed Matrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace. The announcement was accompanied by the release of a striking new poster that reflects the film's powerful theme and message.

The newly unveiled poster not only confirms the change in the film's title but also introduces a meaningful tagline that carries a significant message. The film's tagline, "May War Rest in Peace," emphasises the importance of peace in a world often marked by conflict.

With this thought-provoking line, Salman Khan appears to be conveying a message that extends beyond the narrative of war. The title and tagline together suggest a deeper reflection on the consequences of conflict and the universal desire for lasting peace.

While the film draws in-



spiration from the historic events of the Galwan Valley, its theme goes beyond merely portraying a battlefield story. The makers seem intent on presenting a cinematic exploration of patriotism, sacrifice and the hope for peace.

Through Matrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace, the creators appear to be positioning the project as more than a war drama. Instead, it aims to offer a broader narrative that highlights the courage of soldiers while also reflecting on the human cost of armed conflicts. The story is inspired by the real-life 2020 Galwan Valley clash between

India and China. The confrontation in the Galwan Valley in Ladakh became one of the most significant military stand-offs between the two nations in recent years.

The film is expected to focus on the bravery and sacrifice of Indian soldiers who were involved in the confrontation. By highlighting their courage and dedication, the project aims to pay tribute to the armed forces. Salman Khan will reportedly portray the role of Indian Army officer Bikumalla Santosh Babu, who was among the soldiers martyred during the Galwan Valley clash.

Madhur Bhandarkar is all praise for Ranveer Singh

Mumbai: Bollywood filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar has praised actor Ranveer Singh for his extraordinary dedication and powerful performance in the film Dhurandhar. The National Award-winning director said that the level of commitment Ranveer displayed for the role is rare to see among actors in today's film industry.

Bhandarkar highlighted that delivering such an intense performance requires years of preparation, emotional investment and physical transformation. According to him, Ranveer's work in the film stands out because it reflects a deep commitment to the craft of acting rather than simply aiming for commercial success.

Speaking about the actor's dedication, Bhandarkar said that only a handful of performers are willing to immerse themselves completely in a character. He added that actors who choose the difficult path often leave a lasting impact on audiences through their performances.

"Very few actors make such a huge commitment. When I watch a film like Dhurandhar and witness Ranveer Singh's amazing performance, it's clear that he has dedicated two or three years of his life to this character," Bhandarkar said while appreciating the actor's intense preparation.

He further remarked that



in the current era of filmmaking, many actors prefer quick projects rather than investing long periods in shaping a role. In contrast, he noted that Ranveer's approach reflects the passion and discipline required to create memorable cinema. Even months after its release, Dhurandhar continues to remain a major talking point among film enthusiasts and critics. Ranveer's portrayal of the character Hamza in the film received widespread praise and became one of the most discussed performances of the year.

Audiences across the country were particularly impressed by the actor's dramatic transformation for the role. His intense screen presence, emotional depth and powerful dialogue delivery contributed significantly to the film's success.

Fans and social media users even coined the phrase "Hamza fever" to describe the widespread craze surrounding the character. The role resonated deeply with

viewers, further strengthening Ranveer Singh's reputation as one of the most versatile actors in contemporary Bollywood.

The film went on to become a blockbuster at the box office, drawing large crowds to theatres and generating strong word-of-mouth publicity. Industry analysts credited a major part of the film's success to Ranveer's gripping performance and the compelling storyline.

Building on the massive popularity of the first installment, the sequel titled Dhurandhar: The Revenge is now gearing up for release. The announcement of the sequel has already generated considerable excitement among fans and trade analysts alike.

Reports suggest that the makers are expecting a much bigger opening for the sequel compared to the original film. Advance booking trends and early box office predictions indicate strong audience interest in the upcoming release.

Sonali Bendre shares 90s throwback, says "life was much simpler"

Mumbai : Actor Sonali Bendre recently took fans on a nostalgic journey by sharing a throwback video montage featuring photographs from the early years of her career in the film industry. The actress posted the compilation on social media, bringing back memories from the 1990s, a decade that played a defining role in shaping her popularity in Bollywood. The video features a collection of vintage photographs from her modelling assignments and early film career. The images capture moments from a time when analogue photography and magazine shoots dominated the entertainment world, offering a glimpse into the aesthetics and glamour of that era. Accompanying the post, Bendre wrote a caption that resonated strongly with her followers. Reflecting on the simplicity of life during the pre-digital age, she wrote, "Back when photos were kinda blur but life was much simpler."

The montage highlights several photographs that showcase the fashion trends of the 1990s. Through these images, fans were able to see the distinctive style and charm that defined the actress during her early years in the spotlight. In the clip, Sonali can be seen experimenting with a wide

range of fashion choices that were popular at the time. From glamorous photoshoots in stylish crop tops and skirts to elegant traditional outfits paired with statement jewellery, the pictures reflect her versatility as a model and actor. One of the photographs also features the actress in a casual red top combined with high-waisted denim jeans. The look perfectly captures the relaxed yet stylish vibe of the decade, reminding many fans of the fashion trends that were widely followed during the 1990s. The nostalgic post quickly caught the attention of her fans and followers across social media platforms. Many users appreciated the rare glimpse into the actress' early career and shared their own memories of the era. The nostalgic post shared by Sonali Bendre quickly caught the attention of fans and followers across various social media platforms. Many users appreciated the rare glimpse into the actress' early career and shared their own memories of the era. Several fans commented that the montage reminded them of a time when film photography, printed magazines and analogue cameras dominated the entertainment industry. The images evoked a strong sense of nostalgia for

a period when celebrity culture was shaped largely through photoshoots, magazine covers and carefully curated film publicity campaigns. During the 1990s, Sonali Bendre established herself as one of the most popular and admired actresses in Hindi cinema. Known for her graceful screen presence, expressive performances and natural charm, she quickly became a favourite among audiences across the country. Over the years, she appeared in several successful films spanning multiple genres, from action dramas to romantic entertainers. Her performances allowed her to share screen space with some of the biggest stars in the industry and helped her build a strong reputation as a versatile and talented actor. Among her notable films were Sarfaroosh, Diljale, Duplicate and Major Saab, all of which contributed significantly to her growing popularity during the decade. These films showcased her ability to adapt to a wide variety of roles and narratives. She is also fondly remembered for her role in the family drama Hum Saath-Saath Hain, where she starred opposite Salman Khan. In the film, she portrayed the gentle and soft-spoken

character Preeti, a role that resonated deeply with audiences. The character stood out for its warmth, simplicity and emotional depth, making it one of the most memorable

performances of her career.



