

# Aryan Age

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## Iran sets six conditions for ending Middle East war

**Tehran :** Iran has outlined six conditions as part of a new legal and strategic framework for ending the war in the Middle East which entered its 23rd day on Sunday. These are: Establishing a new legal framework for the Strait of Hormuz, guarantees to prevent the recurrence of war, closure of US military bases in the region, payment of compensation to the Islamic Republic (of Iran), an end to wars across all regional fronts and prosecution and extradition of media figures deemed hostile to Iran.

Iran's proposals come a day after President Donald Trump claimed on Saturday that the United States is 'getting very close' to meeting objectives of 'winding down' military efforts in the Middle East, hinting that he



is considering wrapping up the Middle East operations. Iran's MEHR News Agency (MNA) quoted an

unidentified senior political and security official as saying that Iran is implementing a pre-prepared, multi-

phase plan in its defensive war against US-Israel, emphasising that the strategy was developed months in

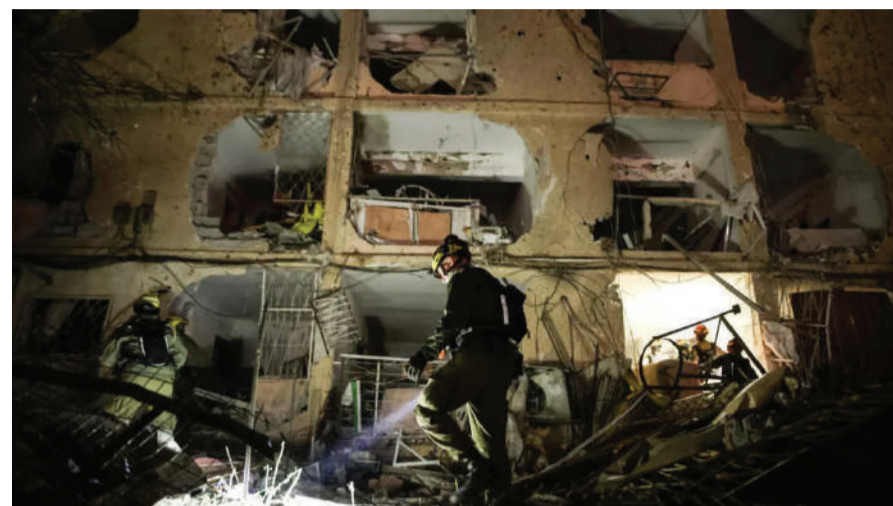
advance and is being carried out with "high strategic patience".

The official stated that after targeting and destroying American and Israeli air defence systems and radar infrastructure across the region, Iran has now established 'full control' over the Israeli entity's airspace.

The official said Iran intends to continue its policy of 'punishing the aggressor' until it delivers what it described as a 'historic lesson' to US-Israeli aggression and to US President Donald Trump.

Several regional parties and mediators have conveyed proposals to Tehran aimed at ending the war. However, Iran has set conditions that must be met and taken seriously before any agreement can be reached, the official added.

## Iran strikes Israeli nuclear facility of Dimona, in retaliation of Israeli attack on Natanz



**Tel Aviv :** Iran launched missile attacks on the Israeli strategic southern cities of Dimona and Arad, aimed at nuclear research facility near Dimona, on Saturday night in retaliation of Israeli strikes on the Natanz nuclear facility.

More than 100 people, including two children, were injured in the Iranian missile strikes. Eleven of them are seriously injured in the attacks that took place barely hours after Israel struck Natanz.

Israeli air defences failed to intercept at least two ballistic missiles. Authorities are investigating why did Israeli missile interceptors fail to intercept the incoming missiles, according to Israeli media.

Following the strikes, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel Defense Forces Chief of

Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir pledged to continue fighting Israel's enemies on "all fronts."

Dimona and Arad are strategically and economically significant to Israel, primarily due to their location in the Negev desert and their connection to the country's sensitive infrastructure. Dimona is globally recognized as the home of the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center, widely believed to be the site where Israel produces nuclear weapons.

Arad is located near several major IDF bases and serves as a residential hub for personnel working at the Dimona nuclear facility and nearby high-tech defence industries.

The two were targeted by Iran because of their close proximity (about 25 minutes apart). In military terms, they form a "cluster"

that includes nuclear infrastructure, military personnel housing and industrial supply chains.

Iranian media said the strikes targeted Israel's nuclear research facility, located about 10 km outside of Dimona and 30 km outside of Arad, in retaliation for an US attack on Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment facility earlier in the day.

The Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center is believed to be key to Israel's long-suspected nuclear weapons program.

Netanyahu described the situation in a statement as "very difficult evening in the campaign for our future."

He spoke with the mayors of Dimona and Arad, and said Israel will "continue to strike our enemies on all fronts with determination."

## "I Have Proof Against Opposition Leaders Too"

**Fadnavis on Nashik Fake Godman Case**

**Nagpur :** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has taken a strong stand in the shocking case of Nashik-based fake godman Ashok Kharat, who is accused of sexually exploiting women by pretending to have divine powers. Speaking to the media in Nagpur on Sunday, Fadnavis said that under no circumstances will Ashok Kharat be spared. He revealed that the case is extremely serious and was exposed based on secret intelligence gathered by the government itself. He warned that the accused will have to face strict punishment for his crimes.

Responding to the ongoing political allegations, Fadnavis made a sensational claim that not only ruling party members but also several senior leaders from the opposition had visited Kharat, and there is evidence of this in the police investigation. He questioned who had approved a 40-kilometre water pipeline for Kharat by bending rules and who had called a special cabinet meeting for it, urging that the matter should not be politicised. He clarified that this is an issue of women's dignity, and action cannot be taken merely based on photo-

graphs, but anyone found involved in the crime will not be spared.

The Nashik Police Commissionerate and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) are conducting a thorough probe, with the State Director General of Police personally monitoring the case. Fadnavis said many victims hesitate to come forward due to social pressure, and efforts are being made to support them and their families so they can speak out. Special instructions have been given to ensure transparency in the investigation and justice for the victims.

For the first time, Fadnavis also commented on the resignation of Rupali Chakankar from the State Women Commission. He said that since the person she considered her guru is now facing serious allegations of exploiting women, it would have been difficult for her to ensure justice while holding the post. Realising the need for a fair investigation, she chose to resign. The Chief Minister indicated that the government and police will now take strict action against those who exploit women in the name of spirituality.

## 'Have blown Iran off the map,' says Trump, even as Iran fires missiles at Israel's nuclear facilities

**Washington :** Donald Trump claimed the US has "blown Iran off the map" weeks ahead of schedule, following Iranian missile strikes on Israel and US-UK bases. Trump said Iran's leadership, navy, and air force have been destroyed, leaving the country with "no defence."

He also targeted The New York Times journalist David Sanger, rejecting criticism of his strategy and military actions. Claiming Iran now wants

a deal, Trump said the US is not interested, asserting operations are progressing "weeks ahead of schedule."

He reiterated that the US would dictate terms from a position of strength, signalling no urgency to negotiate.



## Another Setback for Rupali Chakankar? Likely Removal from NCP Women's Wing

**Mumbai :** Rupali Chakankar, who recently lost her position as chairperson of the State Women Commission due to her alleged links with fake godman Ashok Kharat, may soon face another major setback. There is strong speculation that she could also be removed from the post of Maharashtra President of the women's wing of the Nationalist Congress Party.

Chakankar had come under heavy criticism from opposition parties for considering Ashok Kharat as her guru, especially since he is accused of sexually exploiting women. Questions were raised about how someone who follows such a person could head the Women Commission, forcing her to step down from the post.

Now, sources suggest that the controversy may cost her another key position within the party. A crucial meeting was held late Saturday night at the Devgiri bungalow in Mumbai, attended by Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, NCP working president Praful Patel, and state president Sunil Tatkare. Discussions reportedly focused on how to contain the damage caused to the Kharat case.

It is believed that Chakankar has already been informally asked to step down from her party post, and she may soon submit her resignation. The meeting also reportedly discussed who should be appointed next as the State Women Commission chairperson and the party's women's wing president.

There have been ongoing allegations that Sunil Tatkare acted as Chakankar's political mentor, but after this meeting, it is being speculated that he has withdrawn his support. When asked about her possible resignation, Tatkare said a decision would be taken after further discussions and made it clear that the party will not protect anyone involved.

He added that the party supports a thorough SIT investigation into Ashok Kharat's crimes. Chakankar's resignation from the Women Commission has already been accepted by

the party, and Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar will forward it to the Chief Minister with a recommendation for acceptance.

The development is likely to have wider political repercussions within the party, especially ahead of upcoming organisational changes.

Party leaders are expected to take a final call soon to prevent further damage to its public image.

Meanwhile, opposition parties have intensified their attack, demanding stricter accountability in the matter.

The issue continues to remain politically sensitive, with further developments expected in the coming days.

## NCP leader seeks immediate arrest of Chakankar over Kharat case



**Pune :** Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Rupali Patil Thombre has demanded the immediate arrest of former Maharashtra State Women's Commission chairperson Rupali Chakankar, alleging her role in the alleged sexual exploitation racket linked to Ashok Kharat.

Thombre said she has written to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis seeking prompt action and warned that she would approach the High Court if no steps are taken.

Citing findings of the Special Investigation Team (SIT), she claimed that evidence points to Chakankar's alleged involvement and argued that she should be named as a prime accused in the case. The NCP leader alleged that 250 to 300 videos have surfaced so far, purportedly showing Kharat exploiting multiple women. She described the material as highly objectionable and said the case indicates a wider conspiracy. Thombre further alleged that Chakankar misused her official position to shield Kharat.

She also claimed that two individuals involved in creating the videos later blackmailed Kharat. Referring to earlier developments, Thombre said a journalist had exposed the case nearly a year ago and alleged that the journalist was threatened at the time.

According to her, a settlement was reached with the involvement of a Pune-based social activist after the blackmail came to light. She demanded that any IAS

officer found to have aided Kharat should face strict action.

Thombre acknowledged that the Chief Minister has initiated steps, including providing relief to victims and securing the resignation of the Women's Commission chairperson, but said further action is required.

She also questioned Kharat's financial background, asking how he accumulated assets reportedly worth around Rs 800 crore. Thombre appealed to activist Trupti Desai to pursue the matter legally and ensure stringent punishment for those involved.

She reiterated that justice must be ensured for all victims and that no individual, regardless of position or influence, should be spared if found guilty.

Thombre said the case has shaken public trust and called for complete transparency in the investigation process.

She urged authorities to fast-track the probe to prevent any tampering of evidence or intimidation of witnesses.

Emphasising accountability, she said strict legal action should be taken against all those directly or indirectly involved in the alleged racket.

She also appealed to citizens to come forward with any information that could aid the investigation.

Thombre maintained that the truth must come out at the earliest to restore confidence in the system and deliver justice to the affected women.

## PM Modi becomes longest-serving head of government in India

**New Delhi :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the longest-serving head of a government in India, surpassing the previous record held by former Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling.

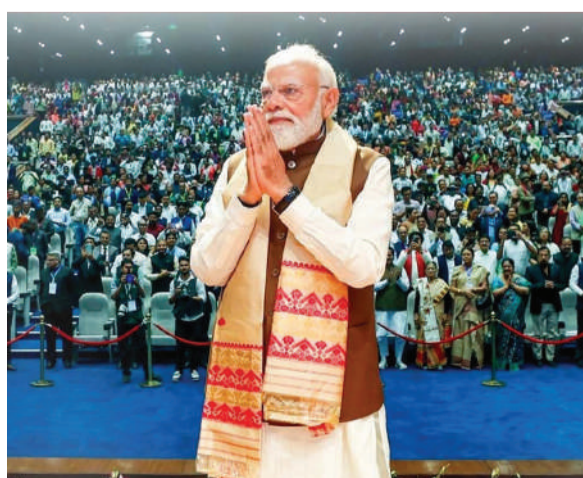
The milestone was highlighted in a post by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and shared by the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday, marking what was described as a historic moment in India's political landscape.

According to the post, Prime Minister Modi has now completed 8,931 days in public office as head of government, overtaking Chamling's record of 8,930 days.

The message described the achievement as a reflection of "pure devotion to the nation and its people," adding that Modi's journey has been defined by

"nation-first governance, integrity in action, and tireless service to every citizen."

The post further traced Modi's long political ca-



reer, noting that his leadership journey spans from his years as Chief Minister of Gujarat to his current tenure as Prime Minister.

"From his unwavering commitment as the Chief Minister of Gujarat to his dedicated leadership as the Prime Minister, his life has been a continuous journey

of service," it said. It also extended congratulations, stating, "Heartiest congratulations to Modi Ji on this remarkable achievement," while emphasising that the milestone represents sustained continuity in public service over decades.

Modi, who first became Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001 before assuming office as Prime Minister in 2014, has now completed more than two decades in top executive roles across state and national governance.

The record underscores his unusually long tenure as a head of government in India's post-independence political history, a period marked by multiple electoral victories and extended administrative continuity. The announcement quickly drew attention across political circles, with supporters highlighting the scale of his tenure as evidence of political stability and public mandate over successive elections.

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## Railways enhances allowances for loco pilots, guards under revised rates

**New Delhi :** Indian Railways has announced a comprehensive upward revision in the rates of kilometrage allowance and allowance in lieu of kilometrage (ALK) for its running staff.

The move is aimed at strengthening employee welfare and improving compensation for front-line personnel who ensure smooth functioning of the country's rail network, the Ministry of Railways stated.

The revised rates, effective from January 1, 2024, follow the increase in Dearness Allowance to 50 per cent and will benefit thousands of Loco Pilots, Assistant Loco Pilots, Guards, Firemen and other operational staff.

According to the official statement, the revision covers both loco running staff and traffic running staff, recognising their critical role in keeping trains running round the clock across one of the world's largest rail systems.

Similarly, traffic running staff, including Mail/Express Guards, Passenger and Goods Guards, as well as Assistant Guards and Brakesmen, now redesignated as Train Managers, will also benefit from revised allowance rates.

The move is expected to provide a financial boost to employees engaged in continuous and demanding train operations, aligning their compensation with current cost-of-living adjustments.

The Ministry said the revised rates are being implemented under the Railway Services (Revised Pay) Rules, 2016, and all existing terms and conditions governing the admissibility of kilometrage allowance and ALK will remain unchanged.

It emphasised that the decision reflects the organisation's continued commitment to the welfare and financial well-being of its running staff, often regarded as the backbone of railway operations.

## Mayawati reviews BSP's progress in MP, Bihar, Chhattisgarh; calls for unity and electoral strength

**Lucknow:** Mayawati, the national president of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), chaired a long review meeting in Lucknow on Sunday with senior office-bearers and state unit members from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh. The meeting focused on strengthening the party organisation, expanding its mass base, and mobilising financial support in these states.

The review was conducted in line with the directions issued during the party's All India meeting held on February 22. Based on feedback from senior leaders, including sector in-charge Rajaram, the BSP chief expressed satisfaction over the "moderate progress" made by the three state units in implementing organizational directives.

Addressing the joint meeting, Mayawati praised party workers for their commitment to advancing Ambedkarite principles and striving to establish political power for marginalised communities. She emphasised that the path to ending caste-



based oppression and anti-poor governance lies in sustained struggle and unity among Dalits, Adivasis, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Muslims, and other minorities.

She reiterated that constitutional rights granted by B. R. Ambedkar can only be effectively implemented when political power is in the hands of the Bahujan community. She also

recalled the contributions of BSP founder Kanshi Ram, stating that the party continues to work toward fulfilling his unfinished mission.

