

# Aryan Age

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## Congress accuses Centre of using special Session for electoral gain amid delimitation row

**New Delhi:** Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh launched a scathing attack on the union government on Friday, claiming that the hasty extension of the current Parliamentary session until this month is intended to gain political advantage ahead of important state elections while avoiding proper consultation with the opposition.

Addressing reporters in Delhi, Ramesh said the government had ignored repeated requests from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for an all-party meeting, despite formal correspondence with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

He described the decision to proceed unilaterally as a "gross violation" of the Model Code of Conduct,

particularly with elections imminent in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned on Thursday and are scheduled to reconvene on April 16. It was reported that the ongoing Budget session, which began on January 28, was originally set to be adjourned sine die on April 2.

Criticizing the government's decision, Ramesh remarked that the move raised "serious questions about transparency and intent," particularly since the agenda had been expanded to include controversial matters like delimitation without prior consultation.

"As you all know, the government has announced a special session on April 16, 17 and 18," Ramesh said. "On March 16, Mr Rijiju

wrote to Mr Kharge stating that the government wished to discuss amendments to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. Mr Kharge responded that such discussions must take place in an all-party meeting. That request has been ignored."

He further alleged that the Centre had remained inactive for nearly two and a half years after passing the women's reservation legislation, formally known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, only to revive it now for political mileage.

"The government kept sleeping for 30 months and is now attempting to take double credit during the election season," he said.

Raising concerns over delimitation, Ramesh noted that no formal proposal had been shared with Opposition parties. However, he claimed

that informal indications suggested a significant

sharp rise in representation, while others, including



increase in Lok Sabha seats. "We have heard there may be a proportionate rise in seats, but in reality smaller states and those in the South, Northeast and West could suffer massively," he warned.

Citing possible scenarios, he suggested that states such as Uttar Pradesh could see a

Kerala, might gain little. "What we have heard unofficially would be very dangerous for many states," he said.

Ramesh also questioned the timing of the session, arguing that it coincided deliberately with election campaigning. "The only

objective is to grab political mileage to influence polls in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Could this not have been scheduled after a fortnight?" he asked.

He accused the government of prioritizing "narrative management" over substantive policy-making. "This government functions on optics. They are losing the political and foreign policy narrative and want to reclaim it through a special session," he said.

Ramesh further highlighted the ongoing back-and-forth between the Centre and the Opposition, noting that the Congress and allied parties had jointly requested the government to postpone any consultations until after April 29. "Despite this, just thirty minutes after Mr. Rijiju's second letter, Mr. Kharge renewed the call for

an all-party meeting, but the government chose to proceed unilaterally," he pointed out.

He further noted that delimitation was never part of prior discussions. "There was no prior reference to delimitation. Suddenly, we're faced with plans to introduce amendments to the women's reservation law alongside a constitutional amendment tied to delimitation," Ramesh remarked.

Concerns have also been raised by the Congress regarding shifting deadlines for the national Census, with Ramesh citing suggestions that the final data might only be available by 2029. He reminded that when the women's reservation law was first enacted, the Opposition argued it could be implemented without waiting for delimitation or Census

outcomes—a view dismissed by the government at the time.

Ahead of the upcoming extended session, key Congress leaders including Kharge and Rahul Gandhi plan to meet senior MPs and other Opposition members to devise a unified approach.

The special parliamentary sitting is likely to address legislation related to women's reservation and a significant potential increase in Lok Sabha seats, possibly rising from 543 to 816, a proposal that has already sparked heated political debate.

While the government asserts its right to legislate, Opposition parties accuse it of trying to force through major constitutional changes without consensus, escalating tensions as the election season approaches.

### Orange alert for heavy rain, hailstorms in Maharashtra; crops hit



**Pune:** An orange alert has been issued for heavy rainfall across Marathwada and parts of Central Maharashtra, with the possibility of hailstorms continuing in some areas today. The weather department has predicted that the rain is likely to persist for the next five days. Regions including Solapur, Dharashiv, Pune, Ahilyanagar, Nashik, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Jalna, and Beed have been specifically warned of adverse weather conditions. The unseasonal rainfall has already caused significant damage to agricultural crops, raising concerns among farmers across the affected regions.

### Unseasonal Storm Wreaks Havoc Across Maharashtra, Lives Lost and Crops Destroyed

**Dharashiv:** Heavy unseasonal rain with thunder and strong winds has hit many parts of Maharashtra, causing major damage in both rural and urban areas. The sudden weather has badly affected farmers across Konkan, Vidarbha, western Maharashtra, and Marathwada, destroying crops and adding to their troubles at a time of rising prices. Farmers are now demanding immediate surveys and financial help from the government.

In Pune, a record 65 mm of rain was recorded on Thursday, breaking a 130-year-old record from 1896. Sadly, a 60-year-old woman flower seller died after a tree fell on her in the Dattawadi area. She had been selling flowers under that tree



for the last 20 years. Two others narrowly escaped.

In Satara district, heavy hailstorms caused severe destruction. In Karad taluka, large hailstones broke solar panels installed by 45 families, causing losses worth lakhs. Farmers also suffered heavy damage to crops like watermelon, wheat, maize, and mango. In some places, cattle were injured after sheds were damaged by strong winds.

In Dharashiv, lightning

strikes over two days killed seven animals, including oxen and buffaloes. A young farmer lost his entire grape farm due to the storm, suffering losses of around ₹25-30 lakh. In Ahmednagar district, over 18,000 hectares of farmland has been affected, with several villages badly hit. Farmers expressed deep distress, saying their crops and dreams have both been destroyed overnight and are now seeking urgent government support.

### Raj Thackeray directs MNS leaders to strengthen party base and expand outreach

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray has issued clear directives to district contact presidents to focus on strengthening the party organisation, expanding its reach, and attracting more voters over the next three-and-a-half years.

Emphasising grassroots engagement, Thackeray urged leaders to build an image of the party as one that actively takes to the streets to address public issues.

A key meeting of all contact presidents of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena was held in Mumbai, attended by senior party leaders. Discussions centred on strategies to expand the party and build trust among voters, according to senior party sources.

Leaders have been instructed to connect with various local institutions, personalities from different fields, and prominent figures who represent their districts.

Recognising the growing influence of social media, the



party has also directed leaders to engage with social media influencers and maintain regular interaction with them. The meeting also

emphasised training and guiding party workers, along with taking action in case of any misconduct. A strategy is being planned to reach out to dissatisfied voters, social groups, and individuals not currently aligned with any political party.

Additionally, it has been made mandatory for contact presidents to visit their assigned districts for at least three days every month to review progress of the work on the ground.

### Anjali Damania Drops the 'CDR' Bomb

**Mumbai:** A major controversy has erupted after social activist Anjali Damania revealed call detail records (CDR) linked to accused 'fake godman' Ashok Kharat in a sexual exploitation case from Nashik. According to the data from April 2025 to March 2026, former State Women's Commission chairperson Rupali Chakankar allegedly made 177 calls to Kharat.