Sneha Ullal opens up about first meeting with Aishwarya Rai Bachchan during 'Lookalike' buzz

Mumbai : Actor Sneha Ullal recently reflected on the comparisons she faced with Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan during the early years of her career. The actress revealed that despite constant media attention over their resemblance, the two once met in person and shared a warm and memorable interaction. Ullal made her Bollywood debut opposite Salman Khan in the 2005 film Lucky: No Time for Love. Soon after the film's release, she drew widespread attention because many viewers noticed her striking resemblance to Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, which quickly became a major talking point in the media. At the time, the comparisons between the two actresses were frequently discussed in entertainment circles. Fans, critics and media outlets often highlighted their similar facial features, which led to Ullal being widely described as Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's "lookalike". Speaking about her first meeting with the former Miss World, Ullal recalled attending a public event where Rai Bachchan was also present. She admitted that she initially felt hesitant about approaching the senior actor. According to Ullal, she wondered whether it would be better to avoid the interaction altogether. However, after some thought, she decided to greet Rai Bachchan and introduce herself. "At first I thought I should avoid going up to her, but then I went and said hi," Ullal said while recounting the encounter. The moment turned out to be pleasant and reassuring for the young actor. Ullal revealed that Rai Bachchan responded warmly and

treated her with kindness and respect. The interaction left a positive impression on her and helped ease the awkwardness surrounding the comparisons. Reflecting on the long-standing comparisons between them, Ullal said she has always admired Rai Bachchan for her remarkable career and achievements. She acknowledged the immense influence that the senior actor has had in Indian and international cinema. "I am a big admirer of Aishwarya Rai for her work and achievements," Ullal said. At the same time, she emphasised that she hopes to be recognised for her own identity and work in the film industry. The actress explained that while the resemblance may have sparked curiosity among audiences, she would prefer to be known for her own performances rather than for looking like another star.

Over the years, Ullal has also maintained that the comparisons did not affect her personally. She said she remained confident in her own identity despite the constant discussion surrounding her appearance. In earlier interviews, Sneha Ullal suggested that the narrative around her resemblance to Aishwarya Rai Bachchan may have been amplified by publicity strategies and intense media attention during the early phase of her career. She indicated that such comparisons often became a convenient storyline for publicity surrounding her debut. Despite the widespread discussion about their similar looks, Ullal maintained that the comparisons never affected her confidence or personal outlook. The actress said she remained

comfortable with her identity and focused on building her own journey in the film industry. "I am so comfortable in my own skin and all those comparisons didn't bother me," she had said in a previous interview. Ullal added that she always chose to concentrate on her work rather than pay attention to external opinions or media narratives. Born in Muscat in Oman, Ullal later moved to Mumbai to pursue her dream of becoming an actor. Relocating to India at a young age, she soon began exploring opportunities in the film industry. Her entry into Bollywood came when she was cast opposite Salman Khan in the 2005 film Lucky: No Time for Love. The film brought her immediate recognition and placed her in the spotlight as a new face in Hindi cinema. Following her Bollywood debut, Ullal expanded her career into the South Indian film industry, particularly in Telugu cinema. Her performances in Telugu films helped her establish a broader presence across regional film au-

diences. She appeared in popular Telugu movies such as Ullasamga Utsahamga and Simha, both of which contributed to strengthening her profile in the industry.



'One Battle After Another' dominates Oscars, Jordan & Jessie Buckley win awards

Mumbai : The 98th edition of the Academy Awards celebrated a diverse range of cinematic achievements, with One Battle After Another emerging as the most successful film of the evening. Meanwhile, actors Michael B. Jordan and Jessie Buckley secured the prestigious honours for Best Actor and Best Actress respectively.

The epic film One Battle After Another, directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, dominated the ceremony by winning the Oscar for Best Picture. The three-hour-long film was widely praised for its ambitious storytelling and cinematic scale.

In addition to Best Picture, the film also won awards for Best Director for Paul Thomas Anderson, Best Supporting Actor for Sean Penn, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Editing and Best Casting. With a total of six Oscars, it became the most awarded film of the night.

Another major winner at the ceremony was Sinners, directed by Ryan Coogler. The film secured four major awards, further strengthening its reputation as one of the standout productions of the year.

Michael B. Jordan won the Best Actor award for his powerful performance in Sinners, marking a significant milestone in his career. The film also took home Os-

cars for Best Original Screenplay, Best Original Score and Best Cinematography.

With a remarkable total of 16 nominations, Sinners set a new record as the most-nominated film in the history of the Academy Awards. Its multiple wins highlighted the film's impact across both performance and technical categories.

In the Best Actress category, Jessie Buckley created history with her performance in Hamnet. She became the first Irish performer to win the Best Actress Oscar, marking an important milestone for Irish representation at the awards.

The Best Supporting Actress honour went to Amy Madigan for her performance in the film Weapons. Her role was widely appreciated for its emotional depth and intensity.