Mayawati warned against what she described as increasing caste-based crimes in the three states and urged people to remain cautious of electoral inducements offered by rival parties ahead of elections. She

stressed the need for unity and social harmony among marginalised communities to achieve political empowerment.

Highlighting BSP's governance record in Uttar Pradesh, she said the party has demonstrated its commitment to "Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay" (welfare of all) by forming government four times and ensuring rule of law and protection for all communities.

She further alleged that the policies of central and state governments have disproportionately harmed marginalised groups, while benefiting a small section of wealthy individuals. Calling for electoral success, she urged party workers to intensify efforts to bring political change.

Earlier, Mayawati thanked party workers for organising events on the birth anniversary of Kanshi Ram on March 15 and appealed for large-scale celebrations of Ambedkar Jayanti on April 14, along with the party's foundation day, in line with its mission and ideology.

## Nitish thanks PM for Bihar diwas message, reaffirms commitment to development

**Patna:** Nitish Kumar on Sunday expressed heartfelt gratitude to Narendra Modi for his warm and affectionate message to the people of the state on the occasion of Bihar Diwas. In a post shared on the social media platform X, the Chief Minister conveyed his appreciation on behalf of the entire population of Bihar, acknowledging the Prime Minister's recognition of the state's legacy and ongoing progress.

Kumar stated that it was a matter of immense pride for the people of Bihar that the Prime Minister had highlighted the state's rich heritage, vibrant culture, and continuous development efforts in his message. He emphasized that Bihar has a long and illustrious history, and such acknowledgment at the national level serves as encouragement for the state to continue on its path of growth and transformation.



The Chief Minister reiterated that his government remains firmly committed to ensuring holistic development across all sectors, with a focus on inclusive growth and equitable opportunities. He stressed that social justice continues to be a core pillar of his administration's policies, alongside the pursuit of good governance and transparency in public administration. Kumar also high-

lighted the importance of strengthening infrastructure in the state, noting that improvements in roads, connectivity, and public services are crucial for sustained economic development. In his remarks, he acknowledged the continued support and cooperation of the central government, which he said has played a key role in accelerating Bihar's development trajectory.

## UP Govt's 'The Shadow' app to safeguard daughters like shadow

**Lucknow:** The Uttar Pradesh government has taken several initiatives to provide a safe and dignified environment for women and in this direction, Uttar Pradesh State Institute of Forensic Science (UPSIFS) has introduced a unique initiative.

Developed by B Tech students of the institute, the "The Shadow" (UPSIFS App) is a significant step toward strengthening both student safety and academic management, especially for female students.

The app has been designed as a comprehensive security-based digital ecosystem that will remain connected with every student like their "shadow."

This technology is a concrete effort toward making daughters safer and more self-reliant.

UPSIFS Deputy Director Chiranjeev Mukherjee said here on Sunday that, "The Shadow app has been developed by the institute's

own students.

Its features go beyond academic activities, prioritizing student safety by tracking movements in an authorized manner."

Campus entry, exit, leave requests and other activities are digitally recorded, providing real-time information to the administration. The app also includes complete data on attendance, assignments, exam performance, and academic progress, connecting students, parents, and teachers on a single platform. This will enhance transparency and accountability. A stand-out feature is the 'Parent-First Approval System.' Under this, any request by a student, especially a female student, to leave the campus or seek special permission requires prior approval from parents. This adds an extra layer of safety and strengthens parental trust, while maintaining a balance between independence and security.

## Integrated residential schools are 'temples of learning': Bhatti Vikramarka

**Hyderabad:** Bhatti Vikramarka has directed officials to speed up the construction of the Integrated Residential School at Lakshimpuram village in Bonakal mandal of Madhira constituency, underlining that education remains the foremost priority of the Indiramma government.

During an inspection visit on Sunday, the Deputy Chief Minister personally reviewed the progress of the ongoing construction works, taking stock of the pace and quality of development at the site.

He toured multiple under-construction facilities, including junior hostel buildings, academic blocks for both junior and senior sections, as well as administrative structures that will form the backbone of the institution. Officials briefed him on the status of each component, outlining the timelines and challenges in-



involved in completing the large-scale project within the stipulated period. Bhatti Vikramarka also inspected the progress of specialised infrastructure, such as laboratories for mechanical, science, mathematics, and computer studies, which are expected to provide students with modern, hands-on learning experiences. Expressing concern over delays, he instructed both officials and contractors to accelerate the pace of work while strictly maintaining construction

standards and quality. He emphasized that any compromise in quality would undermine the long-term benefits of the institution, and urged all stakeholders to ensure durability and excellence in every aspect of the project. Highlighting the broader vision of the government, the Deputy Chief Minister said that strengthening the education sector is central to achieving inclusive development across Telangana. He reiterated that the Indiramma government

views education not merely as a service but as a powerful tool for social transformation and economic progress.

Bhatti Vikramarka stated that every rupee spent on education should be seen as an investment in the future, as it directly contributes to building a skilled and empowered generation. He described Integrated Residential Schools as "visionary temples of learning," designed to nurture talent, discipline, and holistic development among students. According to him, these institutions will provide high-quality education along with residential facilities, ensuring that students from all backgrounds receive equal opportunities to succeed. The project is expected to significantly benefit students in the Madhira constituency and surrounding regions by offering access to advanced educational infrastructure closer to home.

## Hospitals in smaller districts move from Referrals to solutions in UP

**Lucknow:** The culture of referring complex delivery cases to larger cities is on the decline in Uttar Pradesh.

Now, complex cases are being managed right within the smaller cities themselves. This shift is attributed to the capacity-building initiatives undertaken over the last four years for 1,791 doctors across 76 district hospitals in the state, thereby ensuring timely and high-quality healthcare services.

Officials here on Sunday said reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates remains a major challenge facing the healthcare system today, not only in Uttar Pradesh but across many parts of the country. Specifically, a shortage of specialist services at district and community health centers, a lack of capacity for rapid decision-making during emergencies, and complications surrounding timely referrals often lead to preventable adverse situations. The Regional Resource and Training Center (RRTC) model has emerged as a practical and effective solution to address these very issues. Currently, 20 medical colleges across the state are functioning as RRTCs, officials said. Established in 2017, the RRTC was conceived not merely as a training center, but as a response to a clear systemic imperative. At that time, several significant gaps were evident in maternal and neonatal health services at the district level—such as the excessive referral of complex delivery cases, a shortage of trained human resources, and limited capacity for decision-making and management during emergencies. These circumstances made it clear that the true solution lay not merely in expanding infrastructure, but in fostering skills, confidence, and systemic capacity at the local

level.

Moving beyond traditional training models, the RRTC has developed a hub-and-spoke-based mentorship model. In this framework, a medical college serves as the "Knowledge Hub," while the district hospitals act as "Spokes," receiving continuous guidance from the hub. This model incorporates on-site mentoring, continuous capacity building, the empowerment of nursing staff, and multi-departmental collaboration.

The RRTC established within the campus of J.N. Medical College in Aligarh stands as a prime example of this model. Through this center, the capacities of doctors and staff from the district hospitals of Aligarh, Hathras, and Kasganj have been enhanced; today, they are capable of handling even the most complex medical cases. Dr. Tabassum Rahmat, the RRTC Coordinator, explains: "Our objective is not merely to impart training, but to empower every healthcare unit to a level where it can face complex medical situations with confidence."

The impact of the RRTC model is most vividly evident at the District Women's Hospital in Kasganj. While the first successful C-section performed at this hospital in 2017 was considered a monumental achievement, the situation today has undergone a complete transformation. The operation theater is now fully equipped and fully functional. The majority of the doctors and staff have received specialized training, making it possible to manage complex delivery cases locally within the district itself. The most significant change is that many cases—which previously required immediate referral to larger cities—are now being successfully treated within the district.

## CM Reddy announces Rs 9,000 cr Rythu Bharosa release, dedicates palm oil unit to farmers

**Hyderabad:** A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday announced a major financial boost for the agricultural sector, unveiling the release of Rs 9,000 crore under the Rythu Bharosa scheme. The initiative is expected to benefit nearly 70 lakh farmers across the state, reinforcing the government's continued focus on rural welfare.

The Chief Minister shared the update through a post on the social media platform X, where he underlined his administration's commitment to strengthening the backbone of Telangana's economy — its farmers. He described the move as a significant step toward ensuring financial security for cultivators.

Reddy expressed a personal sense of responsibility toward the farming community, stating that he has assumed the role of an elder brother to farmers. He emphasized that his government aims to instill confidence among cultivators so they can pursue agriculture without fear or uncertainty.

The rollout of funds is being initiated from Narmeta village in Siddipet district, symbolically highlighting

the government's grassroots approach. By starting the disbursement from a rural region, the administration seeks to directly connect with farmers at the ground level. According to the Chief Minister, the scheme reflects the guiding principle of his governance — placing farmers at the center of policy decisions. He asserted that under his leadership, the farmer "truly reigns supreme," signaling a shift toward more inclusive and farmer-centric development. The Rythu Bharosa scheme has been designed to provide timely financial assistance to farmers, helping them manage input costs such as seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural needs.



## BJP flags concerns over Musi rejuvenation, demands clarity and rehabilitation policy

**Hyderabad:** BJP on Sunday raised serious concerns over the proposed Musi River rejuvenation project, questioning its feasibility, cost estimates, and impact on farmers and residents. Speaking at a discussion programme titled "Musi River Rejuvenation — Facts" held at a private hotel on Raj Bhavan Road, State BJP President N. Ramachander Rao said that while river cleaning is essential, it should not come at the cost of poor and middle-class families. He stressed that the Musi is not confined to Hyderabad but flows across multiple districts, supporting thousands of farmers. Increasing pollution, he noted, is already posing risks to agriculture and

public health, making comprehensive river purification necessary.

However, he cautioned that the current approach of the state government appears impractical and could severely affect livelihoods.

Rao questioned the financial viability of the project, pointing out that the government, which claims a lack of funds for welfare schemes like pensions and Rythu Bharosa, is proposing to spend massive amounts on Musi rejuvenation.

He also highlighted inconsistencies in official statements regarding the number of houses likely to be demolished, creating confusion among the public. The BJP leader alleged that large-

scale land acquisition—reportedly up to 3,000 acres—would impact farmers and disrupt vegetable supply to Hyderabad. He also criticised the proposed expansion of buffer zones, calling it discriminatory and unjust, especially for middle-class families and ex-servicemen who built homes through loans. While reiterating that the BJP is not opposed to river cleaning, beautification, or tourism development, Rao insisted that rehabilitation must precede any displacement. "Clean the Musi, but do not demolish poor people's homes without proper rehabilitation," he said, urging the government to adopt a transparent and practical approach.

# Receiving appointment letters in large numbers for daughters during Navratri is a positive sign: CM Yogi

**Lucknow:** "Today, the demand for nursing professionals exists not only in India but across the world.

During visits to Japan and Germany, there was a strong demand for nursing professionals, and people there hold Indian nurses in high regard. This is a matter of pride for our nursing professionals. Therefore, along with a nursing course, pursuing a diploma in a language can further improve future prospects."

These remarks were made by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath while addressing a program here on Sunday, where appointment letters were distributed to 1,228 nursing officers selected through a fair and transparent process.

CM Yogi personally handed over the appointment letters. Earlier, the newly selected officers

shared their thoughts and expressed gratitude. At the event, appointment letters were distributed to 1,097 female and 131 male nursing officers.

Chief Minister Yogi said, "Eastern Uttar Pradesh was once known for its poor healthcare system. Conditions were so bad that thousands of people lost their lives, with little attention given to their plight. Diseases like encephalitis and dengue claimed many lives every year. Alongside other infectious diseases, the region had been called a hub of health crises."

To address these challenges, major reforms were undertaken to strengthen healthcare infrastructure. ANM and GNM training institutes that had been closed for years were reopened. About 35 such ANM centers have been revived, and con-

struction of 31 new nursing colleges is underway.

He emphasized that not only medical colleges but also nursing and paramedical institutions play an equally important role. If doctors lead the healthcare system, nursing staff serve as its backbone. With this vision, equal priority is being given to nursing and paramedical education.

As a result, maternal and infant mortality rates have significantly declined. Uttar Pradesh, which once lagged behind the national average, is now approaching it.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "The state has made notable progress in digitizing healthcare services." Around 9.25 crore people have been covered under Universal Health Coverage. Additionally, more than 14.28 crore digital health IDs (ABHA IDs) have been

issued, enabling integrated healthcare services.

To improve access in rural and remote areas, tele-medicine and tele-consultation services have been introduced at 976 Commu-



nity Health Centers (CHCs). Real-time disease tracking systems have also been implemented to monitor and control diseases effectively. Significant changes have also been observed in medical education. The

"One District, One Medical College" initiative is being promoted, ensuring medical and nursing colleges in every district. Through Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University, efforts have

been made to bring all medical colleges onto a common academic platform. CM Yogi Adityanath stated that the number of medical colleges in the state has increased. AIIMS institutions in Gorakhpur and

Raebareilly are functioning effectively. Some colleges are also being operated under the PPP model, which is evolving into a "Public Trust Partnership" in districts like Maharajganj, Sambhal and Shamli.

There has been a significant increase in seats across various medical and healthcare programs. An additional 7,000 nursing seats and 2,000 paramedical seats have been introduced. Meanwhile, MBBS seats have risen substantially from 5,390 to 12,700, and postgraduate (PG) seats have increased from 1,221 to 5,056, reflecting a strong expansion in medical education capacity.

CM Yogi noted that Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences now offers advanced procedures like kidney, liver, and bone marrow transplants,

along with an Advanced Neurosciences Center and tele-ICU services.

Chief Minister Yogi said, "Receiving appointment letters in large numbers during the auspicious festival of Navratri, especially on Chaturthi, is a positive sign of women empowerment and increasing participation of daughters in society."

He advised nursing students to learn additional languages such as Marathi, Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil, and Bengali along with their courses, as this will open up better opportunities in India and abroad. Countries like Japan and Germany have a high demand for trained nursing professionals, where language skills can provide added advantages.

Simulation labs have been established in major institutions to provide prac-

tical training alongside theoretical education. Under the new education policy, students can also opt for dual degrees, combining nursing with language or other subjects.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the recruitment process is completely transparent and fair, offering equal opportunities to all sections of society. Reservation policies for SCs, STs, OBCs, persons with disabilities, and ex-servicemen are being strictly implemented.

Over the past nine years, the state government has provided more than 9 lakh government jobs — one of the highest numbers by any state in India. The selection process is conducted by competent commissions and agencies under strict monitoring, ensuring transparency and merit-based selection.

# BMC Cancels ₹150 Crore Road Marking Contract

**Mumbai** : The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has officially scrapped a ₹150-crore tender for thermoplastic road marking paint following allegations of a potential scam. Mumbai BJP President and MLA Ameet Satam flagged the contract, questioning why ₹50 crore was allocated equally to the city, eastern suburbs, and western suburbs despite significant differences in road mileage.

Satam argued that the western suburbs have nearly triple the road length of other areas, making the flat allocation arbitrary. He also pointed out that since ₹10,000 crore worth of concrete road work is already underway, marking should have been included in those existing contracts.

This marks the third major tender canceled recently due to

BJP intervention, following the scrapping of a ₹300-crore project for bollard railings and a ₹400-crore plan for the Byculla zoo.

In a significant move toward administrative accountability, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has officially terminated a ₹150-crore tender originally intended for the application of thermoplastic road marking paint across the city. This decision was reached following intense scrutiny and formal objections raised by Mumbai BJP President and MLA Ameet Satam, who flagged the project for containing several red flags indicative of a potential financial scam. The cancellation underscores a growing trend of rigorous oversight within Mumbai's civic body, particularly regarding the allocation of taxpayer funds for urban maintenance



and infrastructure projects.