Damania also claimed that Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde made 17 calls

#### Big Political Names Linked to 'Fake Godman' Case

to Kharat, with conversations lasting around 21 minutes. She further stated that several other political leaders were in contact with him, raising serious questions and triggering a political storm. The data also shows hundreds of calls from other individuals, and even international calls from countries like Qatar, the United States, and the Virgin Islands. Damania demanded a detailed investigation and immediate arrests of those



involved. The case has also taken a financial turn, with reports of suspicious transactions worth around ₹60 crore in a credit society in Kopergaon. Kharat was reportedly listed as a

nominee in multiple accounts, and some accounts were linked to individuals with the surname Chakankar. All these accounts were connected to Kharat's mobile number, raising concerns of possible money laundering.

Responding to the allegations, Minister Uday Samant said that talking to someone on the phone or taking photos does not mean involvement in any wrongdoing, and the government does not support such illegal acts.

#### Former minister Bachchu Kadu booked for plot to kill BJP MLA's brother



**Amravati:** Police have registered a case against former Maharashtra minister Bachchu Kadu on charges of allegedly plotting to eliminate the brother of a BJP MLA. Officials said the First Information Report was lodged at Chandur Bazar police station following a complaint accusing Kadu and his associates of conspiring to murder the brother of BJP legislator Pravin Tayade. According to police, the complaint is supported by certain evidence submitted by the complainant. An investigation into the allegations is currently in progress, police added.

### Two Killed, 38 Injured in Bus Accident on Mumbai-Goa Highway

**Raigad:** In a tragic road accident on the Mumbai-Goa Highway near Nagothane's Sukli Ghat early Friday morning, two passengers were killed on the spot while 38 others sustained injuries.

Among the injured, the condition of around 10 passengers is reported to be critical. Shockingly, survivors have alleged that the accident was caused not by a technical fault but by the driver's reckless behaviour.

The private luxury bus was travelling from Mumbai to Goa when the accident occurred in the early hours. While negotiating a sharp turn in the Sukli Ghat section, the driver reportedly lost control due to overspeeding, causing the bus to overturn. The incident triggered panic and chaos among passengers trapped inside the vehicle.

Hearing the loud crash,



local residents rushed to the scene and immediately began rescue efforts. Survivors of the accident have raised serious concerns about the driver's conduct, claiming he had been driving at a high speed and in a negligent manner since the beginning of the journey. Despite repeated objections from passengers, the driver allegedly ignored warnings.

In a disturbing revelation, some passengers had even lodged an online complaint about the driver's rash driving on the RedBus portal while the bus was still in motion. Unfortunately, the accident

occurred before any action could be taken on the complaint.

Following the incident, the Nagothane police and local rescue teams evacuated the injured passengers from the overturned bus. The injured were initially taken to a nearby hospital, while 9 to 10 critically injured passengers were later shifted to MGM Hospital in Kalamboli for advanced treatment. Authorities are currently working to identify the deceased passengers and further investigate the incident.

## As Gulf war rages, India readies its third nuclear submarine, with plans for more to follow

**New Delhi:** Just before he commissioned INS taragiri, India's new stealth naval frigate, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh posted a terse and cryptic message on his social media handle - "it's not a word, it's power, it's Aridhaman" - throwing the spotlight on India's steadily advancing nuclear submarine programme, a cornerstone of its strategic deterrence architecture in an era of missile and drone strikes.

INS Arighat, India's third nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN), is currently undergoing sea trials and the post was read by naval analysts that the tests "have been totally successful."

At the heart of this effort lies the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project, under which India is building a fleet of nuclear-powered ballistic missile

submarines (SSBNs) designed to ensure a credible second-strike capability.

India currently operates two SSBNs -- INS Arihant, commissioned in 2016, and INS Arighat, inducted in August 2024. The Arihant, the lead boat of this programme, completed its first deterrent patrol in 2018, marking India's entry into an elite group of nations with operational nuclear triads.

INS Aridhaman (which is codenamed S4 project), is a larger and more capable successor, is expected to be formally commissioned in the coming weeks. It will be equipped with both K-15 short-range and K-4 intermediate-range submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), with a range of 3,500 kms, significantly extending India's reach.

A fourth boat, believed to be named INS Arisudan, codenamed S4 asterix, has already been launched and is also undergoing trials, with induction likely by early 2027.

The stealth frigate launched today by Singh at Vishakhapatnam, is a Nilgiri class missile frigate built at Mazagon docks. Construction of the ship began 2020 and it was launched in 2022 and its commissioning after extensive sea trials is seen as a milestone. The 7,000-tonne ship, equipped with BrahMos and other missiles, is expected to lend left to India's naval presence in the oceans where India operates.

"The two new nuclear submarines which are yet to be commissioned are part of what is considered a crucial evolutionary step, which we call the "Arihant-stretch" variants, will bridge the

gap between the original Arihant-class and the more ambitious next-generation platforms," said senior defence ministry officials.



With displacement estimated between 7,000 and 11,000 tonnes and improved nuclear reactors, the new boats offer greater endurance, stealth, and strike capability.

"These projects also mark a leap in indigenisation, with roughly 75 per cent of components sourced

domestically, a key objective of India's defence industrial policy," said officials. Beyond the Arihant line, India is already planning its next leap, which sources said will be

the S5-class SSBNs. These will be significantly larger submarines, with displacement of around 13,500 tonnes and will reportedly carry up to 16 missiles, including longer-range K-5 and K-6 SLBMs with potential ranges of 5,000-8,000 km.

Construction is expected to begin around 2027, with the first induction likely in the early 2030s. These platforms would give India a true intercontinental sea-based deterrent, enhancing its ability to target adversaries deep within their territory.

In parallel, India is pursuing a fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) under Project-77, with plans for six indigenous boats by the 2030s. Unlike SSBNs, which are designed for strategic deterrence, SSNs are geared toward hunting enemy submarines and protecting naval assets.

"The expansion of the submarine fleet is central to India's nuclear triad and will give India the ability to deliver nuclear weapons from land, air, and sea," said officials.

Of these, the sea-based leg is considered the most survivable, ensuring retaliation capability even after a first strike. "This also aligns with India's stated 'No-First-Use' doctrine, which relies on credible second-strike capability to deter nuclear aggression," pointed out officials.

Strategically, the submarines also reinforce India's posture in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the context of China's growing naval presence. With longer-range SLBMs, Indian SSBNs operating in the Indian Ocean can hold high-value targets at risk without leaving relatively safe waters.

## Kishan Reddy writes open letter to Kerala voters, targets Congress-led Telangana govt

**Hyderabad :** Union Coal and Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy has written an open letter to the people of Kerala, urging them to remain cautious of what he described as "misleading claims" made by political leaders ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections.

The letter comes at a time when political campaigning has intensified in the state, with leaders from across the country actively engaging with voters ahead of the polls scheduled for April 9.

In his communication, Reddy took direct aim at A. Revanth Reddy, criticising remarks made during his recent visit to Kerala.

Revanth Reddy had reportedly stated that the Congress government in Telangana had fulfilled its electoral promises, a claim that Kishan Reddy strongly contested.

Calling the statements misleading, the Union Minister argued that the ground reality in Telangana paints a very different picture from what has been presented publicly.

He alleged that several major promises made by the Congress government in Telangana remain unfulfilled, raising questions about



the credibility of such claims.