Several films also made their mark in the craft categories during the 98th edition of the Academy Awards. The film Frankenstein secured multiple honours, winning Oscars for Best Costume Design, Best Makeup and Hairstyling, and Best Production Design.

In the technical categories, Avatar: Fire and Ash received the award for Best Visual Effects, continuing the franchise's long-standing reputation for pushing the boundaries of cinematic technology and visual storytelling.

Meanwhile, the high-octane racing drama F1 won the Oscar for Best Sound. The film was widely praised for its immersive audio design that brought the intensity and realism of Formula One racing to the big screen.

The Best International Feature Film award went to Sentimental Value, marking a historic moment for Norway at the Oscars. The win represented the first time Norwegian cinema has secured the prestigious international category at the Academy Awards.

The achievement was widely celebrated by filmmakers and audiences in Norway, who viewed the recognition as a milestone for the country's film industry on the global stage.

In the documentary categories, Mr Nobody Against Putin won the award for Best Documentary Feature. The film received acclaim for its compelling storytelling and its exploration of contemporary political themes.

The Oscar for Best Documentary Short Film was presented to All the Empty Rooms, which impressed voters with its poignant narrative and powerful visual presentation. Animation also enjoyed a significant moment at the ceremony. The film KPop Demon Hunters won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature, earning recognition for its unique storytelling and vibrant animation style.

Navneet credits teammates & coaching staff for her strong performances at Hockey WC Qualifiers

New Delhi: Veteran forward Navneet Kaur played a pivotal role in India's impressive run at the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers Hyderabad, finishing as the third-highest goal scorer of the tournament with four goals.

The experienced attacker was instrumental in driving India's offensive play throughout the campaign and was named the 'Player of the Tournament' for her standout performances.

Navneet also scored a hat-trick in India's commanding 4-1 victory over Wales, underlining her influence in the team's success.

The Indian Women's Hockey Team secured qualification for the upcoming FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium & Netherlands 2026 after finishing with a Silver medal at the recently concluded FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers Hyderabad.

India went down 0-2 to England in the Final but delivered a strong overall campaign with important victories against Uruguay, Wales and Italy.

Reflecting on the team's performance and experience of playing in Hyderabad, Navneet said, "It was a good experience for us, especially since it was the first time we played in Hyderabad. The



ground and support from fans was very good. We also had a new coaching setup, so there were many new things for us to learn on the field. Our main focus was to play as a team, understand each other's strengths and build that connection."

"From the beginning of the tournament, our first goal was to qualify for the FIH Hockey World Cup. At the same time, finishing as high as possible in the tournament was also important because it gives the team confidence going ahead," she added.

Speaking about her own

performances in the tournament, Navneet credited the support of her teammates and coaching staff for allowing her to express herself on the field.

"As a senior player, I always feel the responsibility to lead from the front. My focus is to bring my strengths onto the field, whether it is creating chances inside the circle or using my dribbling to open up the game. I get a lot of support from my teammates and coaches and that gives me the confidence to play my natural game. Even if something doesn't work

out, I know I have the freedom to try again," she explained.

The tournament also saw several young players step up and deliver strong performances, something Navneet believes reflects the positive environment within the squad under the new coach.

She said, "It was not just about focusing on young players, but about giving opportunities to players who had earned their place through their performances. Some of the youngsters had done very well in the Hockey India League and were se-

lected in the senior group. They had the right attitude, were eager to learn and understood the requirements of the team. The coaches encouraged them to play freely and focus on their strengths which helped them perform well."

Looking ahead, Navneet acknowledged that the team will focus on improving their finishing after creating several scoring opportunities during the tournament.

"If we look at the tournament and even the Final, we created enough chances. One area we will focus on is converting those chances in the final third. Finishing those opportunities will be important going forward. Otherwise, the overall performance and effort from the team was very good," she stated.

The Indian Women's Hockey Team now shifts its focus towards preparations for the FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium & Netherlands 2026 in August, with several international tours lined up in the coming months.

"We have a number of tours during the build up to the FIH Hockey World Cup. We will be playing some good matches and we will use these opportunities to improve and be fully ready for the big tournament," Navneet signed off.

ICC player of month nominees for February revealed

Dubai: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced the nominees for the ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month awards for February, recognising several standout performers from international cricket during the period. Players from Pakistan, England, the United States, Sri Lanka and India have made the shortlist following impressive performances in major international matches and series.

For the men's award, the nominees include Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan, England all-rounder Will Jacks and United States fast bowler Shadley van Schalkwyk. All three players delivered remarkable performances during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup and were also included in the ICC Team of the Tournament announced at the end of the event, with Schalkwyk being named as the 12th player.

Sahibzada Farhan emerged as one of the most dominant batters of the tournament. The hard-hitting opener amassed an impressive 383 runs in seven T20 internationals at an average of 76.60 and an outstanding strike rate of 160.25. His consistent run-scoring played a crucial role in Pakistan's campaign during the competition. During the tournament, Farhan also created

history by breaking the record for the most runs scored in a single edition of the T20 World Cup, previously held by Virat Kohli. His performance further stood out as he became the first player in the history of the tournament to register two centuries in the same edition.

The Pakistani opener achieved these milestones with centuries against Namibia and Sri Lanka, showcasing his dominance against different bowling attacks throughout the event.

England's Will Jacks also had an excellent run in the tournament, contributing significantly with both bat and ball. The dynamic all-rounder scored 192 runs at an impressive strike rate of 173.21 across nine T20Is, helping England reach the semifinals.

In addition to his batting contributions, Jacks proved equally effective with the ball, claiming 11 wickets at an economy rate of 8.04. His match-winning performances earned him four Player of the Match awards during the tournament. Meanwhile, United States fast bowler Shadley van Schalkwyk delivered one of the most impressive bowling campaigns of the tournament. The pacer claimed 13 wickets in just four matches while maintaining an economy rate of

6.80. Van Schalkwyk finished the initial group stage as the leading wicket-taker and produced remarkable spells against some of the strongest teams in the competition.