The controversy began when Satam highlighted a glaring lack of logic in the budgetary distribution of the contract, which

had earmarked exactly ₹50 crore each for the island city, the eastern suburbs, and the western suburbs. He argued that such an equal split was entirely arbitrary

and ignored the geographical realities of Mumbai's road network. Specifically, the western suburbs possess a road length nearly triple that of the other

two zones, making a uniform financial allocation functionally impossible to justify without suggesting that the figures were drafted without any prior site analysis or genuine cost-estimation.

Beyond the uneven distribution of funds, the MLA pointed out a major redundancy in the tender's conceptualization that suggested a wasteful overlap of public spending. He noted that the BMC is currently executing massive cement concrete (CC) road works across the metropolis valued at over ₹10,000 crore. Standard engineering contracts for such large-scale road construction almost always include road markings and signage as a part of the primary work order. Satam contended that issuing a separate, standalone tender for the same task was an attempt

to double-bill the exchequer for work already covered under existing multi-crore contracts.

The MLA's formal complaint to the Mayor and the BMC Commissioner also raised concerns regarding the lack of transparency in the tender's unit costs, specifically the cost per kilometer for the paint application. In the absence of such granular data, Satam alleged that the tender was likely tailored to favor a specific cartel of contractors who often collude with civic officials to inflate project prices.

He emphasized that the BMC must shift away from a "contractor-centric" model of governance, where projects are designed by private interests, and move toward a "citizen-centric" approach where every rupee spent is backed by a clear and verifiable necessity.

## Airlines Adjust West Asia Flight Schedules

**Mumbai** : Major Indian carriers including IndiGo, Akasa Air, and Air India have issued travel advisories and modified their flight schedules due to rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia. While many Gulf routes remain operational, airlines warned that schedules may change without prior notice based on safety assessments.

Akasa Air has suspended flights to Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Kuwait until March 31, 2026, while offering full refunds or free rescheduling to affected travelers. Air India has also temporarily halted services to Tel Aviv and select Gulf cities, though long-haul flights to Europe and North America remain unaffected. Passengers are urged to monitor their flight status in real-time before heading to the airport.

Indian Carriers Re-route Operations Amid West Asia Tensions: Mumbai : In response to rapidly escalating geopolitical tensions across West Asia, India's leading



commercial airlines—IndiGo, Akasa Air, and Air India—have moved swiftly to issue comprehensive travel advisories and implement significant modifications to their international flight schedules.

This proactive stance comes as a direct result of safety assessments conducted in light of regional instability, which has forced carriers to prioritize passen-

ger and crew security over routine operations.

While a majority of the lucrative Gulf routes remain technically operational, the airlines have signaled a period of high uncertainty, warning travelers that flight timings and routes are subject to sudden changes or cancellations without prior notification. The disruption has hit Akasa Air particularly hard, leading to the strategic

decision to completely suspend all flight operations to key destinations including Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Kuwait.

This suspension is currently slated to last until at least March 31, 2026, as the airline monitors the evolving security situation on the ground.

To mitigate the inconvenience caused to thousands of booked passengers,

Akasa Air has rolled out a relief package that includes the option for full financial refunds or the ability to re-schedule travel to a later date without the usual penalty fees.

This move is seen as an essential step in maintaining customer trust during a period of international crisis that is largely beyond the airline's control. Air India, the country's flagship carrier, has also adopted a calibrated approach to the crisis, choosing to temporarily halt its direct services to Tel Aviv and several other select cities within the Gulf region. By suspending these high-risk routes, the airline aims to avoid any potential airspace complications while continuing to fulfill its global commitments.

However, the carrier has reassured the public that its long-haul "Gold Standard" routes to North America, Europe, and Australia remain largely unaffected by the localized tensions in West Asia.

## Crisis at Kalyan Station After OHE Incident

**Kalyan** : Train services were severely disrupted at Kalyan railway station on Sunday after an unidentified youth climbed a high-voltage overhead equipment (OHE) pole. The act triggered panic among commuters and forced railway authorities to suspend power to platforms 1, 1A, and 2 as a safety precaution.

Despite efforts by the GRP, RPF, and fire brigade to persuade him to descend, the youth eventually came into contact with a live wire. He suffered severe electric shocks and fell from a height, sustaining burns over an estimated 90% of his body. Critically injured, he was transported to a hospital in an auto-rickshaw due to a lack of immediate medical transport at the site. The incident has raised questions regarding emergency medical preparedness at major suburban stations.

A high-stakes emergency unfolded at Kalyan railway station on Sunday, leading to a complete standstill of train services and a harrowing scene for hundreds of commuters. The crisis began when an unidentified young man climbed a high-voltage overhead equipment (OHE) pole, a move that immediately triggered a state of panic across the platforms. In response to the life-threatening situation, railway authorities were forced to take the drastic step of suspending electrical power to platforms 1, 1A, and 2, causing significant delays and cancellations throughout the suburban network.

The situation escalated despite the arrival of the Government Railway Police (GRP), the Railway Protection Force (RPF), and the local fire brigade. For a considerable duration, emer-

gency responders attempted to communicate with the youth, using every possible means to persuade him to descend safely from the dangerous height. However, the standoff ended in tragedy when the individual made contact with a live overhead wire, resulting in a massive electrical discharge. The impact caused him to fall from the pole, and he was found to have sustained critical injuries, including severe burns over an estimated 90% of his body.

In the immediate aftermath, the lack of a specialized medical transport vehicle at the station became a point of significant contention. Due to the urgency of his condition and the absence of a dedicated ambulance on-site, the critically injured youth had to be transported to a nearby hospital in a local auto-rickshaw.

## Fire Destroys Scrap Warehouses in Bhiwandi

**Bhiwandi** : A massive blaze decimated two scrap warehouses in Kon village on Sunday, resulting in significant property damage. The fire is believed to have started when dry grass near the warehouses was intentionally set on fire by an unidentified person, quickly spreading to the highly flammable cloth, plastic, and paper stored inside.

Two fire engines from the Bhiwandi Fire Brigade, supported by private water tankers, battled the flames for approximately two hours before bringing the situation under control. While the warehouses were completely gutted, authorities confirmed there were no casualties or injuries. An investigation is currently underway to identify the individual responsible for igniting the grass.

A devastating fire broke out in Kon village on Sunday, completely decimating two large scrap warehouses and resulting in extensive property damage. The infer-



no, which sent thick plumes of black smoke billowing into the sky, originated from a nearby patch of dry grass. Witnesses reported that the grass had been intentionally set on fire by an unidentified individual, and the flames quickly spiraled out of control due to the afternoon winds.

The fire rapidly leaped from the parched vegetation to the warehouses, which

were filled with highly flammable materials including discarded cloth, plastic waste, and mountains of paper.

The Bhiwandi Fire Brigade responded to the emergency call with two fire engines, which were soon supplemented by several private water tankers to combat the escalating blaze. Firefighters faced a grueling two-hour battle to contain

the flames and prevent them from spreading to neighboring industrial units and residential clusters.

Despite the intensity of the heat and the volatile nature of the stored scrap, the teams were eventually able to bring the situation under control, though the warehouses themselves were unfortunately gutted beyond repair by the time the cooling operations began.

## Maharashtra Boosts Commercial LPG Supply

**Mumbai** : Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal announced that Maharashtra's commercial LPG allocation will increase by 20%, bringing the total supply to 50% of pre-crisis levels starting March 23. The decision follows a directive from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas intended to stabilize the food services sector. Priority for the additional supply will be given to hotels, restaurants, industrial canteens, and welfare kitchens. To qualify, businesses must register with Oil Marketing Companies and apply for Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connections. Additionally, the state has simplified kerosene distribution by automatically renewing pending licenses without fees and facilitating the transfer of licenses to legal heirs. In a move designed to provide critical relief to the state's hospitality and industrial sectors, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal has announced a



significant 20% increase in Maharashtra's commercial LPG allocation. This strategic adjustment, effective from March 23, will elevate the total available supply to 50% of the levels recorded before the recent energy crisis. The decision comes on the heels of a formal directive from the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, which aims to stabilize the food services industry and ensure that essential

cooking fuel reaches large-scale kitchens across the state. The state government has outlined a clear hierarchy for the distribution of this additional fuel, placing a high priority on establishments that cater to the public and workforce. Hotels, restaurants, and industrial canteens are at the top of the list, followed closely by welfare kitchens and community dining halls that provide affordable meals to the

underserved. By prioritizing these sectors, the administration hopes to mitigate the rising operational costs of the food industry, which has been grappling with supply chain disruptions and fuel volatility for several months.

To access the enhanced quota, businesses are required to meet specific regulatory milestones aimed at modernizing the state's energy infrastructure.

## Special Trains Announced for Gujarat Routes

**Mumbai** : Western Railway has introduced several special train services from Bandra Terminus to various cities in Gujarat to accommodate the summer travel rush. These services are scheduled to run between April 2 and July 31, 2026, targeting high-demand destinations like Bhavnagar, Gandhidham, Bhuj, Veraval, and Udhana.

Key services include Train 09207 to Bhavnagar and Train 09415 to Gandhidham. Furthermore, special bi-weekly services between Mumbai Central and Banmankhi (Haryana) have been extended until the end of July. Passengers are encouraged to check the specific schedules and booking details via the Western Rail-

way portal as these seasonal trains aim to clear the extra holiday rush.

In a proactive effort to manage the anticipated surge in passenger traffic during the upcoming summer vacation period, Western Railway has officially announced the introduction of several special train services.

These strategic additions to the rail network are designed to provide much-needed relief to travelers heading from Mumbai's Bandra Terminus to various high-demand urban centers across Gujarat.

The scheduled operations are set to commence on April 2 and will continue through July 31, 2026, covering the peak holiday

months when traditional train bookings often reach full capacity weeks in advance.

The expansion of services targets several key coastal and industrial destinations, ensuring that the heavy influx of tourists and migrant workers can find reliable transit options. Among the primary routes identified for these special runs are Bandra Terminus to Bhavnagar, Gandhidham, Bhuj, Veraval, and Udhana.

By focusing on these specific corridors, Western Railway is addressing the historical data that shows a consistent spike in travel demand toward the Saurashtra and Kutch regions during the summer break. Specific train numbers

have already been assigned to help passengers navigate the booking process, with Train 09207 designated for the Bhavnagar route and Train 09415 scheduled to serve Gandhidham. These trains are expected to feature a mix of air-conditioned and sleeper-class coaches to cater to a wide range of budgetary preferences. The move is part of a larger, state-wide initiative by Indian Railways to deploy "Holiday Specials" that bypass the usual waiting-list bottlenecks seen on regular long-distance expresses.

In addition to the Gujarat-bound services, Western Railway has also confirmed an extension of the bi-weekly special service operating between Mumbai Central

and Banmankhi. This particular route, which serves a vital connection to Haryana, has seen its operational window stretched until the end of July. This extension is a direct response to the sustained high occupancy rates observed on this line, providing a stable travel option for those visiting the northern plains during the peak of the heatwave season.

The announcement has been welcomed by frequent commuters and travel agents alike, who often struggle to secure berths on standard trains like the Kutch Express or the Saurashtra Mail during the summer.

By adding these special rakes, the railway administration is effectively increasing the total berth availabil-

ity by thousands of seats per week. This capacity boost is seen as an essential measure to prevent over-crowding and to ensure a safer, more comfortable journey for families traveling with children and elderly relatives.

Western Railway officials have emphasized that these special trains will adhere to the same safety and hygiene protocols as the regular fleet.

They have also encouraged passengers to utilize the official IRCTC website and the Western Railway portal for real-time updates on seat availability and platform assignments. Given the high demand, travelers are advised to book their tickets as early as possible, as these seasonal services are expect-

ed to fill up rapidly once the reservation windows open.

The logistics of managing these extra services require significant coordination between the Mumbai and Gujarat divisions of the railway.

Maintenance crews at the Bandra and Mumbai Central yards have been tasked with ensuring that the additional coaches are in peak mechanical condition. Furthermore, extra staff may be deployed at major stations to assist the "summer rush" passengers, helping to streamline the boarding process and manage the increased footfall on platforms during the departure of these special trains.

Economic analysts note that the introduction of such

special trains also provides a modest boost to the regional economies of the destination cities.

By facilitating easier travel, the railways are supporting the local tourism and hospitality sectors in places like Bhuj and Veraval, which see a significant number of visitors during the summer months. For many, these trains represent more than just a commute; they are a vital link to home and heritage during the longest holiday period of the year.

As the April 2 start date approaches, the Western Railway's social media handles are expected to release detailed timetables, including the specific halt stations for each special service.