Among the issues highlighted were financial assistance schemes for farmers, which Reddy said have not been implemented as promised.

He also pointed to pending loan waivers, claiming that many farm-

ers are still waiting for relief that was assured during the election campaign.

In addition, the Union Minister raised concerns over job creation, stating that employment opportunities have not materialised at the

scale that was pledged.

He further alleged that pension schemes and welfare programmes for women have not been delivered effectively, leaving beneficiaries dissatisfied.

Reddy also claimed that commitments related to unemployment benefits and education support have not been fulfilled, adding to the concerns of young people and students.

Highlighting the state's financial situation, he alleged that Telangana's fiscal health has deteriorated due to poor planning and governance.

He further pointed to pending dues to government employees and delays in welfare disbursements as indicators of administrative challenges.

Appealing directly to voters in Kerala, Reddy urged them to make informed choices and not be swayed by what he termed as "false promises" during the campaign period.

He expressed confidence that the NDA, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, would deliver good governance and development, as political activity continues to intensify in the run-up to the elections.

## After death of 3-year-old child at an illegal clinic in Sambhal, UP fixes responsibility on CMOs for such clinics

**Lucknow:** Amit Kumar Ghosh, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical & Health), Uttar Pradesh, has taken cognisance of the death of a three-year-old child at an allegedly illegal clinic in Sambhal district.

The incident occurred in the village of Saudhan Karanpur Kayastha, located under the jurisdiction of the Kailadevi police station area in Sambhal district.

Following the incident, the senior official directed the concerned Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to submit an immediate and detailed report on the matter.

The directive was issued to ascertain the facts surrounding the functioning of the clinic and the circumstances that led to the child's death.

According to the report submitted by the CMO, a team was dispatched to inspect the location soon after the incident came to light.

Upon inspection, offi-

cials found that the clinic was closed, raising suspicions about its operations and legality.

Local residents informed authorities that the clinic had been operating without any valid authorisation or official registration.

They further alleged that the clinic was being run by an individual named Aniket.

Reportedly the son of one Pappu Singh, without even a display board indicating medical credentials.

As per the findings, the child was administered an injection at the same clinic shortly before passing away, triggering serious concerns about medical negligence.

The report also noted that the clinic operator has been absconding since the night of the incident, prompting efforts to trace and apprehend him.

Authorities conducted photography and videogra-

phy of the premises in the presence of the landlord to document evidence related to the case.

Subsequently, the clinic has been sealed by the authorities.

And legal proceedings are being initiated, including the filing of a formal complaint in court.

In response to the incident, Amit Kumar Ghosh has issued statewide directives.

To all Chief Medical Officers to launch special enforcement campaigns.

These campaigns are aimed at identifying and taking strict action against illegally operating clinics across all districts in Uttar Pradesh.

He emphasized that any negligence related to public health will not be tolerated and warned that accountability will be fixed on concerned officials if such violations are reported in the future.

## Tejaswi Yadav slams Bihar's prohibition law over spurious liquor deaths in Motihari

**Patna:** Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, Tejaswi Yadav, on Friday expressed deep grief over the deaths caused by suspected spurious liquor in Motihari, raising serious concerns over the effectiveness of the state's prohibition law.

The tragic incident, reported from Motihari, has claimed at least four lives, while six others have reportedly lost their eyesight after consuming the suspected illicit liquor.

The development has once again brought the spotlight on the implementation and impact of prohibition in Bihar, which has witnessed multiple such incidents in recent years.

Tejaswi Yadav stated that the recurring tragedies expose fundamental flaws in the state's liquor ban policy, questioning its effectiveness in preventing illegal alcohol circulation.

He further noted that several other victims are still in critical condition, raising fears that the death toll could increase in the coming days.

Blaming the government for what he termed "insensitivity," Yadav al-



leged that repeated incidents of spurious liquor deaths reflect administrative failure.

He accused the ruling National Democratic Alliance government in Bihar of negligence, stating that the situation highlights a lack of accountability.

According to Yadav, such tragedies underscore the government's indifference toward the safety and well-being of its citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable sections.

He pointed out that incidents of deaths due to illicit liquor are not new in the state, despite the enforcement of strict prohibition laws.

Citing available data, the RJD

leader claimed that more than 1,300 people have died due to the consumption of spurious liquor since prohibition was introduced in Bihar.

He added that the actual number could be significantly higher, with many more individuals reportedly losing their eyesight due to such incidents.

Yadav further alleged that the original objective of the prohibition law has been completely undermined over time.

He claimed that instead of curbing alcohol consumption, the law has inadvertently created opportunities for illegal earnings among certain political leaders, corrupt officials, and liquor mafias.

According to him, illicit liquor continues to be manufactured and sold openly across the state, allegedly with the complicity of local authorities.

He also alleged that illegal home delivery of liquor is taking place "under the nose of the government," with common people bearing the brunt of the crisis, often paying with their lives.

## Assam will not be allowed to become a land of 'love jihad', 'land jihad': Yogi Adityanath

**Barpeta (Assam):** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday, launched his campaign in Assam and addressed a massive public rally in Barpeta.

He appealed for votes in support of NDA candidate Deepak Kumar Das and launched a scathing attack on the Congress and UDF.

The Chief Minister said that Assam will not be allowed to become a land of "love jihad" and "land jihad." He alleged that Congress had already left the field before the elections, while the time had come to "throw the UDF into the Bay of Bengal."

Raising the issue of infiltration prominently, Yogi said that the NDA government is determined to identify and expel every single infiltrator and that any conspiracy to change the state's demography will not



be allowed to succeed.

Calling the UDF the "mother of infiltration," he said that the Congress, by becoming its ally, is tampering with Assam's culture, while the NDA government is committed to preserving the state's cultural heritage.

Referring to Assam's cultural heritage, the UP Chief Minister mentioned

the Kamakhya Temple, Kaziranga National Park, and the great saint Srimanta Sankardev.

He said that through its hard work and dedication, Assam has gained global recognition for tea and is now becoming an emerging hub for chip production.

Taking a dig at the Congress, Yogi said that previ-

ously, the Bharat Ratna was limited to only one family, but the NDA government honored great Assamese figures Bhubendra Hazarika and Gopinath.

He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, wherever there is an NDA government in the country, both development and heritage are being respected.

Citing the example of Uttar Pradesh, the Chief Minister claimed that the state is now riot-and curfew-free. He said that there is no compromise on law and order, and strict action is taken against rioters.

CM Adityanath appealed to the voters to strengthen the NDA so that work towards development, security and cultural preservation in Assam can move forward at a faster pace.

## Bengal police arrest Malda incident mastermind

**Kolkata:** The West Bengal Police on Friday arrested Advocate Mofakkarul Islam, who is believed to be the alleged mastermind behind the confinement of seven judicial officers and the subsequent attack on them in Malda district.

According to sources from the Election Commission of India, the arrest marks a major breakthrough in the high-profile case that has raised serious concerns about the safety of officials on election duty.

Mofakkarul was apprehended at Bagdogra Airport, located about 16 kilometres from Siliguri in North Bengal, while allegedly attempting to flee.

The incident relates to an attack that took place earlier this week in Malda district, where judicial officers engaged in electoral work were targeted by a mob.