His standout performances included figures of four for 25 against both India and Pakistan. He also registered figures of three for 21 against the Netherlands, highlighting his ability to perform under pressure.

In the women's category, the nominees include Sri Lanka batter Harshitha Samarawickrama, Pakistan captain Fatima Sana and India seam bowler Arundhati Reddy.

Harshitha Samarawickrama delivered strong performances with the bat during Sri Lanka's ODI series in the Caribbean. The left-handed batter scored 171 runs in three matches at an average of 57, playing a key role in Sri Lanka's 2-1 series victory over the West Indies women's cricket team.

Her contributions included scores of 66, 35 and 70, which helped her finish as the leading run-scorer in the series and ensured a memorable series win for Sri Lanka. Pakistan captain Fatima Sana also produced notable all-round performances in both ODIs and T20Is during the period.

Numeros Motors becomes Super Kings Academy's Official Partner

Chennai: Chennai Super Kings' Super Kings Academy (SKA) on Monday announced a partnership with Numeros Motors, which will join the academy as its Official Partner. The collaboration reflects a shared commitment to nurturing young talent and supporting the next generation of Indian cricketers.

Super Kings Academy is an initiative launched by the IPL franchise to identify and develop promising cricketing talent at the grassroots level. Through structured training programmes and professional coaching, the academy aims to create opportunities for aspiring players to grow and progress in the sport.

Announcing the partnership, KS Viswanathan, Managing Director of the five-time IPL champions Chennai Super Kings, welcomed the association and highlighted the academy's mission of nurturing young cricketers.

"We are pleased to welcome Numeros Motors as an official partner of SKA. Our mission has always been to nurture young talent and provide opportunities for the next generation of cricketers," he said.

Viswanathan added that the partnership aligns well with the academy's broader vision of building a strong grassroots cricket ecosystem. He noted that organisations sharing similar values of excellence and innovation

play an important role in strengthening sports development initiatives.

"With Numeros Motors sharing our commitment for excellence and innovation, we look forward to working together to inspire and support aspiring players on their journey," he said, expressing gratitude to the company for backing grassroots cricket.

Since its launch in April 2022, the Super Kings Academy has expanded significantly and established cricketing communities across multiple regions. The academy currently operates centres across India and has also extended its presence internationally. SKA's global footprint now includes training centres in countries such

as the United States, Australia and Canada. These centres provide structured coaching and professional guidance to young players seeking to pursue cricket at competitive levels.

For Numeros Motors, the partnership with SKA represents a natural extension of its corporate philosophy, described as the "Always Moving" approach, which emphasises purposeful progress and innovation.

Speaking about the collaboration, Shreyas Shibulal, Founder and CEO of Numeros Motors, said the company saw strong parallels between the discipline required in sports and the dedication involved in engineering innovation.

Injury sidelines New Zealand duo Sodhi & Jacobs for South Africa T20Is

Hamilton: New Zealand have suffered multiple injury woes as they prepare to take on South Africa in the second T20I.

Spinner Ish Sodhi will miss the remainder of his side's T20I series against South Africa due to a broken thumb.

Sodhi hurt his thumb while bowling at training on Saturday and scans have since revealed a break in the affected area and a rehabilitation period of up to four weeks.

That will see the right-arter that played three matches at the recent ICC Men's T20 World Cup miss the remainder of the home series against South Africa.

The Black Caps won't name a replacement for Sodhi, with speedster Lockie Ferguson to join the playing group for the second and third matches of the series following an easy seven-wicket victory for the Proteas in the opening fixture in Mount Maunganui on Sunday.



It will leave Mitchell Santner and Cole McConchie as the main spin options in New Zealand's squad and head coach Rob Walter believes they have enough depth to cover the loss of Sodhi. "Ish is very passionate about playing for New Zealand and we know he was looking forward to turning out in front of home fans after the (T20) World Cup campaign," Walter said.

"He is hugely experienced in the

T20 format and so will be a big miss for the remainder of the series.

"We're confident with Lockie coming in, as well as Mitch (Santner) and Cole (McConchie) that we have appropriate cover for the next two matches, before the squad transitions for the last two matches."

In an additional development ahead of the second T20I, batter Bevon Jacobs was ruled out due to a left knee injury. Further assessment will be required to determine Jacobs' return to play timeline, while Katene Clarke has joined the squad ahead of the second T20I as a cover.

New Zealand's updated squad: Mitchell Santner (c), Katene Clarke, Josh Clarkson, Dane Cleaver (wk), Devon Conway (wk), Lockie Ferguson, Katene Clarke, Zak Foulkes, Kyle Jamieson, Nick Kelly, Tom Latham (wk), Jayden Lennox, Cole McConchie, Jimmy Neesham, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Nathan Smith.

Series triumph has Miraz hungry for more from Bangladesh



Dhaka: Triumphant Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz has praised the efforts of his bowlers following their impressive ODI series victory over Pakistan.

Bangladesh wrapped up their three-match ODI series against Pakistan with a thrilling 11-run victory in Mirpur on Sunday, with opener Tanzid Hasan leading the way with a superb century in what was a Player of the Match performance.

While Tanzid's innings will win much of the praise, Miraz instead singled out the performance from his bowlers as they took wickets at regular intervals and restricted the powerful Pakistan batting line-up to just 279 in their pursuit of 291 for victory in the series decider, according to ICC. Pace spearhead Taskin Ahmed led the way for Bangladesh with a four-wicket haul, while experienced seamer Mustafizur Rahman (3/54) and up-and-comer Nahid Rana (2/62) also drew praise from Miraz. "Overall, everyone played very well as a team," Miraz said after the win.