## Editorial

### The Marketplace of Faith and the Vise of Charlatanism

In today's uncertain and stressful life, human beings constantly seek contentment, security, and refuge. Yet, this very quest often ensnares them in a web of deceit constructed under the guise of faith. The 'Captain Kharat' episode has exposed the shocking reality of this situation. This incident starkly highlights the extent to which charlatanism—lurking behind the veil of spirituality—has spread its tentacles, perpetrating not only financial exploitation but also psychological and physical abuse. This episode is not merely the crime of a single individual; rather, it serves as an exposé of a systemic failure—a system built upon society's blind faith and deep-seated fears. A simple and universal principle of economics states that whenever the demand for a specific good or service rises, the number of its suppliers inevitably increases as well. As this surge in demand intensifies, the price of that commodity or service skyrockets. Regrettably, this very principle appears to apply with uncanny precision to the 'market of spirituality and faith' in India today—particularly in the state of Maharashtra. In this era of uncertainty—where the common man remains crushed under the weight of countless crises, ailments, and mental stress—it appears that the official institutions tasked with guaranteeing protection are proving woefully inadequate. In such a helpless predicament, while those possessing immense wealth find it easy to purchase protection, the vast middle and lower-income segments of society are left to rely on luck or destiny for the resolution of their problems. It is precisely when this sense of helplessness assumes a collective form that the 'suppliers' within this marketplace of faith—namely, the fraudulent godmen and self-proclaimed spiritual gurus—begin to thrive. For the past several decades, this marketplace of faith has witnessed a perpetual boom. The primary reason for this phenomenon lies in the fact that this market makes a deceptive claim: that it alone can fulfill people's deep-seated psychological and emotional needs. Whether in a nondescript alleyway or an upscale district of the city, a charlatan sets up shop, spends lakhs of rupees on systematic advertising, and boldly pledges to deliver people from their troubles. The network of this trade is so enigmatic and deeply entrenched that once a person gets ensnared in its web, they themselves become a propagator of that very charlatanism. By touching upon sensitive facets of human life—such as spirituality, astrology, fortune-telling, love marriages, political success, the desire for progeny, or family discord—these 'shopkeepers' shrewdly serve their own interests. Every 'vendor' in this marketplace adopts a specific persona befitting their trade. Behind a mask comprising an innocent, serene smile, an outward simplicity designed to project an aura of divine power, and attire signifying asceticism, these individuals conceal their true, hideous faces. Within their ashrams or monasteries, an otherworldly atmosphere is meticulously crafted through the wafting fragrance of incense, the scent of sandalwood, and the artful arrangement of ritualistic paraphernalia. To lure the needy, the magic of 'miracles' is occasionally employed; and once a steady stream of devotees begins to flow, the cycle of exploitation accelerates. Despite knowing that in today's world, no marketplace offers a guarantee of unadulterated goods, people place blind faith in the marketplace of spirituality. Even after being swindled by one charlatan, people blame their own fate and, in a bid to escape their next predicament, seek refuge at the feet of yet another imposter. It is precisely this tendency that ensures these charlatans' businesses never cease to thrive. On the contrary, many of them enjoy direct state patronage and political protection, making it difficult even for the administration to muster the courage to take action against them. The recent unmasking of 'Captain Kharat'—a charlatan active in the Ahilyanagar and Nashik regions of Maharashtra—stands as a stark illustration of this very system of organized exploitation. Claiming to offer deliverance from problems through clairvoyance, this individual had donned the guise of a spiritual guide and a possessor of 'divine powers.' His devotees included not only the common people but also prominent political leaders, ministers, and distinguished entrepreneurs—a fact that fueled speculation that he enjoyed an impenetrable shield of protection. However, a single case of fraud has now completely torn away the mask concealing this twisted criminal nature. The Captain Kharat case is not merely confined to the crimes of a single individual; rather, it serves as a chilling reflection of the superstitions, fears, and blind faith deeply embedded within the collective psyche of our society. This charlatan's modus operandi was utterly ruthless: using concepts such as 'remedies,' 'rituals,' 'astrological defects,' or 'ancestral curses' to instill fear in people, and then exploiting their helplessness to physically and mentally abuse women. Administering sedatives to commit sexual assault—and subsequently filming these acts to blackmail the victims—constitutes not merely a series of isolated personal crimes, but rather an organized chain of exploitation. When such perverse tendencies receive social or political patronage, public faith in the justice system begins to waver. Therefore, the investigation into this case must not be limited solely to securing a conviction for Kharat; it is, instead, the need of the hour to expose the entire political and social nexus that enabled and nurtured his criminal activities. In the context of women's safety, this case serves as a grave wake-up call. Such exploitation, perpetrated through the gross abuse of trust, stands as a stark indicator of our society's moral degradation. It is imperative that women remain highly vigilant regarding such self-styled 'Gurus' and promptly report any suspicious activities. Maharashtra is heir to a rich legacy of the Warkari tradition and progressive thought; indeed, figures ranging from Sant Tukaram Maharaj to Gadge Baba have vehemently denounced and combated charlatanism. Although Maharashtra has pioneered the enactment of an Anti-Superstition Act—thereby setting a precedent for the entire nation—the darkness of superstition continues to persist within the grassroots of our society. Change is possible only when all three levels—the education system (by fostering a scientific temper rather than merely dispensing degrees), the media (by refusing to provide a platform for advertisements featuring such charlatans), and the administration (by taking strict action without succumbing to any political intimidation)—work in unison. Ultimately, the 'Captain Kharat' episode has once again confronted us with that same fundamental question: Are we truly a rational society? Or do we, the moment a crisis strikes, cast aside logic and become patrons of the charlatans peddling their wares in the marketplace of superstition? Finding the answer to this question is not solely the responsibility of the government or the judiciary; it is the duty of every conscientious citizen. As long as society fails to rely on reason and science to confront adversity, tendencies akin to that of 'Captain Kharat' will continue to roam freely within our midst, donning ever-changing masks. Putting an end to the patronage such charlatans receive—often from those in power—and shutting down this nefarious trade conducted in the name of faith has now become absolutely imperative for the social well-being of our society. Embracing the values of reason, scientific temper, and personal responsibility remains the only effective means to curb such perverse tendencies; otherwise, the relentless series of incidents that strip society of its moral dignity will continue unabated.

# National Conference on Cold Water Fisheries in Srinagar



The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India, is organizing the National Conference on Cold Water Fisheries at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir on 14th March 2026. The event will be held under the guidance of Hon'ble Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying (MoFAHD) and Panchayati Raj, in the august presence of Shri Manoj Sinha, Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir; Shri Omar Abdullah, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Jammu and Kashmir; Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel, Hon'ble MoS, MoFAHD, GoI; Shri George Kurian, Hon'ble MoS, MoFAHD, GoI; and Shri Javid Ahmad Dar, Hon'ble Minister, Agriculture Production Department, Jammu & Kashmir. This will be a first-of-its-kind national dialogue on sustainably harnessing the potential of India's Cold-Water Fisheries for growth and prosperity.

India's Cold Water fisheries form a unique and valuable segment of the country's aquaculture landscape, thriving predominantly in the high-altitude regions of the Himalayas,

parts of the Northeast, and select zones of the peninsular highlands. It is spread across Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and parts of the Western Ghats, North-east and peninsular regions, collectively covering over 5.33 lakh sq. km of mountainous terrain. This vast geography is enriched with pristine rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs, offering ideal ecological conditions for the growth and diversification of Cold Water fish species. With more than 278 identified Cold Water fish species, these ecosystems offer immense potential for livelihood generation, nutrition security, scientific aquaculture and biodiversity conservation.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), the Department of Fisheries, Government of India has undertaken major initiatives to strengthen the Cold-Water fisheries segment. A dedicated investment of ₹2,299.56 crore has been sanctioned to Cold Water states to modernize infrastructure, expand hatcheries, enhance seed and feed systems, develop raceway facilities, strengthen transport and cold-chain networks, and support livelihood-oriented activities. These interventions are

building the foundation for a modern, technology-driven Cold Water aquaculture ecosystem in India.

During the Conference, Hon'ble Union Minister FAHD Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh will release the "Model Guidelines for the Development of Cold Water Fisheries", distribute scheme benefits to Traditional and Progressive Cold-Water fishers, Fisheries Cooperatives under PM-MKSSY,

bow Trout, Brown Trout and Mahseer represent a high-value segment with significant growth potential. Targeted policy interventions have enabled trout production to grow nearly 1.8 times over the past decade. Yet India continues to import Salmon and premium Trout underscoring the need to expand domestic capacity. To address this, the Government of India has laid out the National Vision for Cold

as a timely and strategic intervention, providing a vital platform for dialogue, partnership and roadmap development to accelerate Cold Water fisheries, enhance sustainable livelihoods and strengthen nutritional security in India's hilly and remote regions.

Over the past decade, the Government of India has created a strong investment architecture to support fisheries across the country, in-

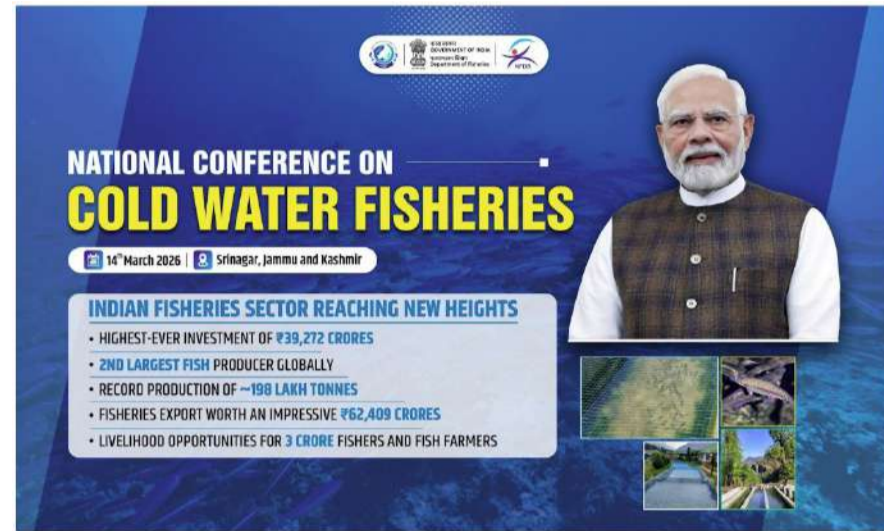
of over ₹39,272 crore has been envisaged, of which projects worth ₹34,266 crore have already been approved.

Under PMMSY, the Department of Fisheries has approved 5,600 raceways, 54 hatcheries, 5,600 trout rearing units, 293 cold storages, 8,044 transport vehicles and 260 feed mills, these activities are directly benefiting the Cold Water Fish farmers and have significantly improved production and distribution networks across states. Along with these activities, Insurance support to 33.78 lakh fishermen and livelihood and nutritional support to 23.51 lakh families have been provided ensuring social security and resilience among mountain communities

Among the twelve Integrated Aqua Parks (IAP) approved nationally, four IAPs, namely Anantnag in Kashmir, Udham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand, Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh and Mokokchung in Nagaland, fall under Cold Water fisheries. Notably, the Aqua Parks provide state-of-the-art facilities support fisheries development and ensure end to end connectivity throughout the value chain.

In addition, the Department of Fisheries, Government of India has notified Cold Water fisheries clusters including Jammu and Kashmir with Anantnag as the leading district, Uttarakhand with Pithoragarh as the leading district and Himachal Pradesh with Kullu as the leading district.

In order to strengthen supply chain for inland and high-altitude aquaculture in the future, the Department of Fisheries, GoI is also integrating unmanned aerial vehicles into India's aquaculture logistics via Drone technology. A pilot has been conducted which demonstrated that drone transport can reduce spoilage, improve access to markets and significantly enhance farmer returns in remote and infrastructure deficient areas where conventional transport is slow or unreliable.



and Kisan Credit Card beneficiaries along with awards distribution to the Best FPOs and Best Fisheries Start-ups from Jammu & Kashmir. The Technical session will deliberate on key thematic areas including research and innovation, technology adoption, infrastructure expansion, institutional convergence and entrepreneurship development.

The event aims to bring together policymakers, experts, researchers and stakeholders from Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala to explore collaborative pathways for sectoral advancement. By fostering knowledge exchange and aligning national and state priorities, the Conference seeks to accelerate sustainable growth in the Cold Water fisheries sector.

India's premium Cold Water species such as Rain-

Water Fisheries 2030, which aims to double cold water fish production (such as Trout and Mahseer) and generate livelihood oppor-

tunities. In this context, the National Conference serves



tunities. In this context, the National Conference serves

FIDF, PMMSY and PMMKSSY, an investment

## PM Mudra Yojana Provides Collateral-Free Loans up to ₹20 Lakh to Entrepreneurs and Enterprises

As informed by Department of Financial Services (DFS), Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) was launched on 08.04.2015 to extend collateral free credit up to Rs.20 lakh by Member Lending Institutions (MLIs), i.e. Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs). Any individual, who is otherwise eligible to take a loan and has a business plan for

small business enterprise can avail loan under the Scheme for income generating activities in the manufacturing, trading, service sectors including activities allied to agriculture across four loan categories, viz. Shishu (loans upto Rs. 50,000), Kishor (loans above Rs. 50,000 and upto Rs. 5 lakh), Tarun (loans above Rs. 5 lakh and upto Rs. 10 lakh) and Tarun Plus (loans above Rs. 10 lakh and upto Rs. 20 lakh for those entrepreneurs who have

availed and successfully repaid previous loans under the 'Tarun' category w.e.f. 24.10.2024).

The Scheme provides funding to small businesses, handicrafts, agriculture-allied activities and traditional enterprises on which many women rely for income. Further, women, who often lack collateral or credit history, have benefited from collateral-free loans provided under PMMY.

With a view to incentivize suc-

cessful borrowers under the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), a new category of Mudra Loans, namely 'Tarun Plus' was introduced in 2024-25 for those borrowers who have successfully repaid their Mudra loan under Tarun Category. Under 'Tarun Plus', collateral free loans upto Rs. 20 lakhs are provided to such borrowers.

The Government has taken several measures in order to sim-

plify the loan application process and ensure the timely disbursal of loans. Portals like Jan Samarth has been created with 15 credit linked schemes where the applicant can have the self-journey or assisted journey for applying specified loans.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Sushri Shobha Karandlaje in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

## J&K on India's pharma export map

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, and MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh today laid the foundation stone of a major Multi National Company pharmaceutical manufacturing facility at Village Gadadhar in district Kathua.

The project, with investment of over Rs 600 to 700 cr, is being set up by Orchid Pharma with facilitation from Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), under the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Jitendra Singh said the investment of around 600 crore rupees, being made under the Government of India's Production Linked Incentive Scheme, reflects growing confidence in the industrial and innovation potential of the Jammu & Kashmir region. He said the facility is expected to generate direct employment for nearly 400 people, while creating an equal number of indirect employment opportunities

for suppliers, logistics providers and other allied sectors.

The Minister highlighted that with its growing industrial infrastructure Kathua has the potential to emerge as a significant pharmaceutical manufacturing hub on India's pharma export map.

Dr. Jitendra Singh described the project as a major breakthrough for the pharmaceutical sector in the region, noting that the facility will manufacture the critical antibiotic intermediate Amino Cephalosporanic Acid (ACA), a key component in the production of cephalosporin antibiotics. At present, India depends almost entirely on imports of this intermediate from China, which creates vulnerabilities in supply security, pricing stability and healthcare access.

The Minister said, the Kathua facility would significantly strengthen India's strategic capabilities in pharmaceutical manufacturing and reduce import dependence on critical intermediates. "Antibiotics are foundational to modern healthcare, and the pandemic showed how dependence on a single geography for essential in-



puts can quickly become a national vulnerability".

Highlighting the broader policy vision, Dr. Jitendra Singh said the initiative reflects the vision of the Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi to make India self-reliant in critical healthcare technologies and pharmaceutical supply chains. He also referred to the newly announced ₹10,000 crore Biopharma Shakti initiative in the Union Budget aimed at strengthening India's biotechnology and biopharmaceutical ecosystem.

The Minister noted that India is rapidly emerging as a major player in the global biotechnology and

pharmaceutical sector, currently ranking third in biomanufacturing in the Asia-Pacific region and 30th globally. "The establishment of such advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing units has the potential to place Kathua on India's pharmaceutical export map," he said.

Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized that the Kathua project reflects India's intent to move up the pharmaceutical value chain thereby reinforcing the country's role as a reliable global supplier of essential medicines, particularly for countries that depend on India during health emergencies.

He added that establishing ad-

vanced pharmaceutical manufacturing in Jammu & Kashmir signals a new development approach focused on capability building, skill development and long-term value creation. "This is not merely about reducing imports; it is about building strategic capability where it matters most," he said, adding that such projects integrate regions like Jammu & Kashmir into the national growth story through knowledge-driven industries. The Minister said projects like this not only expand India's pharmaceutical capacity but also strengthen the country's health security by ensuring the availability and affordability of essential medicines even during global disruptions.

Secretary of the Department of Biotechnology, Dr. Rajesh Gokhale said that the bioeconomy is crucial for strengthening the country's scientific and economic capabilities, adding that science-led biomanufacturing initiatives such as emerging efforts in Kathua demonstrate how India is building the capacity to become a strong global competitor in biotechnology and advanced manufacturing.

## Swift action in 'Captain' case welcomed; Call for justice for victims

**Pune:** Hemant Patil, National President of India Against Corruption (IAC), has welcomed the swift action taken by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in the alleged astrologer case from Nashik.

He stated that the developments in the 'Captain' case have led to an embarrassing situation, forcing State Women's Commission Chairperson Rupali Chakankar to resign.

Patil expressed concern that if individuals holding constitutional positions are seen indirectly supporting anti-women activities, it raises serious questions about governance and public trust. He praised the Chief Minister for personally intervening and expediting the investigation,



highlighting his commitment to ensuring timely justice for victims. The case gained widespread at-

tention after serious allegations of sexual exploitation were levelled against Ashok Kharat in Nashik. The

controversy deepened after photos of Chakankar with Kharat and a video of a ceremonial ritual involving him went viral, sparking public outrage.

Following directives for Chakankar's resignation, Patil termed the move as a step in the right direction. However, he emphasised that the matter should not end with a resignation alone. He called for a thorough and impartial investigation, demanding strict action against all those found guilty.

Patil further stressed that the victims must receive swift and effective justice, and urged the government to implement strong preventive measures to ensure that such incidents do not recur in the future.