The victims, including three women officers, were part of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. They were reportedly gheraoed for several hours by what officials described as "anti-social elements."

The incident occurred at the Kaliachowk II Block Development Office, where the officers were confined and allegedly at-tacked during the course of their official duties.

They were eventually freed only after midnight between Wednesday and Thursday, following prolonged efforts by the administration.

Addressing the media at Mothabari police station, K. Jayaraman, Additional Director General and Inspector General of Police (North Bengal), confirmed the arrest.

He stated that the Siliguri Police, in coordination with the state Criminal In-

vestigation Department (CID), identified Mofakkarul as the main instigator behind the incident in the Mothabari Assembly constituency.



Taking serious note of the matter, the Supreme Court of India has issued show-cause notices to senior administrative and police officials over the incident.

Meanwhile, the probe into the sequence of events has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency by the Election Commission in compliance with a judicial order.

Police officials confirmed that three separate cases have been registered against Mofakkarul at the Kaliachak police station in connection with the incident.

Investigations revealed that he is a resident of Itahar under the Raiganj police district and had also been residing in Kolkata.

According to the West Bengal Police, Mofakkarul Islam allegedly addressed multiple gatherings across Murshidabad and Malda during his travel, where he is suspected of instigating people. Authorities also noted that several videos of his speeches were widely circulated on social media platforms, further intensifying the situation.

Officials stated that he was intercepted by the state Criminal Investigation Department while attempting to travel to Bengaluru. Following his detention, he is being brought to Kaliachak for further legal proceedings in connection with the

registered cases.

In a related development, another individual identified as Ekramul Bagani, who was accompanying Mofakkarul at the time, reportedly attempted to flee from the scene. However, swift action by the police led to his detention shortly thereafter.

Authorities have confirmed that a total of 19 cases have been registered in connection with the Mothabari incident so far. Initially, 33 individuals had been arrested as part of the investigation.

With the arrest of Mofakkarul Islam and Ekramul Bagani, the total number of arrests in the case has now risen to 35, indicating the scale and seriousness of the incident.

Mofakkarul, however, has denied all allegations against him. He claimed that he was travelling in search of work and had only addressed groups protesting against the deletion of names from electoral rolls, maintaining that he had no role in the confinement or attack on judicial officers.

Responding to questions regarding the possible involvement of central agencies, K. Jayaraman stated that any request by the National Investigation Agency for custody would be handled strictly in accordance with established legal procedures.

Explaining the delay in rescuing the judicial officers, Jayaraman noted that the presence of a large number of women and children at the site prevented immediate forceful intervention.

He added that an inquiry into the incident is currently underway and assured that a detailed report identifying any lapses by officials will be submitted to the appropriate authorities soon.

## From Srinagar, Chief Imam Ilyasi says PoK will return to India soon

**Srinagar:** All India Imam Organisation Chief Imam Umer Ahmed Ilyasi on Friday said that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), which he described as an integral part of India, would "return to India very soon," asserting that the desire for reunification comes from the people of PoK themselves.

Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, Ilyasi said that residents of PoK wish to hold a referendum to express their aspirations.

"I want like to say something to my neighbouring country from Kashmir that the PoK is our integral part and will definitely join India again. The people of the PoK want to hold a referendum and want to return to their homes," he said. The cleric said that people in PoK were happy to see the progress of

Jammu and Kashmir and that their sentiments favour integration with India.

"It is not us, but the people of PoK who want this. Inshallah (God willing), their 'ghar wapsi' will take place soon and PoK will join India," he remarked.

Ilyasi, who has often been seen engaging in inter-faith outreach, is considered a man known for his "proximity to the ruling BJP and the RSS". He was also among the few Muslim clerics invited to the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22, 2024.

Ilyasi said that Kashmir has transformed into a "New Kashmir" after the abrogation of Article 370, claiming that development, education, and tourism have increased in the region.

He said that the removal of Article 370 in 2019 brought "happiness to the whole of Kashmir" and led to visible changes on the ground. "I am happy to say that today, Kashmir is a New Kashmir. After the removal of Article 370, there is development, and tourism has increased. People are happy," he said. He said that the situa-

tion of youth has changed significantly over the years. "There was a time when young children used to pelt stones. Today, children have pens in their hands. Children are studying and focusing on education," he added. Ilyasi also praised the work of Darakhshan Andrabi, Chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board and also a



reaching the hospital. The service has also proven particularly effective in handling emergency childbirth cases, especially in rural and remote areas where access to healthcare facilities is limited.

In several such instances, EMTs have successfully conducted safe deliveries inside ambulances when there was insufficient time to reach a hospital. Officials noted that the combination of trained personnel, modern equipment, and continuous coordination has made the 108 service a trusted and reliable emergency response system across the state. They urged the public to immediately call 108 in case of symptoms such as chest pain, breathing difficulties, or excessive sweating, emphasising that the service is free of cost and available 24/7.

Officials explained that this immediate on-site response distinguishes the 108 service from conventional ambulance systems. Unlike many private ambulance services that primarily focus on transportation, the 108 network operates as a fully equipped emergency care unit on wheels. The ambulances are fitted with advanced medical equipment, while EMTs undergo rigorous training to handle a wide range of emergency situations. Additionally, doctors stationed at the Emergency Response Control Centre provide real-time guidance to EMTs through dome cameras installed inside the ambulances. This constant communication ensures that patients receive expert medical attention even before

reaching the hospital. The service has also proven particularly effective in handling emergency childbirth cases, especially in rural and remote areas where access to healthcare facilities is limited.

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self, significantly improving survival outcomes. Health officials associated with the service highlighted that timely intervention plays a decisive role in saving lives, particularly in cardiac emergencies.

They noted that the ambulances often reach patients within the crucial "Golden Hour," a window immediately after a heart attack when prompt medical attention can drastically increase survival chances.

Upon arrival, trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) quickly assess the patient's condition and initiate life-saving procedures without delay.

These procedures include basic life support, administering oxygen, performing CPR, stabilising blood pressure, and ensuring that the pa-

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reaching the hospital. The service has also proven particularly effective in handling emergency childbirth cases, especially in rural and remote areas where access to healthcare facilities is limited.

In several such instances, EMTs have successfully conducted safe deliveries inside ambulances when there was insufficient time to reach a hospital. Officials noted that the combination of trained personnel, modern equipment, and continuous coordination has made the 108 service a trusted and reliable emergency response system across the state. They urged the public to immediately call 108 in case of symptoms such as chest pain, breathing difficulties, or excessive sweating, emphasising that the service is free of cost and available 24/7.

# Former Judge Slams Massive Mangrove Felling

**Mumbai:** Justice Abhay Oka has criticized the planned removal of 45,000 mangroves for the Coastal Road North project, calling the scale of destruction "staggering." Speaking at a recent lecture, the former Supreme Court judge argued that an independent ecological assessment should have been conducted to minimize the environmental impact.

While the High Court previously allowed the BMC to proceed provided they perform compensatory planting, environmentalists warn that these efforts are often ineffective. Critics point out that planting saplings in distant inland districts like Jalna cannot replace the flood protection and unique coastal benefits provided by Mumbai's local mangrove forests.