"It was an excellent match. At times even I was a bit afraid, but the boys handled the pressure really well

in the last over when they needed 14 runs.

"Taskin bowled really well. He took two wickets in the first three overs and two more at the end. Throughout the series, Taskin and Nahid Rana bowled really well, and I'm really happy with their performance."

The series victory boost Bangladesh's chances of earning automatic qualification for next year's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, with the top eight sides on the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings - plus two of the three tournament co-hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe - winning a place at the 2027 showcase. Bangladesh sat in 10th place on the rankings prior to the series against Pakistan and Miraz is looking for more consistency

from his batters as the side chases an eighth straight appearance at the 50-over World Cup. "We have some lacking areas; the batters need to take responsibility," Miraz said.

"I think that if we play on true wickets, on good wickets, the batters will gain a lot of confidence. Look, the Pakistan series we played, we played on true wickets, and the batters got runs there.

PT Usha demands athlete-first governance

New Delhi: Indian Olympic Association president PT Usha emphasised the need for athlete-first governance, saying the future of Indian sport must place athletes' preparation, welfare, and development at the centre of all decision-making.

Speaking on Day 3 of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the SJFI National Convention at the India Habitat Centre, Usha said India's sporting ecosystem has improved over the past decade with better infrastructure, scientific training, and institutional support.

However, she stressed that the real strength of Indi-

an sport lies at the grassroots level, in villages, towns, and schools, where young talent continues to emerge.

"Athlete-first governance must guide the future of Indian sport. Their preparation, welfare, and development must remain our highest priority," Usha said, urging administrators and sporting bodies to focus on nurturing talent from the ground up. She also lauded the role of sports journalism in inspiring young athletes, noting that reporters are not just chroniclers of results but storytellers capturing the struggles and triumphs of athletes.

IOA CEO Raghuram Iyer highlighted that India is at a pivotal stage in its sporting journey, with growing investment and participation shaping the nation's ambitions. He stressed building a strong grassroots ecosystem through mass participation and community engagement while providing elite athletes with world-class resources.

Iyer further said India aims to host major international sporting events, including the Commonwealth Games, as part of a long-term strategy to strengthen infrastructure and lay the foundation for hosting the Olympic Games in the future.

Kibet, Chelangat lead TCS World 10K Bengaluru

Bengaluru: The 18th edition of the TCS World 10K Bengaluru is set to witness a star-studded lineup as some of the world's top long-distance runners gear up to compete in the prestigious race scheduled for April 26 in Bengaluru.

Among the headline contenders are Ugandan rising star Harbert Kibet and defending women's champion Sarah Chelangat, both expected to be among the standout performers at the event.

The race, recognised as a World Athletics Gold Label Race, carries a total prize purse of USD 210,000. Winners in both the men's and women's elite categories will receive USD 26,000 each, with additional bonus-

es on offer for athletes who break the course record.

Twenty-year-old Harbert Kibet will be making his debut appearance in India and arrives in excellent form. The young Ugandan sensation recently produced a world-leading performance this year with a remarkable 26:39 finish in Castellon, Spain.

That performance also ranks as the sixth-fastest 10K ever recorded, firmly establishing Kibet as one of the most exciting emerging talents in global distance running.

Kibet will enter the Bengaluru race as one of five athletes who have run under 27 minutes this year, indicating the extremely competitive nature of the field.



In total, eleven runners in the men's elite lineup possess personal bests faster than the current Bengaluru course record of 27:38, raising expectations of a fast and thrilling race.

However, Kibet will face stiff competition from several experienced athletes. Among them is Ethiopian runner Khairi Bejiga, who

Cunha & Sesko fire Manchester United past Aston Villa

London: Manchester United secured a crucial victory over Aston Villa on Sunday as goals from Matheus Cunha and Benjamin Sesko in the final 20 minutes sealed an important win in the race for qualification to the UEFA Champions League.

The match, played in the Premier League, initially struggled to find rhythm and quality during the first half, with both sides failing to create clear scoring opportunities.

However, the contest came alive after the interval, with United captain Bruno Fernandes emerging as a key figure in the turnaround.

Manchester United nearly took the lead earlier when

Bryan Mbeumo produced a goal-bound effort, only for Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to deny him with a sharp save.

The breakthrough eventually came from a set piece. Fernandes delivered a perfectly placed near-post corner which was flicked on by Casemiro. The ball looped over Martinez and went in off the far upright to give United the lead.

Aston Villa responded strongly and managed to draw level 11 minutes later. Midfielder Ross Barkley, making his first Premier League start in 14 months, struck a quick snap shot that found the net to bring the

visitors back into the game.

Despite the equaliser, Manchester United continued to push forward in search of a decisive goal. Fernandes once again played a central role in the move that restored the home side's advantage.

The Portuguese playmaker delivered an excellent through ball that split the Villa defence and released Matheus Cunha on goal. The Brazilian forward kept his composure and placed a precise low shot into the far corner.

The goal proved to be a turning point as Villa struggled to recover from the setback during the closing stages of the match.

roads of Bengaluru and are familiar with the race conditions. Kwizera finished as the silver medalist in the Bengaluru race two years ago, while Dida recently secured an impressive second place finish at the RAK Half Marathon earlier this year.

Adding further depth to the competition is Ethiopia's celebrated distance runner Muktar Edris, a two-time world champion in the 5000 metres. On the women's side, defending champion Sarah Chelangat returns with the aim of securing back-to-back titles. The Ugandan runner clocked an impressive time of 31:07 to win the race in 2025. Chelangat expressed her excitement about returning to the race, saying the Bengaluru event holds

special significance for her and that she hopes to triumph again in the city.