## VP inaugurates Jain exhibition at Lok Bhavan in Mumbai

**Mumbai:** Vice President of India, C. P. Radhakrishnan, today inaugurated a Jain literature exhibition at Maharashtra Lok Bhavan during his visit to attend the Jain Diksha Mahotsav.

Along with Governor Jishnu Dev Varma and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, the Vice President visited the exhibition showcasing Jain Tirthankar idols and ancient Jain manuscripts.

The Vice President stated that the teachings of Mahavira are more relevant today than ever before. Through his life, he conveyed the message of renunciation and simple living.

He further noted that Jainism has a noble tradition of renouncing worldly attachments and dedicating oneself to the service of society, which is truly exemplary. Referring to history, he mentioned that at one time nearly two-thirds of the population of Tamil Nadu followed Jainism and that Jain monks made immense contributions to Tamil literature.

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma observed that Jainism has played a significant role in preserving Indian culture. He noted that the Diksha tradition is an integral part



of Sanatan culture and highlighted the contributions of the Jain community even in northeastern states like Tripura and Nagaland. The Governor emphasized that the tradition of renouncing all material wealth and embracing asceticism is unique to India. He explained that non-violence is not limited to physical actions; even violent thoughts constitute a form of violence. True dharma, he said, lies in ahimsa, which paves the path to success. CM Fadnavis stated that the Jain community contributes significantly to the country's gross income and is also at the forefront of philanthropy. He highlighted that Jainism considers not only the welfare of human beings but also that of all living and non-living entities, including subtle life forms.

Appreciating the efforts of the Jain community in preserving ancient manuscripts, the Chief Minister appealed for their support in the restoration of old temples across the state. On this occasion, the Vice President felicitated youths who undertook Jain Diksha as well as donors who contributed to the preservation of Jain literature.

Minister for Skill Development Mangal Prabhat Lodha, Managing Trustee of Shri Adhyatma Parivar Trust Hitendra Mota, and trustees Rajesh Chandan and Babul Bhansali were present at the event. Earlier, on 8 February at Borivali, a total of 18 men and 46 women from different states and age groups embraced Jain Diksha, marking the occasion for organizing the Jain Diksha Mahotsav.

## Social worker Suresh Sakpal sets inspiring example with 101st blood donation

**Pune:** Marking the martyrdom day of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj and in the festive spirit of Gudi Padwa, social activist Suresh Sakpal set a remarkable example by donating blood for the 101st time, reinforcing the importance of humanitarian service.

Sakpal, founder-president of Sujay Pratishthan

and Maitri Raktachi, actively participated in a large-scale blood donation and health check-up camp held in Pune.

The camp was organized by the Hindu Group Raviwar Peth and supported by Adarsh Seva Mandal. The event witnessed the presence of office bearers, dedicated volunteers, and a significant

number of citizens.

On this special occasion, Sakpal's 101st blood donation stood out as a powerful symbol of commitment to social service and public welfare, inspiring many attendees at the event.

Speaking during the program, Sakpal highlighted the critical importance of blood donation, calling it one of the

noblest forms of charity that directly contributes to saving lives. He emphasized that a single act of donating blood can help multiple patients in need, especially during emergencies, surgeries, and medical treatments. Urging the youth to take initiative, Sakpal appealed to them to make blood donation a regular habit rather than a

one-time effort, stressing its long-term impact on society. He also noted that there is often a shortage of blood in hospitals, and voluntary donors play a crucial role in bridging this gap. The event not only focused on blood donation but also included health check-ups, promoting awareness about preventive healthcare among citizens.

## Children's Theatre Festival Organisers Honour Sai Paranjpye's Legacy in Pune

**Pune:** Iconic characters 'Cinderella' from Jhali Kay Gammat and 'Rani' from Shepticha Shaap, both from plays written by veteran writer, playwright, and director Sai Paranjpye, came to life as the yesteryear actors who personified those roles, interacted with young child artists during a special event here on Sunday in the run up to a Children's Theatre Festival.

The occasion marked the ceremonial script worship (Sanhita Pujan) of six children's plays authored by Paranjpye, organised by Samvad Pune as part of her 90th birthday celebrations. The festival, scheduled from April 18, will showcase these plays across Pune and its suburbs.

The theatre festival will feature six plays: Shepticha Shaap, Jhali Kay Gammat, Pakshyanche Kavi Sammelan, Salo Ki Palo, Jaducha Shankh, and Patte Nagarit. Posters of all six plays were unveiled by dignitaries and child artists at the event.

The script worship ceremony at the Patrakar Bhavan was conducted by Anjali Phadke-Joshi and Sandhya Devrukhar, who had per-



formed in Paranjpye's children's plays around 60 years ago—playing 'Cinderella' and 'Rani' respectively. The event was attended by noted personalities including children's writer Rajiv Tambe, along with organisers Sunil Mahajan, Nikita Moghe, and director Devendra Bhide.

Sunil Mahajan highlighted that the festival is being organised in collaboration with five theatre groups active in Pune's children's theatre scene.

The festival aims to bring quality children's theatre to audiences while paying tribute to Sai Paranjpye's immense contribution.

Recalling her early days, Anjali Phadke-Joshi shared that her association with Paranjpye began during her

time at Balodyan, which led her to act in these plays. She credited Paranjpye for shaping her journey in theatre.

Sandhya Devrukhar noted that Paranjpye's work has played a vital role in nurturing generations of child artists and promoting Marathi language and culture. She added that even after six decades, these plays continue to entertain while instilling strong cultural values.

Rajiv Tambe reminisced about being deeply influenced by Paranjpye's play Jaducha Shankh and expressed joy that her timeless children's plays are returning to the stage once again.

Director Devendra Bhide elaborated on the concept of the festival.

## RPI (A) likely to skip Bengal polls, says Athawale, hints full support to BJP

**Nagpur:** Union Minister and president of the Republican Party of India (A), Ramdas Athawale, on Saturday indicated that his party is considering staying out of the upcoming West Bengal Assembly Elections to prevent a split in votes, while extending full support to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Addressing a press conference in Nagpur, Athawale said that although RPI (A) has a presence in West Bengal, the party may refrain

from fielding candidates in the state to strengthen the BJP's prospects.

However, he clarified that the party will actively contest elections in other states, including Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Providing details, Athawale said the party is likely to field candidates in 25-30 constituencies in Tamil Nadu, 15-20 in Assam and 8-10 in Kerala, along with participation in Puducherry polls.

The 294-member West Bengal Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in two phases on April 23 and 29.

Meanwhile, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry will go to polls on April 9, while Tamil Nadu will vote on April 23.

Counting of votes for all states will take place on May 4. On another issue, Athawale termed the allegations against self-styled godman Ashok Kharat as "very serious" and demanded strict

action.

Kharat, who claimed to be a retired Merchant Navy officer and was popularly known as "Captain", has been accused of sexually assaulting a woman over a period of three years.

He also called for the immediate appointment of a new chairperson to the Maharashtra State Commission for Women following the resignation of NCP leader Rupali Chakankar amid the controversy surrounding the case.

## 900 women in Sangli being provided entrepreneurship training: Chandrakant Patil

**Sangli:** Chandrakant Patil, Maharashtra's Higher and Technical Education Minister, has stressed the importance of financial independence for women, stating that empowering women economically is key to strengthening families and, in turn, the nation's economy.

Speaking at a Women Entrepreneurship Training Program, Patil highlighted that enabling women to earn and support their families not only improves household stability but also contributes significantly to overall economic growth.

He emphasized that women must be equipped with the skills and opportunities needed to become self-reliant and capable of supporting not just their families but also their communities.

"If a woman is empowered, the entire family will be empowered and if the family is empowered, the country's economy will be strong," Patil said, underlining the broader impact of women's empowerment.

To promote this vision, he announced that around 900 women in the district are being provided entrepreneurship training under the District

Annual Plan.

The initiative aims to equip women with practical skills, business knowledge, and confidence to start and manage their own enterprises, particularly in rural areas. Patil, who also serves as the district guardian minister, said that such programs are crucial in unlocking the potential of women and integrating them into the economic mainstream.

He noted that women hold immense strength and influence in society and that empowering them can lead to transformative social and economic change.

## Man dies after bike catches fire near Eidgah in Nanded, Explosion-like sounds during blaze raise concerns

**Nanded:** A man was killed after his two-wheeler caught fire near the Eidgah in Nanded, Maharashtra, on Saturday prompting a detailed investigation by the police amid reports of explosion-like sounds during the incident.

The incident occurred when the man was travelling across a bridge in the Wajegaon Bandhara area near the city.

According to police officials, the incident took place between around 9:30 am and 10:00 am, when the vehicle suddenly caught fire while he was on the bridge. Eyewitnesses said that during the blaze, sounds similar to explosions were heard not only from the vehicle but also from the victim's body, creating panic among people present at the spot.

The fire was extremely intense, leaving the victim with nearly 90 per cent burn injuries. He was immediately shifted to a government hospital, but he succumbed to the injuries. The incident gained additional sensitivity as Eid prayers were underway at a nearby Eidgah at the time, prompting authorities to take the matter very seriously.

Senior police officers from Nanded rushed to the spot soon after receiving information and initiated a preliminary investigation. Authorities are examining whether the incident was purely accidental or whether there is any other underlying cause. A forensic team has also been called in to assist with the probe.

Officials are trying to determine the exact reason behind the sudden fire in the two-wheeler and the cause of the explosion-like sounds reported by witnesses. Multiple angles are being investigated, and various speculations have surfaced regarding the incident.

Police conducted a panchnama at the spot, and Additional Superintendent of Police Suraj Guru said that a thorough investigation is being carried out from all possible angles. Some materials recovered from the scene have been sent to the forensic laboratory for analysis. The identity of the deceased has been confirmed, but the details have not been disclosed yet due to the ongoing investigation. Police teams have also been deployed to probe different aspects of the case further.

## Veteran OBC leader and Champion of Muslim OBC Rights Shabbir Ansari passes away

**Jalna:** Shabbir Ahmed Ansari, founder and national president of the All India Muslim OBC Organisation and one of Maharashtra's most prominent voices for social justice, passed away on Sunday in Jalna district.

He was 75 and had devoted more than 45 years to the cause of religion-neutral reservations and empowerment of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), particularly among Muslim communities. He is survived by his wife, three sons and six daughters. His last rites are scheduled to be performed in Jalna at 9 pm. Born into a modest farming family in Jalna, Ansari grew up in a tin-roofed house and had limited access to formal education, never attended university and possessed only basic knowledge of English. Despite these constraints, he emerged as a self-taught grassroots leader deeply connected with rural backward communities. Inspired by socialist leaders such as Ram Manohar Lohia and Karpoori Thakur, he began organising occupational Muslim groups including weavers (Julahas), butchers (Qureishis), barbers (Nais),

vegetable growers (Raecens), oil pressers (Telis) and gardeners (Malis), who faced social and educational marginalisation despite their religious identity. In 1978, Ansari, along with Vilas Sonone and Hasan Kamal, founded the All India Muslim OBC Organisation, building a strong movement across Maharashtra and later nationwide. Under his leadership, more than 100 major gatherings were organised, including significant rallies in Aurangabad and Lucknow. His sustained advocacy played a key role in the Maharashtra government's decision on December 7, 1994 to include socially and educationally backward Muslim communities in the OBC category following the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations. Subsequently, over 57 Government Resolutions (GRs) were issued to simplify certification and extend benefits to Muslim OBC communities. Ansari also earned rare administrative trust, with former Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh reportedly authorising him to recommend OBC certificates directly. Throughout

his career, Ansari maintained a firm ideological position on reservation policies. He opposed proposals such as carving out a 4.5 per cent minority sub-quota from the 27 per cent OBC quota,



arguing that such measures would divide Hindu and Muslim OBCs and harm the most backward sections. He consistently advocated for religion-neutral reservations and supported the full implementation of the Ranganath Mishra Commission report. Ansari's journey was marked by strong resistance. Sections of the Ashraf Muslim elite and organisations accused him of dividing the community, while even some backward Muslim groups initially resisted quota demands. He also faced

personal threats and attacks, including an attempted stabbing, along with internal betrayals. Despite this, he continued his activism with determination. He received notable support from

legendary film actor Dilip Kumar, who stood firmly behind the Muslim OBC movement during critical phases. Dilip Kumar accepted patronage of the organisation in 1990, participated in several gatherings and referred to himself as a "gardener" of the movement, helping spread awareness against caste-based discrimination. Ansari also shared a long-standing association with senior OBC leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhubhal. Both leaders worked together on

several platforms, including the All India Muslim OBC Conference's Samvidhan Samman Sammelan in Mumbai in 2018, where they opposed any attempts to alter the Constitution and demanded justice for OBC communities. Bhubhal had publicly expressed his readiness to work "shoulder to shoulder" with Ansari. In May 2025, when Ansari was admitted to Tata Hospital in Mumbai due to ill health, Bhubhal was among the first prominent leaders to visit him, reflecting their close personal and ideological bond. In recent years, Ansari remained active in public debates. In 2024, he opposed the Maharashtra government's move to include sections of the Maratha community in the OBC category through Kunbi certificates, joining leaders like Chhagan Bhubhal, Prakash Shendge and Vijay Wadetiwar in raising concerns over its impact on existing OBC rights. His life and struggles were documented in the Marathi non-fiction autobiography "Mandal Nama", compiled by Dilip Waghmare and later translated into Urdu by Malik Akbar. The book

was released in 2024 at Mumbai's Khilafat House, where speakers described him as a "revolutionary" and a "standing hero from zero" who compelled political leadership to recognise Muslim OBC reservations through relentless effort.

Ansari was widely respected for his selfless approach, never seeking personal political gains such as Rajya Sabha membership or other positions. His commitment earned him respect across political lines. Following his demise, condolence meetings are being held in Jalna, Aurangabad, Mumbai and other regions. Leaders including Chhagan Bhubhal, Vijay Wadetiwar, Abu Asim Azmi, Mohammad Arif Naseem Khan and Maulana Abdul Qayyum Nadvi paid tributes, describing his death as a major loss to the OBC movement. Shabbir Ahmed Ansari's lifelong struggle for Muslim OBC reservation, social justice and unity among backward communities benefited thousands of families. His work is expected to remain a strong foundation for future generations advocating equitable rights and inclusive policies.

## 'Captain' Ashok Kharat interrogated today for seven hours by SIT

**Nashik:** Self-proclaimed godman and numerologist Captain Ashok Kharat, who is currently in custody on charges of allegedly sexually exploiting multiple women, was interrogated for nearly seven hours on Sunday by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the Maharashtra Government. The prolonged questioning forms part of an ongoing probe into serious allegations against Kharat, with investigators seeking to gather detailed information regarding the accusations and identify potential victims and accomplices, if any. According to officials, the SIT has been tasked with conducting a comprehensive and time-bound investigation into the case, given the gravity and sensitivity of the allegations. After the extensive round of interrogation, Kharat was once again sent back to police custody for further questioning and investigation. Sources said that the SIT is examining multiple aspects of the case, including the circumstances under which the alleged incidents took place and the methods allegedly used by the accused.

## Kej calls Dhurandhar a revolution, questions Bollywood narratives

**Mumbai**: Ricky Kej has weighed into the intensifying “propaganda versus truth” debate within the Indian film industry, describing Dhurandhar as a “revolution” that presents “unvarnished truths” and reflects what he called a renewed sense of national identity.

Kej’s remarks come at a time when discussions around storytelling in Indian cinema have become increasingly polarised, with filmmakers, critics, and audiences debating the balance between artistic expression and ideological messaging.

Speaking about the franchise helmed by Aditya Dhar, Kej suggested that the films mark a departure from long-established narrative patterns in mainstream cinema.