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Abhay Oka has strongly criticized the proposed removal of nearly 45,000 mangroves for the Coastal Road North project, describing the scale of environmental damage as "staggering."

Speaking at a public lecture, Justice Oka stressed that such a large-scale intervention in a fragile ecosystem should not proceed



without a thorough and independent ecological assessment. He argued that proper scientific evaluation could have helped identify alternatives or mitigation strategies to reduce environmental harm.

The project, being executed by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, is part of the city's broader plan to improve coastal connectivity and ease traffic congestion.

However, the plan has sparked widespread concern among environmentalists and experts who warn about long-term ecological conse-

quences. Mangroves play a critical role in protecting coastal cities like Mumbai by acting as natural barriers against flooding and storm surges.

They also support biodiversity and help maintain the ecological balance of coastal regions.

The removal of such a vast number of mangroves has raised fears of increased vulnerability to climate-related risks.

Earlier, the Bombay High Court had permitted the project to go ahead, subject to the condition that compensatory afforestation



be carried out. Under this provision, authorities are required to plant new mangroves to offset the loss caused by construction.

However, environmental activists have questioned the effectiveness of such compensatory measures.

They argue that newly planted saplings cannot replicate the complex ecosystem services provided by mature mangrove forests.

Critics have also pointed out that afforestation efforts are often carried out in distant inland areas such as Jalna.

According to experts, relocating plantations away from the original coastal environment fails to replace the unique benefits offered by local mangroves.

These include shoreline stabilization, carbon sequestration, and protection against tidal surges.

Environmentalists maintain that the ecological value of established mangrove systems cannot be easily recreated elsewhere.

The debate has intensified concerns about balancing infrastructure development with environmental sustainability.

Urban planners and activists alike are calling for more responsible decision-making in projects that impact sensitive ecosystems.

Justice Oka's remarks have added weight to the growing demand for stricter environmental scrutiny in large-scale developments.

The issue also highlights the broader challenge of managing urban expansion in a climate-vulnerable city like Mumbai.

As discussions continue, the controversy underscores the need for long-term ecological planning alongside infrastructure growth.

# Delhi Professional's Mumbai Rent Query Goes Viral

**Mumbai:** A Reddit post from a Delhi professional moving to Mumbai has sparked a heated debate over the city's skyrocketing real estate prices. The user sought a single room near Nariman Point with a budget of ₹30,000, leading to a flood of skeptical and humorous responses from locals.

Mumbaikars were quick to point out the "reality gap," with some commenters suggesting that such a budget might only cover a room in a chawl or an SRA building in South Mumbai. The thread highlighted the common struggle of newcomers who often have to choose between a tiny living space near work or a grueling multi-hour commute from more affordable suburbs.

A viral discussion on the social media platform Reddit has reignited conversations about Mumbai's steep housing costs after a Delhi-based professional sought rental advice for relocating to the city.

The user's query, which mentioned a budget of ₹30,000 for a single room near Nariman Point, quickly drew widespread attention and reactions from local residents.

Many Mumbaikars responded with a mix of humor and realism, pointing

out what they described as a significant gap between expectations and actual market conditions.

Commenters noted that Nariman Point, being one of Mumbai's prime commercial hubs, commands extremely high rental prices due to its location and demand.

Several users remarked that finding even a modest living space in that area within the stated budget would be highly unlikely. Some responses jokingly suggested that such an amount might only secure accommodation in older chawls or in SRA (Slum Rehabilitation Authority) buildings in South Mumbai.

The discussion soon evolved into a broader reflection on the challenges faced by newcomers trying to settle in the city.

Many locals shared their own experiences of adjusting expectations when it comes to space, location, and affordability.

The thread highlighted a common dilemma—whether to live closer to the workplace in a smaller, more expensive space or opt for larger, affordable housing in distant suburbs.

For many working professionals, this often translates into long daily commutes that can stretch for hours.

Users pointed out that areas further north or along suburban railway lines offer relatively affordable options, though at the cost of travel time.

The conversation also shed light on the intense demand for housing in Mumbai, driven by its status as a financial and commercial capital.

Limited land availability and high population density continue to push property prices upward.

Experts often note that Mumbai's real estate market is among the most expensive in the country, particularly in central and south zones.

The viral post resonated with many who have faced similar challenges while relocating to the city.

It also sparked debates about urban planning, housing supply, and the need for more affordable living options.

Some users offered practical advice, suggesting co-living spaces or shared apartments as viable alternatives within the given budget.

Others recommended exploring emerging neighborhoods that balance cost and connectivity.

The discussion reflects how digital platforms are increasingly becoming spaces for real-life problem-solving and shared experiences.

# Century-Old Drains Get High-Tech Face Lift

**Mumbai:** The BMC is utilizing advanced geopolymer lining and trenchless technology to reinforce the city's 100-year-old underground stormwater drains. This innovative "no-dig" method is expected to extend the lifespan of the aging masonry arches by at least 50 years while significantly improving water flow.

The project targets 27 critical drains over a 14-kilometer stretch to combat the increasing threat of monsoon flooding caused by climate change. By strengthening the structural integrity of these Victorian-era tunnels without excavating the streets above, the BMC aims to double the system's drainage capacity and reduce waterlogging in low-lying areas.

The Brihanmumbai

Municipal Corporation has launched an advanced infrastructure upgrade to modernize the city's century-old stormwater drainage system using cutting-edge technology.

The initiative focuses on reinforcing aging underground drains that date back over 100 years, many of which were built during the colonial era.

To carry out the work efficiently, the civic body is using geopolymer lining and trenchless "no-dig" methods that avoid the need for large-scale excavation.

This approach allows engineers to strengthen the internal structure of drains without disturbing roads, traffic, or daily life above ground.

Experts say the use of geopolymer materials will

significantly enhance the durability of the old masonry arches that form the backbone of these tunnels.

The upgraded lining is expected to extend the lifespan of the drainage network by at least 50 years.

In addition to structural reinforcement, the project is designed to improve water flow through the drains.

Smoother internal surfaces will help reduce friction, enabling faster movement of rainwater during heavy downpours.

The project covers 27 critical drains spanning a total length of approximately 14 kilometers across the city.

These drains have been identified as key points in the network that are vulnerable to blockages and flooding.



Mumbai has long struggled with waterlogging during the monsoon season, particularly in low-lying areas.

as.

Authorities believe that modernizing these crucial sections will play a major role in reducing flood risks. Climate change and increasingly intense rainfall events have added urgency to the need for such upgrades.

By improving drainage capacity, the city aims to better handle sudden and heavy bursts of rain.

Officials estimate that the upgraded system could potentially double the drainage capacity in targeted zones.

The trenchless technology being used also minimizes environmental disruption and reduces project timelines.

It eliminates the need for digging up roads, which often leads to traffic congestion and public inconvenience.

The initiative reflects a shift toward smarter and more sustainable urban infrastructure solutions. Urban planners have praised the move as a practical way to preserve heritage structures while enhancing their functionality.

The Victorian-era drainage network is a vital part of Mumbai's infrastructure and requires careful modernization.

By combining old engineering with new technology, the project aims to create a more resilient system.