If she succeeds, Chelangat would join an exclusive list of athletes who have won consecutive titles in the women's race. The only athlete to achieve that feat so far is the late Kenyan star Agnes Tirop, who won the Bengaluru race in both 2018 and 2019. The women's field also features strong representation from Kenya, a nation that has historically dominated the event by winning 10 of the 15 women's titles decided so far. Leading the entries is Kenya's Brenda Jechirchir, who produced an outstanding performance earlier this year by winning the Valencia 10K with a time of 29:25.

BSE Sensex			Nifty 50			Nifty 500			Nifty Next 50			Nifty 100			Nifty Bank			Nifty Midcap 100		
Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change	
75,502.85	1.26%		23,408.80	1.11%		21,498.80	0.50%		64,462.30	-0.35%		24,055.40	0.86%		54,413.40	1.22%		54,614.95	-0.27%	
Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open	
74,563.92	74,415.79		23,151.10	23,116.10		21,391.20	21,355.95		64,691.45	64,621.55		23,849.25	23,814.95		53,757.85	53,721.50		54,761.10	54,652.55	
High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low	
75,805.27	73,949.76		23,502.00	22,955.25		21,593.25	21,110.00		64,969.50	63,525.50		24,155.85	23,608.95		54,664.15	53,258.15		55,013.30	55,013.30	

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
UltraTechCement	11,099.00	4.55
M&M	3,036.10	3.58
Grasim	2,654.40	3.34
Trent	3,596.10	3.11
Eternal	222.04	2.95

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Bharat Elec	429.50	-2.25
Max Healthcare	970.60	-1.96
Coal India	460.30	-1.43
ONGC	260.45	-1.38
Wipro	195.11	-1.25

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Apr 02	156,074.00	-2,392.00 -1.51
Silver May 05	256,829.00	-2,606.00 -1.00
Crudeoil Mar 19	8,736.00	-316.00 -3.49
Naturalgas Mar 26	285.30	-6.60 -2.26

Sensex jumps 938 points, Nifty settles above 23,400 on bargain buying after three-day fall

Mumbai: Benchmark equity indices BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 rebounded sharply on Monday, rising by more than 1 per cent after suffering heavy losses in the previous three trading sessions. The recovery was largely driven by value-buying in blue-chip banking stocks and selective large-cap counters. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 938.93 points or 1.26 per cent to settle at 75,502.85. During intraday trading, the index touched a high of 75,805.27 and a low of 73,949.76, reflecting a volatile trading session. Similarly, the 50-share Nifty 50 climbed 257.70 points or 1.11 per cent to close at 23,408.80. The rise helped the market break its recent losing streak, as investors stepped in to accumulate stocks at lower levels following the sharp correction.

Among the 30 Sensex constituents, UltraTech Cement emerged as the top gainer,

surging 4.22 per cent during the session. The rally in the stock was supported by renewed investor interest in cement and infrastructure-linked companies. Other major gainers included Trent, HDFC Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Eternal, Bajaj Finance, ITC, Tata Steel and State Bank of India, which all posted notable gains during the trading session. On the other hand, some stocks ended the day in the red. Major laggards included Bharat Electronics, Sun Pharma, Power Grid Corporation of India and Bharti Airtel. Market experts attributed the rebound to bargain hunting after the recent market correction. According to Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, the market staged a late-session recovery driven by value buying in domestically oriented sectors such as automobiles, banking and fast-moving consumer



goods (FMCG). He added that in the near term, investor sentiment will depend heavily on geopolitical developments around the Strait of Hormuz. Any easing of supply chain disruptions in the region could provide additional support to global and domestic markets. Meanwhile, broader markets showed mixed trends. The BSE MidCap Select Index slipped 0.36 per cent, while the BSE Smallcap Select Index edged down 0.25 per cent, in-

dicating cautious participation in mid- and small-cap stocks. Among sectoral indices, the BSE Top 10 Banks Index surged 1.61 per cent. It was followed by the BSE Private Banks Index, which gained 1.38 per cent, and the BSE Financial Services Index, which rose 1.32 per cent. Other sectoral indices that advanced included the BSE Auto Index (up 1.23 per cent), BSE Bankex (up 1.08 per cent) and the BSE FMCG Index (up 0.94 per

cent). However, certain sectors faced selling pressure. The BSE Oil & Gas Index dropped 2.29 per cent, while indices tracking hospitals, realty, energy and healthcare also closed lower. According to Ajit Mishra, Senior Vice President (Research) at Religare Broking Ltd, the market began the week on a volatile note but managed to recover due to bargain buying in select large-cap stocks after the sharp decline seen in previous sessions.

He noted that despite the rebound, overall sentiment remained cautious due to geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and elevated crude oil prices, which could impact inflation and increase India's import bill. Global market trends were mixed. In Asia, Japan's Nikkei 225 and China's SSE Composite Index ended lower, while South Korea's Kospi and Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index closed higher.

Meanwhile, markets in Europe were trading mostly lower during the day, and the US market had ended in negative territory on Friday. In the commodities market, Brent Crude, the global oil benchmark, climbed 1.41 per cent to USD 104.4 per barrel, reflecting continued concerns about global energy supply.

Data from the exchanges showed that Foreign Institutional Investors sold equities worth Rs 10,716.64 crore on Friday. However, Domestic Institutional Investors provided some support to the market by purchasing stocks worth Rs 9,977.42 crore. In the previous session on Friday, the BSE Sensex had settled at 74,563.92, falling 1,470.50 points or 1.93 per cent. The Nifty 50 had dropped 488.05 points or 2.06 per cent to close at 23,151.10, marking one of the sharpest declines in recent sessions.

EBG Group partners Hard Rock to launch premium coffee machines in India

Hyderabad: EBG Group on Monday announced a strategic brand licensing partnership with Hard Rock International to introduce a premium range of Hard Rock-branded coffee machines and small kitchen appliances in the Indian market.