He argued that for decades, Bollywood has often normalised certain storytelling conventions, including sympathetic portrayals of antagonists, predictable character arcs, and depictions of Indian traditions as regressive.

According to Kej, such recurring patterns have sub-



tly shaped audience perceptions over time, influencing how stories are consumed and interpreted.

In contrast, he said the “Dhurandhar” films attempt to break away from these conventions by embracing what he described as more rooted and assertive storytelling.

He positioned the franchise as part of a broader shift in Indian cinema, where narratives are increasingly being re-examined through a cultural and national lens.

Kej’s comments have sparked a wider conversation across the industry, with reactions pouring in from various quarters, reflecting differing perspectives on the issue.

While some voices have supported his views, calling for more authentic and culturally grounded narratives, others have urged caution against labelling earlier cinematic trends as propaganda.

Critics of this emerging viewpoint argue that such generalisations risk oversim-

plifying the diverse storytelling traditions that have existed in Indian cinema over the decades.

They also warn that in attempting to correct past narratives, filmmakers could unintentionally swing too far in the opposite direction, potentially compromising nuance and balance.

Industry observers note that the debate extends beyond a single film or franchise, touching upon fundamental questions about creative freedom and artistic

responsibility.

The discussion also highlights the challenge of maintaining ideological balance while catering to evolving audience expectations in both domestic and global markets.

As cinema continues to evolve, the role of filmmakers in shaping narratives — and the responsibility that comes with it — remains at the centre of this ongoing discourse.

Amid this backdrop, Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge has continued to draw attention, not only for its reported box office performance but also for fuelling a broader conversation on truth, perspective, and storytelling.

The film’s reception underscores how modern cinema is increasingly becoming a space for dialogue and debate, where entertainment intersects with ideology.

Ultimately, the conversation ignited by Kej’s remarks reflects a changing cinematic landscape, where audiences are more engaged than ever in questioning the narratives presented on screen.

## Mallika Sherawat boards ‘The Traitors India’ season 2

**Mumbai**: Mallika Sherawat has officially joined the filming of the second chapter of the reality show The Traitors India, which has now commenced production in the regal desert city of Jaisalmer.

The new season of the show is being shot at the luxurious Suryagarh Palace, a grand heritage property known for its royal architecture and opulent setting. The venue adds a dramatic and visually rich backdrop to the high-stakes reality format.

Interestingly, Suryagarh Palace had earlier gained nationwide attention for hosting the much-talked-about wedding of Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra in January 2023, further enhancing its status as a premium destination for celebrity events.

The show continues to be hosted by renowned filmmaker and television personality Karan Johar, who recently travelled to Jaisalmer to kick off the filming of the new season.

Known for his charismatic hosting style, Karan Johar is expected to once again bring intrigue and drama to the show, which blends strategy, deception, and en-



tainment.

Mallika Sherawat’s participation has already generated buzz, as the actress has largely stayed away from mainstream Indian projects in recent years while residing abroad. She was last seen in the 2024 film Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video, marking her return to the screen after a gap. Mallika rose to prominence with her bold performance in the film Murder, a role that was considered unconventional and daring at the time, helping redefine on-screen portrayal of female characters. Over the years, she has carved a niche for herself with a mix of Bollywood and international appearances, gaining recognition beyond Indian cinema.

She also featured alongside global pop star Bruno Mars in the music video “Whatta Man,” showcasing her presence on international platforms.

The second season of “The Traitors India” promises to be bigger and more competitive, featuring a total of 20 participants from diverse backgrounds. The contestant lineup includes actors, digital content creators, and personalities from various fields, adding to the unpredictability and excitement of the show. The announcement of Season 2 was made by Amazon Prime Video India even before the conclusion of the first season, reflecting strong audience interest and confidence in the format.

## Babil Khan’s Eid gift has a special connection with Tabu

**Mumbai**: Babil Khan marked the festive occasion of Eid with a heartfelt social media post, offering fans a glimpse into a deeply personal and emotional moment.

Taking to Instagram, Babil shared a picture of himself dressed in a traditional kurta, which he revealed was a special gift from veteran actress Tabu.

In the caption accompanying the post, he wrote, “Eid Mubarak, the kurta is a gift from @tabutiful,” keeping the message simple yet meaningful.

The gesture carried emotional significance, as Tabu shares a long-standing bond with Babil’s late father, Irrfan Khan, one of Indian cinema’s most respected and beloved actors.

Tabu and Irrfan Khan were known not only for their memorable on-screen collaborations but also for their deep friendship and mutual admiration off-screen.

Over the years, the duo built a reputation as an iconic pair, delivering performances that resonated with audiences and critics alike.

Their connection extended beyond films, rooted in

trust, respect, and a shared passion for meaningful cinema.

Following Irrfan Khan’s passing, that bond appears to have gracefully extended to the next generation, with Tabu maintaining a close and affectionate relationship with Babil.

The Eid gift, therefore, was not just a festive token but a symbol of continuity — a bridge between past memories and present relationships. Following the passing of Irrfan Khan, the deep bond he shared with Tabu appears to have naturally extended to the next generation, with the actress maintaining a warm and affectionate relationship with Babil Khan.

This continuity of connection was evident in Babil’s recent Eid post, where a simple gift carried profound emotional meaning. The kurta gifted by Tabu was not merely a festive gesture, but a symbol of enduring relationships — a bridge linking cherished memories of the past with the present.

Babil’s post subtly captured how such gestures can hold layers of emotion, seamlessly blending celebration

with remembrance.

For fans and admirers, the moment served as a touching reminder of Irrfan Khan’s lasting legacy, not just as an actor but as someone who built meaningful and lasting relationships.

It also highlighted how those connections continue to influence and support Babil as he forges his own path in the film industry.

The kurta itself took on a deeper significance, becoming more than just attire for the occasion — it symbolised warmth, affection, and a shared emotional history.

Through this understated yet powerful exchange, Babil and Tabu demonstrated how genuine bonds can transcend time and circumstance. Their interaction reflected a quiet continuity of love and respect, rooted in shared experiences and memories.

Such moments often resonate more deeply because of their simplicity, reminding audiences of the human side of public figures. The gesture also illustrated how relationships within the film industry can evolve into familial ties that endure beyond professional collaborations.

This structured yet fluid

## Radhikka Madan turns showstopper at Lakmé Fashion Week in bold fusion look; praises student designers

**Mumbai**: Radhikka Madan made a striking appearance at Lakmé Fashion Week, turning showstopper for designers Mannat Jain and Sneha Ali Shetty of NIF Global.

Known for her versatility on screen, Radhikka brought the same spirit of individuality and experimentation to the runway, capturing attention with a distinctive fusion ensemble.

Her presence added energy to the showcase, with the actor confidently carrying a look that blended bold design choices with subtle elegance.

Over the years, Radhikka has built a reputation for selecting roles that reflect range and depth, and her fashion choices appear to mirror that thoughtful approach.

At Lakmé Fashion Week, she opted for an outfit that seamlessly combined traditional elements with modern silhouettes, creating a visually compelling statement.

The ensemble featured a boxy Madras checks crop shirt paired with high-waisted, wide-legged blue pants inspired by Japanese origami styles.

This structured yet fluid

combination struck a balance between rigidity and movement, giving the outfit a unique and contemporary edge.

A matching clutch and minimal accessories complemented the look, ensuring that the focus remained firmly on the design and its construction.

Her appearance quickly became a talking point at the event, with many noting her confident runway presence and the distinctiveness of her styling.

Unlike heavily embellished or conventional showstopper outfits, this look leaned into creativity, craftsmanship, and innovative tailoring.

It also aligned with current fashion trends that celebrate fusion wear, cross-cultural influences, and experimental design aesthetics.

During a press interaction, Radhikka expressed her admiration for the designers behind the ensemble, particularly highlighting that it was created by students.

She praised the craftsmanship and originality of the outfit, describing it as



both creative and thoughtfully executed. During a press interaction, Radhikka Madan expressed her admiration for the designers behind the ensemble, particularly high-

lighting that the outfit was created by students.

She praised the craftsmanship and originality of the design, describing it as both creative and thoughtfully

executed, reflecting a fresh perspective in contemporary fashion.

Radhikka shared that she felt privileged to represent their work on such a prominent platform, adding that she thoroughly enjoyed wearing the ensemble on the runway.

Her appreciation underscored the importance of providing young designers with opportunities to showcase their talent on larger stages.

The collaboration also reflects a growing trend within the fashion industry, where established actors and public figures actively support and promote emerging creative talent.

Such partnerships help bridge the gap between new designers and wider audiences, offering visibility that might otherwise be difficult to achieve.

They also encourage experimentation and innovation, allowing fresh ideas to flourish within an increasingly competitive fashion ecosystem. By aligning herself with student designers, Radhikka reinforced the value of nurturing creativity at its grassroots level.

## Akansha Ranjan Kapoor teases a deeper, personal turn as Dr. Gargi in Gram Chikitsalay 2

**Mumbai**: Amazon Prime Video India has announced an exciting addition to its content slate with the return of Gram Chikitsalay Season 2, bringing back Akansha Ranjan Kapoor in her widely appreciated role as Dr. Gargi.

The series, which earned praise for its grounded and realistic storytelling in its debut season, is now set to return with a more focused and layered narrative centered around its lead character.

Set in the fictional town of

Bhatkandi in Jharkhand, the show explores life within a Primary Health Centre, offering a glimpse into the realities of rural healthcare in India. In the first season, Dr.

Gargi was portrayed as a composed and compassionate medical professional, balancing her clinical responsibilities with a strong sense of empathy and emotional intelligence. Her character emerged as a central pillar of the narrative, often guiding and supporting Dr. Prabhat, played by Amol Parashar, as he navigated the challenges of working in an under-resourced rural environment.

One of the defining aspects of the show was its departure from conventional storytelling tropes, particularly its avoidance of forced romantic angles between the lead characters. Instead, the narrative emphasized mutual respect, shared purpose, and professional camaraderie, which resonated strongly with audiences seeking more realistic portrayals. With Season 2, the storyline is expected to

shift its focus more prominently towards Dr. Gargi’s personal and professional journey, adding greater emotional depth to her character. Speaking about the new season, Akansha Ranjan Kapoor expressed her enthusiasm about returning to a story she described as deeply rooted and authentic.

She noted that the upcoming season will explore Dr. Gargi’s vulnerabilities, internal conflicts, and quiet resilience, presenting a more nuanced portrayal of her character.

According to the actress, Dr. Gargi represents countless doctors working in small towns and villages, who continue to serve communities despite limited resources and challenging conditions. She also highlighted the sense of responsibility she feels in portraying the character truthfully, given the real-world parallels the story draws from.

The second season aims to delve deeper into the complexities of rural medical practice, shedding light on systemic challenges while also celebrating the dedication of healthcare professionals. Dr. Gargi’s evolving arc is expected to take centre stage, offering viewers a closer look at the sacrifices and emotional strength required in such roles.

At its core, “Matka King” tells the story of a cotton trader striving for respect and legitimacy within society. His journey reflects the aspirations and struggles of individuals seeking upward mobility during that era.

In pursuit of recognition, the protagonist introduces a new gambling game known as ‘Matka’. What begins as an idea soon evolves into a widespread phenomenon that disrupts the

## Prime Video unveils new poster of Matka King starring Vijay Varma

**Mumbai**: Amazon Prime Video has unveiled a striking new poster for its upcoming series Matka King, offering audiences a glimpse into the tone and world of this period drama. The visual hints at a story rooted in ambition, risk, and transformation.

Headlined by Vijay Varma, the series is set in 1960s Mumbai and delves into the rise of an underground gambling network. The setting plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative, reflecting a time of social and economic transition.

The newly released poster places Vijay Varma at the center, holding a spread of playing cards close to his face. His intense gaze and composed demeanor suggest a character who thrives in a world driven by calculation and high stakes.

The design of the poster leans heavily into a vintage aesthetic, with muted tones and period-specific styling that effectively recreate the look and feel of the 1960s. This visual approach enhances the authenticity of the series.

The playing cards in the poster serve as a symbolic element, representing not just gambling but also strategy, control, and the unpredictability of fate. They hint at the layered storytelling that the series aims to deliver.

At its core, “Matka King” tells the story of a cotton trader striving for respect and legitimacy within society. His journey reflects the aspirations and struggles of individuals seeking upward mobility during that era.

In pursuit of recognition, the protagonist introduces a new gambling game known as ‘Matka’. What begins as an idea soon evolves into a widespread phenomenon that disrupts the



existing social order.

As the game gains popularity, it begins to reshape a system that was once firmly controlled by the elite, opening doors for new participants while simultaneously disrupting established hierarchies.

This transformation creates fresh opportunities for many individuals seeking upward mobility, but it also fuels tension and conflict within the community as power structures are challenged.

The narrative is expected to delve into how the rise of this gambling network influences the social fabric of the time, exploring deeper themes of power, ambition, and the consequences that follow unchecked growth.

At its core, the story reflects a shifting society, where traditional authority is questioned and new forces emerge to redefine influence and control.

The series Matka King is created and directed by Nagraj Manjule, who has also co-written it with Abhay

Koranne.

Their collaboration is expected to bring a strong and grounded creative vision, combining realism with compelling storytelling rooted in socio-economic realities.

Production duties are being handled by Roy Kapur Films in association with Aatpat Films and SMR Productions.

The team of producers includes Siddharth Roy Kapur, Nagraj Manjule, Gargi Kulkarni, Ashish Aryan, and Ashwini Sidwani, bringing together a diverse mix of creative and production expertise.

The ensemble cast further strengthens the series, featuring Vijay Varma in a key role alongside actors such as Kritika Kamra, Sai Tamhankar, Siddharth Jadhav, Bhupendra Jadawat, and Gulshan Grover.

Each member of the cast is expected to bring depth and nuance to the narrative, contributing to a layered storytelling experience filled with complex interpersonal dynamics.



# T20 World Cup snub will fire up Gill in IPL 2026: Pujara

**New Delhi:** The decision to leave Shubman Gill out of India's squad for the recently concluded ICC Men's T20 World Cup may serve as added motivation for the India Test and ODI captain as he looks to guide Gujarat Titans to the title in the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026.

Former India Test specialist Cheteshwar Pujara believes Gill will use the disappointment of missing out on the T20 World Cup squad as fuel to lead the Titans to success when the IPL begins on March 28.

The Titans, champions in 2022, were knocked out in the Eliminator during the 2025 season and will be aiming to go further this time and secure their second IPL trophy.

Speaking on JioHotstar's 'Game Plan - Know Your Team', Pujara discussed how the T20 World Cup snub could motivate Gill in IPL 2026.

"The T20 World Cup squad snub will definitely fire up Shubman Gill. He is a quality player suited for all three formats. If he has a good IPL 2026 season, he will surely put his name in India's T20I squad. He is leading the Test squad and is also the ODI captain. He is a



multi-format player. If he has a good season, he will be back in the scheme of things for the Indian team.

"There will be some pressure on him because he has not been part of the India squad in the shortest format. But at the same time, it is a great opportunity for him to carry on batting the way he has. He needs to try to accelerate a little more because that is something he has been working on. This IPL season is the perfect one for him to show he can bat at a strike rate of 150 to 160," said Pujara.

Pujara also spoke about the prospects of young pacer

Ashok Sharma, who was signed by the Titans for Rs 90 lakh at the auction, and the possibility of him making his IPL debut this season. He added that working under head coach Ashish Nehra could benefit the youngster: "Playing your first IPL season with a team like GT, under the guidance of Ashish Nehra, will be a big opportunity for Ashok Sharma. He may not get into the playing XI immediately, early in the season, because you have Prasad Krishna, Mohammed Siraj, and Kagiso Rabada as the third seamer. But I won't be surprised if Rabada misses out

at some point.