Residents in flood-prone areas are expected to benefit the most from improved drainage performance.

The effort marks a significant step in preparing Mumbai for future climate challenges.

With monsoon seasons

becoming increasingly unpredictable, such upgrades are seen as essential for the city's long-term resilience.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has launched an ambitious infrastructure project to modernize the city's century-old stormwater drainage system using advanced, non-invasive technology.

The initiative focuses on strengthening underground drains that are over 100 years old, many of which date back to the colonial era and continue to serve as a critical part of Mumbai's urban infrastructure.

To execute the upgrade efficiently, the civic body is deploying geopolymer lining along with trenchless "no-dig" technology, eliminating the need for large-scale excavation.

# Mumbai to Host Inaugural Ocean Film Festival

**Mumbai:** The city is preparing to celebrate marine life with "The Ocean Film Festival of India" (TOFFOI) on Sunday, April 5, 2026.

Organized by Ecofolks and the National Film Development Corporation, the day-long event will be held at the VJBB Udyan & Zoo in Byculla.

The festival aims to highlight the beauty and vulnerability of India's 11,000 km coastline through a series of screenings, including titles like Humpbacks of Goa and Shark Preyed. In addition to cinema, the event will feature masterclasses on marine biodiversity and sailing, led by experts such as Deepak Apte and Zia Hajecebhoy.



The city is gearing up for a unique celebration of marine life as "The Ocean Film Festival of India" (TOFFOI) is set to take place on April 5, 2026.

The event is being organized by Ecofolks in collaboration with the National Film Development Corporation.

Through carefully curated films, the event will highlight both the beauty of marine ecosystems and the challenges they face.

The screening lineup includes notable titles such as Humpbacks of Goa and Shark Preyed, which explore ocean life and conservation themes. These films are expected to offer audiences a deeper understanding of marine biodiversity and human impact on ocean environments.

Beyond film screenings, the festival will also feature interactive masterclasses and discussions.

Experts from the field will lead sessions focusing on marine conservation, biodiversity, and sustainable practices.

# Advanced Animal Trap Deployed in Khalapur

**Mumbai:** To combat the growing number of human-wildlife encounters, the Forest Department in Khalapur has introduced a state-of-the-art animal trap. Developed through a partnership between the Help Foundation and Ahil Fencing and Gabion Company, the new equipment is designed for the humane capture and medical treatment of wild animals.

The cage was designed and donated by local volunteer Ashfaq Logde to address the lack of rescue infrastructure in the region. Range Forest Officer Rajendra Pawar praised the initiative, noting that forest conservation is only effective when local citizens and authorities work

together.

The trap's induction is expected to significantly speed up response times for wildlife emergencies.

In a proactive move to address rising human-wildlife encounters, the Forest Department in Khalapur has introduced a modern animal trapping system designed for safe and humane rescue operations.

The initiative aims to improve response mechanisms in areas where increasing urban expansion has led to frequent interactions between humans and wild animals.

Developed through a collaboration between the Help Foundation and Ahil Fencing and Gabion Company, the advanced trap is

engineered to ensure minimal stress and harm to captured animals.

Officials stated that the equipment is specifically designed to allow for safe capture followed by medical examination and rehabilitation.

The trap has been donated by local volunteer Ashfaq Logde, highlighting the role of citizen participation in conservation efforts. Authorities noted that the region has faced a shortage of proper rescue infrastructure, which often delayed emergency responses.

With the induction of this new system, officials expect a significant improvement in handling wildlife emergencies.

The equipment is built with enhanced safety features that protect both the animals and the rescue personnel involved. It is particularly useful in capturing animals that stray into residential areas without causing injury.

Range Forest Officer Rajendra Pawar praised the initiative and emphasized the importance of community involvement in conservation.

He stated that effective wildlife management depends on cooperation between local residents and government agencies.

The increasing frequency of such encounters has been linked to habitat loss and expanding human settlements.

# LPG Hoarding Racket Busted in Vashi, Two Arrested

**Mumbai:** In a major crackdown on black marketing, the Civil Supplies Department seized LPG cylinders worth ₹13.91 lakh during a raid in Vashi, arresting two individuals accused of illegal hoarding amid supply concerns.

The operation was carried out following a tip-off received by the department's flying squad, which led officials to a location in Sector 11.

Acting swiftly, the team conducted a raid under the supervision of

senior officers from the Churchgate headquarters and the Thane division.

During the search, authorities confiscated a total of 123 LPG cylinders along with four vehicles allegedly used for transportation.

Officials revealed that the accused were attempting to sell the cylinders at inflated prices, taking advantage of the ongoing supply shortage.

The two arrested have been identified as Irfan Shaikh, aged 25, and Firoz Kawas.

Both individuals were taken into custody by Vashi police and are currently facing legal action.

A case has been registered against them under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 for violating norms related to the storage and sale of essential goods.

Investigators found that the illegal stockpile was linked to an agency named Right Connection located in the Sai Baba Arcade building.

According to officials,



the agency was allegedly involved in storing cylinders far beyond the permissible limits.

An additional 68 empty cylinders were found stored inside the office premises.

Authorities believe the setup was part of a systematic attempt to divert supply for black market sales.

Such activities not only violate regulations but also disrupt the fair distribution of essential commodities.

The raid is part of a broader campaign by the Civil Supplies Department to clamp down on hoarding and profiteering. Officials stated that strict monitor-

ing is being carried out to prevent artificial shortages in the market.

The department has intensified inspections across various locations in response to rising complaints.

This action is expected to send a strong message to those engaged in illegal trade practices.

Meanwhile, further investigations are underway to determine if more individuals or networks are involved. Authorities are also

examining supply chains to identify any additional irregularities.

The crackdown highlights the government's commitment to ensuring that essential goods remain accessible at fair prices.

Officials have urged citizens to report any suspicious activities related to hoarding or black marketing.

With continued vigilance, the administration aims to maintain stability in supply and protect consumer interests.

## Editorial

### A New Chapter in Tax Ease

April 1, 2026, marks a day witnessing a major transformation in the history of the Indian economy. Bidding farewell to the Income Tax Act of 1961—which had been in existence for the past six decades—the Central Government has initiated the implementation of a new code: the 'Income Tax Act, 2026.' This change is not merely an amendment to the clauses of the old law; rather, it is a bold endeavor to render the Indian tax system more modern, transparent, and taxpayer-centric. Crafted with due consideration for shifts in the global economy and India's burgeoning digital prowess, this new legislation is poised to directly impact the financial planning of the middle class, the salaried segment, and senior citizens. The primary objective of this reform is to eliminate the technical hurdles encountered by taxpayers while filing taxes and to simplify the process of regulatory compliance. Thanks to this new law, the tax-filing process is no longer a convoluted affair; instead, it has become eminently practical and easy to comprehend—a development expected to curb tax evasion and accord due respect to the honest taxpayer.