As part of its India market entry strategy, the initiative will be supported by a planned investment of ₹100 crore. The company has also set an ambitious revenue target of ₹500 crore over the next five years, according to an official release.

The collaboration is aimed at tapping India's rapidly expanding premium home appliance segment. The market is currently valued at around ₹29,000 crore and is estimated to be growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly nine per cent.

Globally, Hard Rock operates across hospitality, entertainment, retail and licensed lifestyle categories. Over the years, the brand has built a strong international identity and is widely recognised as one of the world's most prominent music-inspired lifestyle brands.

Through this partnership, Hard Rock will make its entry into India's premium home appliance segment. The

move is expected to extend the brand's distinctive design-driven identity into modern kitchens and lifestyle spaces.

Under the licensing agreement, EBG Group will take responsibility for designing, developing, manufacturing and distributing a curated portfolio of Hard Rock-branded products in the country. The products will be aligned with the brand's contemporary lifestyle positioning. The companies are targeting a market share of around five per cent within the first few years of operations. They believe the strong brand recall of Hard Rock combined with growing demand for premium appliances in India will help achieve this goal. The initial product rollout will focus primarily on key metropolitan markets across India. Following this launch phase, the companies plan to gradually expand distribution to other major cities. Commenting on the partnership, Irfan Khan, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of EBG Group, said the collaboration marks a significant milestone for the company's growth strategy.

He noted that partnering with Hard Rock would enable the company to introduce a differentiated portfolio of premium coffee machines and small kitchen appliances tailored for Indian

consumers.

According to him, the initiative is designed to cater to customers who are increasingly seeking a blend of high performance, premium quality and a strong lifestyle-driven brand experience.

The upcoming product range is expected to combine Hard Rock's signature design aesthetics with advanced technology and high-quality materials. The offerings will be targeted primarily at aspirational urban consumers looking for stylish yet functional kitchen appliances. The products will be made available through leading retail chains as well as major online marketplaces. In addition, the companies plan to leverage select premium distribution channels to strengthen their reach in the Indian market. Industry observers note that the collaboration reflects a broader trend in which global lifestyle brands are expanding into adjacent consumer product categories in fast-growing markets like India. With the Indian premium appliance segment witnessing steady growth, the partnership between EBG Group and Hard Rock International could position the two companies to capitalise on rising demand for high-end, design-focused home appliances.

Wholesale inflation inches up to 2.13pc in Feb

New Delhi: The annual rate of inflation based on the All India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 2.13pc (provisional) for the month of February 2026 (over February 2025), an official statement said here on Monday. The positive rate of inflation is driven due to increase in prices of other manufacturing, manufacture of basic metals, non-food articles, food articles and textiles.

On a month-on-month basis, the WPI increased by 0.25 per cent in February compared with January, indicating a mild upward movement in wholesale prices during the month. Among the three major components of the index, the primary articles group, which has a weight of 22.62 per cent, witnessed a 0.52 per cent decline in February compared to the previous month. The fall was mainly due to lower

prices of food articles and minerals. Within the primary articles segment, food articles declined by 1.33 per cent, while mineral prices fell by 1.21 per cent during the month. However, crude

petroleum and natural gas prices increased by 4.17 per cent, and non-food articles rose by 0.83 per cent, partially offsetting the decline. The fuel and power category, which carries a weight of 13.15 per cent, recorded a

1.17 per cent increase during February compared with January. The rise was mainly attributed to higher prices of mineral oils, which increased by 2.05 per cent during the month. However,

electricity prices declined marginally by 0.27 per cent, which moderated the overall increase in the fuel and power group. On a year-on-year basis, inflation in the fuel and power segment remained negative at around - (minus)

3.78 per cent, reflecting lower fuel prices compared to the same period last year. The manufactured products group, which has the highest weight of 64.23 per cent in the WPI basket, registered a 0.47 per cent increase in February over the previous month.

Out of the 22 industry groups under manufactured products, 16 groups recorded an increase in prices, while five groups witnessed a decline during the month. Sectors that reported price increases included the manufacture of food products, textiles, electrical equipment, chemicals and chemical products, and other manufacturing activities. At the same time, some sectors such as computer, electronic and optical products, basic metals, fabricated metal products, wood products and leather products recorded a decline in prices.



petroleum and natural gas prices increased by 4.17 per cent, and non-food articles rose by 0.83 per cent, partially offsetting the decline. The fuel and power category, which carries a weight of 13.15 per cent, recorded a

OXMIQ Partners with AM Intelligence Labs to Build 1 GW AI Compute Hub in India

Hyderabad: OXMIQ Labs, headquartered in Campbell, California, a GPU architecture and AI Technology company, on Monday announced a strategic partnership with AM Intelligence Labs (AMI Labs), a division of AM Group (promoted by founders of Greenko Group), to develop cutting-edge AI infrastructure in India.

The collaboration will support AMI Labs' 2 GW AI compute capacity by 2030, beginning with a 1

GW AI Compute Hub in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, the company said in a release here.

AMI Labs, part of India's largest renewable energy producer Greenko, leverages 50 GW of solar, wind, and hydro capacity, backed by 100 GWh of intelligent energy storage, providing carbon-free energy at 50-70% lower costs than conventional power. This enables one of the world's most sustainable and cost-efficient AI compute plat-

forms.

India's rapidly growing AI market, fueled by a vast developer ecosystem and enterprise adoption, positions the country as a critical global AI hub.

AM Group has begun Phase 1 of the Noida Compute Hub, aiming to bring the first compute capacity online by the end of 2027.

Under the partnership, OXMIQ will provide architecture and engineering expertise across the

entire compute stack—from GPU design, advanced packaging, and rack-scale systems, to high-performance interconnects and orchestration software—optimizing the platform for scale, speed, and efficiency.