"If they think of bringing in someone like Jason Holder, who has been in prime form in T20 cricket, they could have an extra Indian seamer in Ashok Sharma instead of Rabada. That might be a combination GT can look at. But in the first phase of the IPL, their playing XI will likely remain as it was in the past."

Pujara further assessed Gujarat Titans' overall squad strength and said the team has the resources to emerge as title contenders this season. "GT look like a title favourite this season. If you look at their squad, the

top order of captain Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan, and Jos Buttler is incredible. You cannot have a better top order than them. These three have scored runs with amazing consistency. That is their main strength."

"The number of all-rounders they have, especially with the addition of Holder, makes them even stronger. Holder is in great form with both bat and ball, and will love to contribute in both departments. Rahul Tewatia will be their main finisher. He can bowl a few overs if needed, but his primary job is to bat well at number six or seven. Shahrukh Khan is also a key player. If he starts performing as per his potential, GT will be a different team altogether."

"When it comes to bowling, their strength is their seamers. Rabada, Siraj, and Prasad are their main pacers, and Ishant Sharma is also on the bench if needed. Ashok will be unleashed with his fiery pace at some point in the season. Left-arm Luke Wood is another seamer who knows how to do well. If Rabada does not perform, Wood can replace him. But I hope Rabada, being a strike bowler, has a good IPL. All GT fans will be hoping the same," said Pujara.

## Chepauk 'ROARs, CSK's mega fan spectacle featuring OG Stars, AR Rahman held at iconic Chepauk stadium

**New Delhi:** In a never-seen-before celebration, five-time champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK)'s ROAR '26 - a first of its kind mega fan event was held at the iconic MA Chidambaram Stadium here on Sunday evening.

In a historic coming-together of eras, "OG" Super Kings, led by former CSK cricketers Suresh Raina, Matthew Hayden, Murali Vijay and S Badrinath among others, reunited on

their legendary turf to take on the current CSK squad in a series of high-energy, never-seen-before match-ups.

The evening also witnessed the legendary Oscar award-winning music director AR Rahman delivering a special live performance, turning Chepauk into a pulsating arena of music and lights, filling it with celebration and immersive fan experiences creating memories that last a lifetime. This mega celebration is more

than just an event; it's a tribute to the journey of the CSK and the unwavering love of the fans. CSK MD K Viswanathan said. From iconic moments of the past to the promise of the future, it was a night where cricket met entertainment in the grandest way possible that witnessed unforgettable moments, friendly rivalries and plenty of "yellove" lighting up the night and kept the audience spellbound for more than two hours.

## Shooting: NRAI National Coaches Course concludes in Jamshedpur

**Jamshedpur:** The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), in collaboration with the Jharkhand State Rifle Association, successfully concluded its seven-day National Coaches Course on Sunday reinforcing its commitment to strengthening grassroots coaching and building a scientifically driven ecosystem for shooting sports in India.

The course witnessed participation from 33 coaches representing 5 different states, including a strong contingent of 19 coaches from Jharkhand.

Designed as a comprehensive and intensive training program, the course integrated technical excellence with sports science, coaching methodology, and practical application, ensuring a holistic learning experience for all participants.

The technical sessions were led by Olympian and Indian Team Coach Sanjeev Rajput and Indian team coach Vidya Jadav. These sessions focused on core aspects such as weapon handling, shooting techniques, error correction, and competition preparedness, providing coaches with direct insights from elite level experience and international standards.

A key strength of the program was its Sports Science integration, where expert-led sessions provided coaches with practical tools to enhance athlete performance.

The Sports Psychology session by Nanaki Chadha focused on the mental dimensions of performance and well-being. Coaches were introduced to concepts such as performance profiling, goal setting, anxiety management, confidence building, and effective coach-athlete communication, along with creating psy-



chologically safe training environments.

The Nutrition module by Charvi Bajaj provided insights into fueling strategies, hydration, and recovery, helping coaches understand how nutrition directly impacts consistency and performance.

In the Strength & Conditioning session, Vijendra Pal Singh emphasized stability, posture, muscular endurance, and fatigue management, along with practical routines for warm-up and cool-down tailored to shooting athletes.

Human Anatomy sessions by P N Vineel Kumar provided coaches with a deeper understanding of the human body in relation to shooting performance, going beyond basics to cover biomechanics, muscle engagement, posture alignment, and joint stability. The session helped coaches understand how different body systems contribute to precision, balance, and endurance in shooting, enabling them to identify technical errors linked to physical limitations and improve athlete efficiency through better body awareness. The Communication Skills session by Salil Srivastava focused extensively on building effective coach-athlete relationships through clear, structured, and empathetic communication. It emphasized the importance of active listening,

constructive feedback, conflict management, and motivation techniques, helping coaches create a positive and high-performance training environment. The session also highlighted how communication plays a critical role in athlete confidence, learning speed, and overall performance consistency.

The course concluded with a formal examination to assess participants' understanding. As part of the next phase, coaches have been assigned a practical field project, where they will work with athletes and submit a presentation over the next two months.

The second phase of the course will be conducted again in Jamshedpur, where participants will present their work and continue their development under the NRAI education pathway. Upon successful completion of both phases of the course, participants will be awarded an official NRAI certificate.

JSRA President Divakar Singh said that such sessions will be conducted regularly in Jharkhand to further enhance the quality of coaches across the region.

This initiative reflects NRAI's continued vision of developing well-rounded, scientifically informed coaches, capable of enhancing performance at all levels while supporting the overall growth of shooting sports in India.

## Team improved significantly since qualifiers: Head coach Joakim Alexandersson

**New Delhi:** The Indian U20 women's team are on the threshold of the AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup 2026 in Thailand, and not just as participants, but as a side shaped by deliberate preparation and international exposure.

Under Swedish head coach Joakim Alexandersson, India's build-up has been structured with a clear objective: to put on a solid and brave performance against Asia's elite. India will face Japan on April 2 at 18:30 IST, Australia on April 5 at 14:30 IST, and Chinese Taipei on April 8 at 14:30 IST, in Group C. The top two teams in the group and the two best third-placed teams among all three groups will make it to the quarter-finals. Further, the four quarter-final winners will qualify for the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup Poland 2026.

The Young Tigresses arrived in Bangkok 13 days before the first

game, which will give them valuable time to adjust to the climate. However, it is not too different from the conditions in Kolkata, where the team trained after their return from Sweden earlier this month.

India's preparation has spanned continents and styles, beginning with high-intensity friendlies closer to home. Matches against Uzbekistan in Mahabalipuram and Kazakhstan in Shymkent last year offered contrasting tests, but both were essential in shaping the team's tactical maturity.

"The Uzbekistan games were very important for us," Alexandersson said. "We had excellent training facilities in Chennai and played two good friendly matches. They were beneficial because we're aiming to prepare for high-intensity games."

"Kazakhstan had a more physical team, with bigger and stronger players, some of whom had experi-



ence at the senior level," he explained.

The cornerstone of India's preparation, however, came in the form of a month-long training camp in Sweden. It was an experience that pushed the team into unfamiliar territory.

"From a football perspective, the camp was extremely valuable," said Alexandersson. "We had excellent facilities, strong training sessions, and access to a well-equipped gym."

In total, India played five friendly games, but the opening fixture against the senior squad of Swedish

heavyweights Hammarby IF was a reality check in the shape of a 0-6 loss. "That match was challenging. The speed of play, quality, and movement were at a very high level, and we had to work extremely hard defensively. But the girls showed a great mentality," noted Alexandersson. "With each match, we improved, especially in our defensive structure and attacking movements. We've made good progress in creating chances."

More importantly, the team experienced both sides of the game - absorbing pressure and dictating play - a balance crucial at the tournament level.

"Importantly, we maintained our commitment to playing technical, possession-based football."

Drawn alongside some of the strongest teams in Asia, including Japan and Australia, India are not overwhelmed by the challenge.

## India U17 men's team to play friendlies against Thailand, Indonesia and Korea Republic

**New Delhi:** The India U-17 national football team is set to play a series of international friendly matches against Thailand U-17 national team, Indonesia U-17 national team, and South Korea U-17 national team between March 25 and 31, 2026, in Lopburi.

These matches form a crucial part of the team's preparations for the upcoming AFC U-17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2026, where India will aim to make a strong impact.

All three friendlies will be played behind closed doors, allowing teams to focus purely on performance, strategy, and experimentation without external pressure.

India will begin their campaign against Thailand on March 25 at 17:30 IST, followed by a clash with Indonesia on March 28 at the same time.

The final friendly will see India take on Korea Republic on March 31 at 15:30 IST, completing a competitive preparatory schedule.

The Blue Colts, as the team is popularly known, have already had a busy calendar this year with six international friendlies under their belt.

They played two matches each against Tajikistan in Goa, Türkiye in Antalya, and Myanmar in Yangon, gaining valuable exposure and match experience.

These fixtures have helped the coaching staff assess player combinations,



tactical approaches, and overall team readiness ahead of major tournaments.

The squad, coached by Bibiano Fernandes, arrived in Lopburi on March 22 to begin their final phase of preparation.

Fernandes, known for his focus on youth development, will be looking to fine-tune the team's performance during this tour.

In the AFC U-17 Asian Cup, India has been placed in a challenging Group D alongside strong teams like Australia, Uzbekistan, and DPR Korea.

India will face Australia on May 6, followed by Uzbekistan on May 10, and DPR Korea on May 13 in the group stage.

The tournament will serve as a significant platform for young Indian players to showcase their talent on the continental stage.

The 24-member squad for the Thailand friendlies includes a mix of promising goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders, and forwards.

Key goalkeepers in the squad are Alok Nishad,

Manashjyoti Baruah, and Rajrup Sarkar, who will compete for the starting spot.

The defensive lineup features players like Abhishek Kumar Mondal, Indra Rana Magar, Korou Meitei Konthoujam, and Shubham Poonia.

In midfield, talents such as Dallalmuon Gangte, Denny Singh Wangkhem, and Diamond Singh Thokchom are expected to play crucial roles.

The attacking unit includes forwards like Adil Aman, Azlaan Shah, Gunleiba Wangkheirakpam, and Yuvraj Kadam, who will be key to India's goal-scoring efforts.

The support staff includes assistant coach Subham Rabha and goalkeeping coach Parshuram Salwadi, who will assist in preparing the team.

With a structured preparation plan and a competitive set of fixtures, the India U-17 team will be aiming to build momentum and confidence ahead of the continental championship.

## Khelo India Tribal Games to feature 2300 plus athletes, 9 disciplines across 3 centers in Chattisgarh

**Raipur:** The Sports and Youth Welfare Department, Government of Chhattisgarh, proudly announces the state as the host of the Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG), a landmark addition to India's sporting calendar under the Government of India's flagship Khelo India mission.

Commencing on March 21, 2026, the Games will be hosted across three culturally significant cities: Raipur, Jagdalpur, and Surguja, each

reflecting the diversity and depth of Chhattisgarh's tribal heartland. The KITG 2026 event will also host 2300 plus athletes and 3700 participants in the Chhattisgarh event.

With over 32 per cent of its population belonging to tribal communities and a living legacy of indigenous cultures, traditions, and athletic excellence, Chhattisgarh stands not just as a host, but as the natural home of these Games.

From the plains of Raipur to the rich tribal landscapes of Bastar and the highlands of Ambikapur, sport has long been an intrinsic part of everyday life, shaped by tradition, resilience, and community.

The Khelo India Tribal Games celebrate this enduring legacy, with Chhattisgarh's hosting underscoring its central place in India's tribal identity.

The Games will feature a total of 9 sports disciplines

across two categories:

7 Competitive Sports: The competitions will feature a diverse range of disciplines including Archery, Athletics, Football, Hockey, Swimming, Weightlifting, Wrestling, Mallakhamb, and Kabaddi, hosted across key venues in Chhattisgarh. Hockey matches will be conducted at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Hockey Stadium, Raipur, as well as the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Football Ground at

Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur.

Swimming events will take place at the International Swimming Pool, Raipur, while Weightlifting competitions are scheduled at the Open Ground within Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur. Athletics events will be held at Krida Parisar, Dharampura in Jagdalpur. Wrestling and Mallakhamb competitions will be organized at Gandhi Stadium, Surguja.

## Chennaiyin FC hold FC Goa to draw in home opener

**Chennai:** Chennaiyin FC played out a hard-fought 1-1 draw against FC Goa at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Sunday in their first home match of the Indian Super League 2026 season. Head coach Clifford Rayes Miranda made key changes to the lineup, handing Eduardo Kau his season debut in place of the injured Mohammed Ali Bemammer, while Mahesh Singh and Daniel Chima Chukwu were also included in the starting XI. Chennaiyin goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz was called into action early in the match, producing a sharp save in the eighth minute to keep the visitors at bay. Defender Laldinliana Renthlei played a crucial supporting role, helping to clear the danger and stabilise the backline during Goa's early attacking phase. After withstanding initial pressure, the Marina Machans began to settle into the



game and create chances of their own. In the 11th minute, Imran Khan's precise pass found Daniel Chima Chukwu, whose clever flick set up Mahesh Singh for a powerful shot that struck the post. Farukh Choudhary also tested Goa's goal-

keeper with a curling effort from distance, signalling Chennaiyin's growing attacking intent. However, a setback came when Chima Chukwu was forced off due to injury, leading to the introduction of Irfan Yadav. The substitute made an immediate

impact, capitalising on a defensive lapse in the 48th minute to slot the ball home and give Chennaiyin FC a well-deserved lead. Buoyed by the goal, the home side pushed forward in search of a second, with Farukh coming close again in the 82nd minute, only to see his effort blocked at close range. Eduardo Kau also contributed defensively with crucial interventions, helping Chennaiyin maintain their narrow advantage as the game approached its closing stages. Just when it seemed the hosts might secure all three points, FC Goa found an equaliser in the 88th minute. Sandesh Jhingam rose to head in from a corner after Nawaz had made an initial save, bringing the visitors back on level terms. Chennaiyin FC responded with urgency in stoppage time, creating late chances in a bid to snatch a winner.

## Market valuation of five of top-10 firms erode by Rs 1 lakh cr, HDFC Bank took biggest hit

**New Delhi:** The combined market valuation of five of India's top-10 most-valued companies witnessed a sharp erosion last week, with total losses amounting to Rs 1,02,771.87 crore amid volatile market conditions.

Among the worst-hit firms, HDFC Bank bore the brunt of the decline, as its market capitalisation plunged significantly during the period.

The bank's valuation dropped by a steep Rs 56,124.48 crore, bringing its total market capitalisation down to Rs 12,01,267.28 crore, making it the biggest loser among the top companies. Other major laggards in the top-10 list included ICI Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Bajaj Finance, and Hindustan Unilever. At the same time, several companies managed to post gains, helping cushion the broader market sentiment. These gainers included Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel,

State Bank of India, Infosys, and Life Insurance Corporation of India.

The market capitalisation of TCS declined by Rs 7,127.63 crore, taking its total valuation to Rs 8,64,940 crore, reflecting pressure in the IT sector due to the decline in the IT sector during the week. In contrast, Infosys recorded a modest gain of Rs 2,473.79 crore, pushing its valuation up to Rs 5,08,789.37 crore and emerging as one of the gainers in the IT space.

HDFC Bank's sharp decline was accompanied by a fall in ICI Bank's valuation as well, which slipped by Rs 6,171.72 crore to Rs 8,91,673.06 crore. On the positive side, State Bank of India registered a strong increase, with its market capitalisation rising by Rs 10,707.52 crore to Rs 9,76,968.57 crore. Meanwhile, Bajaj Finance saw a notable drop in its valuation, losing Rs 15,338.42 crore and settling at Rs 5,16,715.12

crore by the end of the week.