The most salient feature of this new legislation is the introduction—for the very first time—of the concept of the "Tax Year." Until now, Indian taxpayers were frequently bewildered by the labyrinthine terminology surrounding the "Financial Year" and the "Assessment Year." The technical conundrum wherein income earned in one year would undergo assessment in the subsequent year has now been permanently resolved. Under the new provisions, tax liability will be computed within the very same year in which the income is earned. Consequently, the process of filing Income Tax Returns has become remarkably lucid and streamlined. Significantly, the government has now accorded "Default" status to the "New Tax Regime." This implies that unless a taxpayer explicitly opts for the "Old Tax Regime" while filing their return, their tax liability will automatically be computed in accordance with the New Tax Regime. Nevertheless, the government has not completely discontinued the Old Tax Regime. Taxpayers wishing to avail themselves of deductions such as those under Sections 80C, 80D, or House Rent Allowance (HRA) may opt for the old tax regime. However, the new tax regime features significantly lower tax rates, and—to provide relief to the salaried class—the "Standard Deduction" has been retained even within this new framework. From the perspective of middle-class taxpayers, this new legislation has proven to be extremely promising. Under the new provisions, an annual income of up to approximately ₹12 lakh can now effectively become tax-free. If one factors in the standard deduction of ₹50,000 available to salaried individuals, along with other applicable exemptions, there would be absolutely no tax liability on an income of up to ₹12.75 lakh. This provision is particularly beneficial for young professionals who have a fixed income and limited avenues for savings. Furthermore, salaried individuals have been granted an additional annual tax exemption of up to ₹1.05 lakh on 'meal vouchers' or 'meal cards.' This is a practical concession; if employees pay due attention to this aspect while structuring their salary packages, they can realize substantial tax savings. To facilitate this, it would be prudent to consult with one's company's Human Resources Department or a tax advisor at the very beginning of the financial year, thereby enabling effective tax planning throughout the year. Regarding senior citizens, this law incorporates certain special and mixed provisions. Under the old tax regime, the tax-exemption thresholds for senior citizens and super senior citizens are set at ₹3 lakh and ₹5 lakh, respectively—thresholds that do not apply under the new regime. Furthermore, the deduction of up to ₹50,000 on interest earned from fixed deposits in banks, available under Section 80TTB, is accessible only under the old regime. Consequently, senior citizens must meticulously compare both tax regimes, taking into account their specific investments and interest income. Timely submission of Form 12I or Form 15H to avoid Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) by banks should constitute an integral part of a senior citizen's financial planning. Additionally, alongside maintaining accurate records of pension and interest income, it is crucial to preserve documentary evidence of medical expenses to ensure one can effectively avail of the deductions available under Section 80DDB. The new legislation has not only introduced various concessions but has also taken stringent measures to enhance transparency. Thanks to digital systems, the majority of a taxpayer's data will now be pre-populated in the tax return forms. This is expected to significantly reduce the incidence of errors committed while filing returns. However, alongside this convenience, the taxpayer's responsibility has also increased. It is now mandatory to accurately disclose all sources of income—particularly details regarding foreign assets and transactions. Provisions have been established for imposing penalties and initiating strict legal action in cases involving the submission of incorrect information or the concealment of income. Significant changes have also been introduced in the investment landscape; specifically, a 'Capital Gains' tax has now been levied on share buybacks. Therefore, individuals investing in the stock market must carefully assess the tax implications of their investment portfolios. Furthermore, certain revisions have also been made to the deadlines prescribed for taxpayers to file their income tax returns. For general taxpayers filing ITR-1 and ITR-2, July 31, 2026, remains the deadline; however, for business owners and professionals (filing ITR-3 and ITR-4), this deadline has been extended to August 31, 2026—an extension from the previous date of July 31. For cases requiring an audit, the deadline of October 31 remains unchanged. The most significant change is that the deadline for filing a revised return has now been extended to March 31, 2027, instead of December 31. This provides taxpayers with additional time to rectify errors or furnish any information that may have been inadvertently omitted. Nevertheless, taxpayers must not overlook the fact that failing to meet the advance tax payment deadlines—scheduled for June 15, September 15, December 15, and March 15—may result in the imposition of interest penalties. Overall, the new Income Tax Act of 2026 is poised to steer the Indian economy toward a more streamlined and efficient trajectory. Tax planning should not be viewed merely as a rushed, year-end exercise; rather, it ought to be a disciplined practice initiated on the very first day of the financial year. Timely selection of an appropriate tax regime, strategic investment planning, and diligent tracking of income sources serve to alleviate the psychological stress and financial burden typically associated with the year-end period. While this Act is undeniably modern in its approach, its ultimate success hinges upon the awareness and integrity of the taxpayers themselves. It is the duty of every responsible citizen to contribute to nation-building by paying their taxes in a timely manner. In essence, the 'Income Tax Act, 2026' not only offers concessions to taxpayers but also provides them with an empowered platform to fulfill their tax obligations with both dignity and ease. True financial freedom can only be realized if tax planning commences not at the close of the year, but from its very inception.

## Anganwadi Centres equipped with Growth Monitoring Devices to measure growth of children

Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 has been launched with the aim of strengthening and accelerating improvements in nutrition across the country. The mission brings multiple nutrition-related schemes under one umbrella for better coordination and impact.

It has subsumed key programmes such as Anganwadi Services, Poshan Abhiyaan, and the Scheme for Adolescent Girls. By integrating these initiatives, the government seeks to ensure a more holistic and efficient approach to tackling malnutrition.

The mission is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme and is being implemented across all States and Union Territories. While the Centre provides policy direction and financial support, the responsibility for execution lies with the respective State and UT governments.

States and UTs are tasked with implementing various activities under the mission. This decentralized approach allows flexibility in addressing region-specific nutritional challenges while adhering to national goals. The current status of nutrition among children below six years of age is regularly monitored. Data from all States and UTs is compiled and made publicly accessible through the Poshan Tracker dashboard.



This dashboard provides insights into the progress made under the mission. It helps stakeholders track improvements and identify areas that need attention.

A major feature of the mission is the introduction of Saksham Anganwadi Centres. These are upgraded versions of traditional An-

ganwadi Centres designed to offer better services.

Saksham Anganwadi Centres are equipped with modern infrastructure, including digital software and hardware. Facilities such as internet connectivity, LED screens, and smart learning tools are being introduced.

Additional improvements include water purifiers or RO systems, audio-visual aids, and child-friendly learning materials. Educational artwork and practice boards are also part of the upgraded environment.

The government has approved the upgradation of 2 lakh Angan-

wadi Centres into Saksham Anganwadis over a period of five years. This large-scale transformation aims to modernize grassroots childcare and nutrition services.

To strengthen monitoring, the Ministry has launched the Poshan Tracker mobile application. This digital tool tracks activities of Anganwadi Centres, workers, and beneficiaries.

The application enables near real-time data collection, allowing authorities to closely monitor implementation. It also supports data-driven decision-making and timely course corrections.

A Facial Recognition System (FRS) has been integrated into the Poshan Tracker. This ensures accurate distribution of Take-Home Rations to registered beneficiaries.

Additionally, Aadhaar-based tracking has been introduced. This helps in proper identification of beneficiaries, preventing leakages and eliminating duplicate or ghost entries.

Anganwadi Workers have been provided smartphones with data-recharge facilities for efficient data entry. Growth Monitoring Devices have also been installed at all centres to track children's development. This information was shared by Savitri Thakur in the Lok Sabha in response to a query.