The integrated approach will unlock industry-leading electronics-to-tokens economics, making zettascale AI compute more accessible and cost-effective. Anil Chalamalasetty, Group Chairman, AM

Group, said "OXMIQ gives AMI Labs access to some of the deepest hardware and systems expertise in the industry. Together, we are laying the foundation for AMI Labs to become a full-stack AI compute platform."

Raja Koduri, Founder and CEO, OXMIQ Labs said "AMI Labs has solved the hardest constraint in large-scale AI infrastructure: access to reliable, carbon-free power at global scale."

IndiGo inks deal with Adani Airports to reward BluChips Duty-Free Shoppers

Mumbai: Private airlines player IndiGo has announced a partnership with Adani Group's Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL) to allow its loyalty programme members to earn IndiGo BluChips on duty-free purchases at select airports in India aimed to make airport shopping more convenient for travellers while offering rewards for their spending.

"The partnership will integrate IndiGo BluChip with the Adani platform, enabling travellers to pre-order duty-free products and collect them at the airport," both the companies announced here today, in a joint statement.

IndiGo has announced that its IndiGo BluChip members can now earn rewards on duty-free shopping at select airports managed by AAHL. IndiGo customers can log in through a dedicated portal, link their membership ID and receive their earnings within 24 to 48 hours based on their spending. Currently, participating duty-free stores are at Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur, Mangaluru and Lucknow airports. The programme will soon expand to Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati and the new Navi Mumbai International Airport, the statement informed. Under the partnership, IndiGo BluChip members will earn five BluChips

for every Rs 100 spent on duty-free products booked through the Adani platform. IndiGo BluChip is IndiGo's loyalty programme which rewards frequent flyers. Under this programme, members earn BluChips on every flight based on their spending.

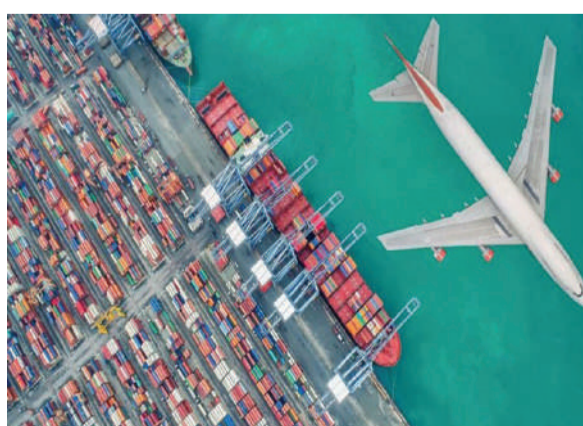
Commenting on the development, IndiGo Chief Digital and Information Officer Neetan Chopra said, "At IndiGo, we are continuously striving to enhance the value proposition of our loyalty programme. This partnership with Adani Duty Free strengthens our commitment to offering meaningful rewards beyond flights, making every step of the journey more beneficial for our customers. By combining IndiGo's extensive network with Adani's premium duty-free experience, we are delighted to bring greater convenience, choice and value to millions of travellers across India." AAHL CEO Suchit Bansal said, "We are transforming how travellers shop at airports by integrating digital discovery, pre-order convenience and seamless collection through the Adani platform. Our partnership with IndiGo brings together India's largest airline and the country's largest private airport operator to deliver a more connected and rewarding travel retail experience."

India's trade deficit widens Y-O-Y in Feb 2026 with imports touching USD 80.09 bn

New Delhi: As per trade data for February 2026, total imports during the month increased by 21.64 per cent to USD 80.09 billion, resulting in an overall trade deficit of USD 3.96 billion in February compared with a surplus of USD 2.72 billion in the same month last year. On the contrary, India's total exports, including merchandise and services, rose by 11.05 per cent year-on-year to an estimated USD 76.13 billion in February 2026, reflecting strong growth in services exports and several key sectors. According to the data, merchandise exports stood at USD 36.61 billion in February 2026, slightly lower than USD 36.91 billion recorded in February 2025. On

the other hand, merchandise imports rose significantly to USD 63.71 billion, compared to USD 51.33 billion in the same month last year.

The services sector continued to drive overall export growth, with services exports estimated at USD 39.53 billion in February, registering a sharp increase from USD 31.65 billion in February 2025. Services imports during the month were estimated at USD 16.38 billion, compared with USD 14.51 billion a year earlier. For the period April-February of the current financial year (2025-26), India's total exports (merchandise and services combined) are estimated at USD 790.86 billion, recording a growth of



5.79 per cent compared with USD 747.58 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Total imports during the same period were estimated at USD 900.51 billion,

showing an increase of 7.37 per cent over USD 838.69 billion recorded during April-February of the previous financial year. As a result, the overall trade deficit widened to USD 109.64 bil-

lion during the period, compared with USD 91.11 billion in the corresponding period last year. Merchandise exports during April-February 2025-26 stood at USD 402.93 billion, compared with USD 395.66 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal, registering a growth of 1.84 per cent. Merchandise imports during the period increased to USD 713.53 billion, up from USD 657.46 billion a year earlier, pushing the merchandise trade deficit to USD 310.60 billion, compared with USD 261.80 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year. Non-petroleum exports during April-February were valued at USD 354.12 billion, registering a growth

of 5.03 per cent over USD 337.17 billion in the same period last year. Among key sectors, engineering goods exports increased by 12.9 per cent to USD 10.36 billion in February, while electronic goods exports rose by 10.37 per cent to USD 4.18 billion. Exports of organic and inorganic chemicals grew by 6.85 per cent to USD 2.38 billion, and gems and jewellery exports increased by 4.08 per cent to USD 2.64 billion. Other sectors that recorded positive export growth included drugs and pharmaceuticals, marine products, handicrafts, coffee, fruits and vegetables, ceramic products and glassware, and cereal preparations.