In the insurance segment, Life Insurance Corporation of India managed to edge higher, adding Rs 2,624.88 crore to reach a total market valuation of Rs 4,91,610.45 crore.

Among the biggest gainers, Reliance Industries saw its valuation jump by Rs 45,942.75 crore, taking its total market capitalisation to Rs 19,14,235.92 crore, maintaining its position as the most-valued firm in India. Bharti Airtel also posted impressive gains, with its valuation surging by Rs 24,462.03 crore to Rs 10,52,893.75 crore, reflecting strong investor confidence in the telecom sector.

In the overall ranking of the top-10 firms, Reliance Industries retained the top spot, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, LIC, and Hindustan Unilever.

## West Asia conflict to impact from semiconductor manufacturing to fertilizers and construction

**New Delhi:** Globally, disruptions in the Gulf could trigger shortages across multiple sectors. Supplies of helium, sulphur, methanol, and aluminium are at risk, potentially impacting industries ranging from semiconductor manufacturing to fertilizers and construction. Food security concerns may also rise as fertilizer supply chains face disruptions, leading to higher agricultural input costs, said a report by DAM Capital Advisors.

The report highlights that while crude oil availability may remain manageable in the near term, the supply of key petroleum products such as LPG, naphtha, aviation turbine fuel (ATF), and gasoil is expected to face significant pressure due to limited refining capacity. Natural gas markets are also likely to tighten, as the Gulf region accounts for over 20pc of global LNG supply, leaving



little room for alternative sourcing.

For India, the macroeconomic impact could be significant if crude oil prices remain elevated. The report estimates that every USD 1 per barrel increase in crude prices could widen the fiscal deficit by Rs 100 billion. A sustained price above USD

80 per barrel may push inflation beyond 4.5pc and weaken the rupee.

India's heavy dependence on imports, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, adds to the vulnerability. Nearly 90pc of LPG imports and over 50pc of crude imports pass through the route, making supply

chains susceptible to disruptions. While crude oil availability is considered manageable due to alternative sourcing and reserves, LPG availability remains critical due to limited inventories.

Upstream oil and gas companies may benefit from higher prices, while downstream firms, especially oil

marketing companies, are likely to face margin pressures due to limited ability to pass on costs. Airlines could see profitability hit as fuel accounts for up to 40pc of operating costs, while FMCG companies may face margin pressure from rising packaging costs.

Infrastructure and capital expenditure could also be affected, as higher oil prices strain government finances. Meanwhile, industries such as textiles, chemicals, and fertilizers may face input cost inflation and supply chain disruptions, although some may benefit from short-term inventory gains, the report said.

The report cautions that while short-term disruptions may be manageable, a prolonged conflict lasting beyond two months could lead to severe supply constraints, rising costs, and broader economic slowdown both globally and in India.

## India's foodgrain production projected to reach approximately 368 MT by 2030-31: Report

**New Delhi:** India's foodgrain production is projected to reach approximately 368 million tonnes (MT) by 2030-31, according to a report released by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, highlighting the growing need for robust storage infrastructure to support the country's agricultural expansion.

The report observed that while production levels are steadily rising, the existing storage capacity remains inadequate to handle the anticipated surge.

It stressed that without timely upgrades in warehousing systems, a significant portion of produce could be exposed to post-harvest losses, affecting both farmers and overall food security.

Emphasising the urgen-

cy of the situation, the industry body called for a quick-response policy framework that would encourage private and institutional investment in modern storage solutions.

It noted that silo-based warehousing systems, equipped with advanced technology, can play a crucial role in reducing wastage, improving grain quality, and ensuring efficient supply chain management.

The report titled 'Foodgrain Warehouse Market in India 2025-2030' serves as a comprehensive financial pre-feasibility study, offering a ready-to-use model for investors and stakeholders interested in the agriculture warehousing segment.

It translates extensive market research into actionable insights, enabling better

planning and execution of storage infrastructure projects.

Rajeev Juneja, President of PHDCCI said, "A technology-driven storage infrastructure is essential to support India's transition toward a more efficient agricultural value chain to reduce wastage and creation of value added products both of domestic as well as export markets."

According to the findings, India's transition towards scientific storage methods is essential not only to meet domestic demand but also to strengthen its position in global agricultural trade.

The report further underlined that investments in modern warehouses would generate employment opportunities, enhance rural

infrastructure, and support farmers by providing better price realisation through reduced spoilage.

The chamber also pointed out that aligning warehousing development with government initiatives in agriculture and logistics could accelerate sectoral growth.

It suggested that policy support, ease of financing, and public-private partnerships would be key drivers in bridging the current storage gap.

With foodgrain output expected to rise significantly over the next decade, the report concluded that building a resilient and efficient storage ecosystem will be critical for sustaining India's agricultural growth trajectory and ensuring long-term food security.

## FLO Hyderabad enters Silver Jubilee Year, announces new leadership

**Hyderabad:** FLO Hyderabad marked a significant milestone as it celebrated its 25th year, announcing its Silver Jubilee celebrations along with a special awards ceremony during its annual session.

The event brought together members, leaders, and distinguished guests to reflect on the organisation's journey and its contributions toward women's empowerment over the years.

A key highlight of the occasion was the leadership transition, with Seetha Reddy Gaddam taking over as Chairperson of FLO Hyderabad, succeeding Prathibha Kunda.

Simultaneously, Khushboo Daga assumed charge as Chairperson of YFLO Hyderabad from Pallavi Jain,

marking a new phase of leadership for the youth wing.

The transition of leadership was formalised through a ceremonial exchange of medals and the signing of the charter, symbolising continuity and commitment to the organisation's mission.

The event was graced by Deepika Reddy, a Padma Shri awardee and renowned Kuchipudi exponent, who attended as the chief guest and delivered an inspiring address.

In her speech, Deepika Reddy emphasised the importance of dedication, equality, and mutual respect, particularly in advancing the cause of women's empowerment in society. Outgoing Chairperson Prathibha Kun-

da reflected on her tenure,

which was centred around the theme "Power to Empower," highlighting the various initiatives undertaken during her leadership.

She noted that her term saw the successful organisation of numerous speaker sessions, workshops, and empowerment programmes that collectively benefited thousands of women and girls.

Under her guidance, FLO Hyderabad witnessed significant growth, adding over 200 new members and expanding its reach within the community. Among the notable initiatives was StyleTatva, a flagship event that drew wide participation and played a crucial role in supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises

(MSMEs).

Taking forward this legacy, the new Chairperson Seetha Reddy Gaddam outlined her vision themed "Engage, Empower, Elevate," which aims to further strengthen the organisation's impact.

She highlighted plans to expand initiatives in areas such as skill development, digital empowerment, and support for women in agriculture, along with promoting traditional arts and crafts.

Khushboo Daga, as the new YFLO Chairperson, shared her focus on building capabilities among members, encouraging cross-sector learning, and creating opportunities for holistic personal and professional growth.

## Vedanta moves NCLAT, challenges NCLT nod to Adani's bid for acquiring Jaiprakash Associates

**New Delhi:** Business conglomerate Vedanta Group has approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), challenging the NCLT's approval to Adani Group's bid for acquiring Jaiprakash Associates Ltd for Rs 14,535 crore.

Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Group was in the race to acquire Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) through an insolvency process, but the lenders in November last year approved the resolution plan or bid of Adani Enterprises Ltd.

On March 17, the National Company Law Tribu-

nal (NCLT), Allahabad bench, approved Adani Enterprises Ltd's Rs 14,535 crore bid to acquire Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) through the insolvency process. In a regulatory filing, JAL had informed that the NCLT, Allahabad bench, has "orally pronounced an order on March 17, 2026" approving the resolution plan submitted by Adani Enterprises Ltd.

Now, mining giant Vedanta has filed an appeal against the said NCLT order before the appellate insolvency tribunal NCLAT.

The matter is listed for hearing on Monday before a



two-member bench comprising Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan and Member (Technical) Barun Mitra.

In November last year, a Committee of Creditors (CoC) approved the resolution plan by business ty-

coon Gautam Adani to acquire JAL.

Adani Enterprises had outbid Vedanta and Dalmia Bharat to win the bid for JAL.

Adani got the maximum 89 per cent votes from creditors, followed by Dal-

mia Cement (Bharat) and Vedanta Group.

JAL, which has high-quality assets and business interests spanning real estate, cement manufacturing, hospitality, power and engineering & construction, was admitted to the CIRP in June 2024 after it defaulted on payments of loans aggregating Rs 57,185 crore.

JAL has major real estate projects like Jaypee Greens in Greater Noida, a part of Jaypee Greens Wish-town in Noida (both on the outskirts of the national capital), and the Jaypee International Sports City, lo-

cated near the upcoming Jewar International Airport.

It also has three commercial/industrial office spaces in Delhi-NCR, while its hotel division has five properties in Delhi-NCR, Mussoorie, and Agra.

JAL has four cement plants in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, and a few leased limestone mines in Madhya Pradesh.

It also has investments in subsidiaries, including Jaiprakash Power Ventures Ltd, Yamuna Expressway Tolling Ltd, Jaypee Infrastructure Development Ltd, and several other companies.

## Beyond Policy: Closing India's Credit Gap for Women Entrepreneurs

**New Delhi:** India's entrepreneurial landscape is changing rapidly. More women today are launching businesses, leading MSMEs, investing in property, and building long-term financial assets than ever before. Their participation is not only reshaping households and industries but also strengthening India's broader economic momentum. Policy support for this shift has steadily grown over the past decade. Initiatives such as the Women Entrepreneurship Platform by NITI Aayog, Stand-Up India, and targeted MSME credit schemes signal a clear national direction — women must be central contributors to economic expansion. Yet, despite this supportive policy ecosystem, access to structured and timely credit remains a practical challenge for many women entrepreneurs and professionals.

The difficulty often lies not in the lack of capability or ambition, but in navigat-

ing a lending environment that can feel fragmented. Eligibility frameworks vary across lenders, documentation expectations differ, and approval timelines are not always predictable. For borrowers seeking to expand businesses, raise capital against property, or formalise growing enterprises, these complexities can slow down important financial decisions.

A woman entrepreneur with stable cash flows and strong repayment capacity may still spend considerable time identifying the lender best suited to her financial profile. In several cases, viable borrowers approach multiple institutions before finding the right structure or approval framework.

The issue, therefore, is rarely creditworthiness. More often, it is clarity and alignment within the credit process.

"Women entrepreneurs in India are building serious businesses and creating real

economic value. The opportunity today lies in making access to credit more transparent and efficient. When borrowers can clearly understand which lenders are aligned with their profile, the process becomes faster and far more productive," says Nitin Khandelwal, Founder & CEO, OneNDF.

As women increasingly participate in asset ownership and enterprise creation, the demand for structured capital is becoming more visible. Borrowing today is driven by clear objectives — expanding MSMEs, acquiring residential or commercial property, investing in professional ventures, or strengthening long-term financial security.

What the ecosystem increasingly requires is greater transparency in how borrowers connect with lenders.

Platforms that bring together lender networks, eligibility insights, and structured advisory can help simplify this journey.

## Govt to launch 7th tranche of critical mineral auctions to boost mineral security

**New Delhi:** Union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy will launch the 7th Tranche of Auction of Critical and Strategic Mineral Blocks on Monday, according to a statement.

Critical minerals are pivotal for the country's economic development and mineral security. The global transition towards clean energy and advanced technologies has significantly increased the demand for minerals such as lithium, graphite, rare earth elements (REE), tungsten, vanadium, titanium and other rare metals.

Their limited availability and geographical concentration pose challenges to resilient supply chains worldwide.

Recognising their strategic importance, the Government of India amended the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act) on August 17, 2023, notifying 24 minerals as

Critical and Strategic Minerals. This amendment empowers the Central Government to auction Mining Leases and Composite Licences for these minerals. The revenue generated from these auctions accrues to the respective State Governments, the statement added.

So far, the Ministry of Mines has successfully launched six tranches of auctions, with 46 critical and strategic mineral blocks already auctioned, reflecting strong industry participation and growing confidence in India's mineral sector.

Building on this momentum, the Seventh Tranche will offer 19 blocks across several States under Mining Lease and Composite Licence. These blocks comprise a diverse basket of minerals essential for sectors such as clean energy, advanced technologies, fertilizers and strategic industries, the release further

stated.

The auction framework has been progressively strengthened to ensure transparency, efficiency and faster operationalisation of mineral blocks.

Recent reforms, including the Mineral (Auction) Second Amendment Rules, 2025, have streamlined post-auction timelines such as submission of performance security, upfront payment and issuance of Letter of Intent. Additionally, the Mineral (Auction) Amendment Rules, 2026, have introduced the provision of Insurance Surety Bond as an alternative to bank guarantees, enhancing flexibility for bidders.

The auction will be conducted online through a transparent two-stage ascending forward auction process, wherein the successful bidder will be selected based on the highest percentage of value of mineral dispatched quoted, the statement added.

## Naidu to lay foundation for ₹1.35 Lakh Cr Arcelor-Mittal Nippon Steel Plant in AP on Mar 23

**Anakapalli:** N. Chandrababu Naidu is set to lay the foundation stone for a massive ₹1.35 lakh crore integrated steel plant by ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India in Andhra Pradesh on Monday, marking a significant milestone in the state's industrial development.

The greenfield project will come up at Rajayyapeta in Nakkapalli mandal, with the foundation ceremony expected to be attended by several Union Ministers and senior leaders.

According to officials, the project involves a total investment of ₹1,35,964 crore and is poised to become one of the largest industrial investments in the region.

The proposed steel plant is expected to generate employment for nearly one lakh people, both directly and indirectly, offering a major boost to job creation in the state.

The facility will have a total production capacity of 17.8 million metric tonnes per annum and will be developed in two phases across a vast area of 5,465 acres.

In the first phase, the plant will produce 7.3 million metric tonnes annually, while the second phase will expand the capacity by an additional 10.5 million metric tonnes.

As part of the project, the company will also establish a captive port with a handling capacity of 50 million metric tonnes, spread over 316 acres. The port project alone will involve an investment of ₹11,198 crore and is expected to create around 6,000 additional jobs, further strengthening the region's economic prospects.

Officials noted that the project is likely to transform the Visakhapatnam economic region into a major industrial hub, enhancing its importance on the national industrial map.

The development is also expected to significantly contribute to strengthening India's overall steel production capacity, supporting long-term infrastructure growth.

The state government has assured comprehensive support to ensure the timely execution of the project, including facilitating necessary clearances and infrastructure.

Plans are underway to develop a four-lane road connecting the plant site to National Highway-16, ensuring seamless connectivity for logistics and transportation.

In addition, the state government will ensure the provision of key infrastructure such as adequate water supply and reliable power facilities to meet the operational requirements of the upcoming steel plant, enabling smooth and efficient functioning once it becomes operational.

The foundation-laying ceremony is expected to witness the presence of several prominent leaders, including Union Steel and Heavy Industries Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy, underscoring the importance of the project at the national level.

Other key dignitaries who are likely to attend the event include Minister of State Bhoopathi Raju Srinivasa Varma, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and IT Minister Nara Lokesh.

Their participation reflects strong political support for the project, which is being seen as a major driver of industrial growth in the state.

From the corporate side, industry leaders Lakshmi Mittal and Aditya Mittal are also expected to be present at the ceremony. Their presence highlights the strategic importance of the investment and the company's commitment to expanding its footprint in India's steel sector.