## Trans-state Conservation Effort leads to successful hatching of Great Indian Bustard chick in Gujarat after a decade

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupendra Patel, today announced a significant milestone in the conservation of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB). Gujarat witnessed the birth of a chick after a decade, in Kutch, through a novel conservation measure known as the Jumpstart Approach. The effort was planned a year back which was coordinated by the MoEFCC, along with the State Forest Departments of Rajasthan and Gujarat and the Wildlife Institute of India.

This is the first inter-state jump start initiative of the GIB in the country, that was successfully executed in Gujarat. It is important to mention that in Gujarat only three female GIBs are surviving in the grasslands of Kutch, leaving no possibility of having a fertile egg in the

wild. It took an arduous 770km road journey to transport an incubated egg to the desired nesting site in Kutch, which was undertaken without a break by creating a halt-free corridor from Sam (Rajasthan) to Naliya (Gujarat).

In the social media post, Shri Yadav noted that Project GIB was envisioned by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2011 to conserve the Great Indian Bustard in its natural habitats, including Gujarat, and was formally launched in 2016. He stated that the project has been making steady progress in strengthening conservation and recovery efforts for the species.

The Minister informed that the number of birds in conservation breeding centres at Sam and Ramdevra in Rajasthan has reached 73, with the addition of five new chicks during the current breeding season. He added



that India is now moving ahead towards the rewilding of birds in the near future as part of long-term conservation planning.

Giving further details on the path-breaking initiative, the Minister said that the female GIB tagged in August 2025 laid an infertile egg in Kutch, where the local population had lost all its males long ago. In a major trans-state conservation effort, a captive-bred GIB egg from the conservation breeding programme in Rajasthan was transported by road for over 19 hours in a handheld portable incubator and was successfully replaced in the nest on 22nd March.

The Minister stated that the female completed the incubation of the fertile egg and successfully hatched the chick on 26th March, with the field monitoring team observing the young chick being reared by its foster moth-

er in its natural habitat. He described this as a significant achievement in the recovery of the critically endangered species.

Shri Yadav stated that this effort is among several steps being taken to revive Great Indian Bustard populations and reflects India's strong commitment to wildlife conservation. He congratulated all scientists, field officers and wildlife enthusiasts involved in the effort and expressed hope for the survival of the chick, stating that the Government remains committed to leaving no stone unturned to make the conservation endeavour successful.

India is making steady progress in the wildlife conservation journey and remains firmly committed to protecting the Great Indian Bustard and other endangered species for future generations.

## ICAR Institutions Break New Ground in Global Rankings

In a significant step towards achieving the vision of a developed India, or Viksit Bharat, Indian agricultural institutions have made their debut in the prestigious global rankings. This milestone reflects the country's growing emphasis on quality education and research.

For the first time, Indian institutions have secured positions in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026. The development marks a breakthrough for the agricultural education sector in India.

The achievement aligns with the vision articulated by Narendra Modi during the Chief Secretaries' conference held in December 2025. At the conference, he stressed the importance of building skilled human capital to drive national growth.

Responding to this priority, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has intensified efforts to strengthen agricultural education. The council operates under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

ICAR has been working to build a world-class, multidisciplinary, and research-driven education ecosystem. This initiative is being implemented through the National Agricultural Research Education and Extension System (NAREES).

The latest edition of the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026 was officially released on March 25 by QS Quacquarelli Symonds. The rankings are widely regarded as one of the most credible global benchmarks for assessing academic excellence across disciplines.

This year's evaluation was ex-

tensive in scope, covering more than 21,000 academic programmes offered by over 1,900 universities across the world. The scale of participation highlights the competi-

Employer reputation, on the other hand, captures how graduates are valued in the global job market.

Research citations play a crucial role in determining the impact

Agricultural Research have achieved a historic breakthrough by securing positions in the rankings for the first time.

This milestone is being seen as



tiveness and prestige associated with these rankings.

Institutions were assessed using a comprehensive set of parameters designed to measure both academic quality and global influence. These included academic reputation, employer reputation, research citations per paper, and the extent of international research collaboration. Academic reputation remains one of the most influential indicators, reflecting how universities are perceived by scholars worldwide.

of an institution's scholarly work. A higher citation count indicates that the research produced is widely recognized and used by the academic community.

International collaboration is another key metric, highlighting partnerships between institutions across borders. This parameter reflects the global integration of research efforts and knowledge exchange. Against this highly competitive backdrop, two institutions under the Indian Council of

a major achievement for India's agricultural research and education ecosystem. It signifies the country's growing presence in globally competitive academic domains.

The ICAR-Indian Veterinary Research Institute has secured a position in the 51-100 ranking band. This makes it the only Indian institution to feature among the top 100 globally in the Veterinary Science category. Its inclusion in this elite group reflects decades of consistent contributions to veterinary educa-

tion, research, and animal health sciences. The institute has played a key role in advancing livestock health and productivity in India.

Meanwhile, the ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute has made its debut in the 151-200 band in the Agriculture and Forestry category. This achievement highlights its strong academic foundation and research output.

The presence of IARI in the rankings signals India's growing strength in agricultural sciences, particularly in areas such as crop research, sustainable farming, and food security.

Overall, 10 Indian universities have been featured in the Agriculture and Forestry category out of a total of 475 institutions worldwide. This demonstrates a steady expansion of India's academic footprint on the global stage.

Among the institutions ranked in the 151-200 band are Banaras Hindu University, University of Delhi, and IIT Kharagpur, all of which have strong interdisciplinary research capabilities.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has been placed in the 201-250 band, reflecting its contributions to agricultural innovation and education. Additionally, Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University has entered the rankings in the 301-350 band, marking its first appearance.

Reacting to the achievement, M. L. Jat stated that the inclusion of ICAR's deemed universities is a testament to their sustained and multidimensional contributions to agricultural and health sciences. He noted that their work spans both basic and applied research domains.

## Mumbai Police arrest fake doctors running illegal clinic



**Mumbai:** Two persons were arrested by Mumbai Crime Branch for allegedly posing as Doctors and running a clinic without proper academic certificates. The accused were identified as Rajiv Kapildev Ranjan (34) and Kumbhakar Ganti Yadav (56), and found examining pa-

tients. And administering treatment, officials said on Friday. Acting on a tip-off, a crime branch police team, along with an Assistant Medical Officer from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (M-East Ward), Deonar, conducted

raids at two clinics in Shivajinagar area of suburban Mumbai and arrested the accused. FIR were registered against them at Shivajinagar Police Station under Sections 33 and 36 of the Medical Practitioners Act, 1961. Further investigation is underway.

## Maha Vikas Aghadi has completely fallen apart, says BJP's Ban

**Mumbai:** Bharatiya Janata Party chief spokesperson Navnath Ban on Friday launched a sharp attack on the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), claiming that the alliance has "completely fallen apart" with its constituent parties moving in different directions. Ban pointed to the Indian National Congress announcing candidates independently for the upcoming by-elections in Rahuri and Baramati as a clear sign of disunity within the alliance. He argued that such unilateral decisions reflect a serious lack of coordination among MVA partners. According to Ban, the Congress party's move ahead of the April 23 by-elections indicates that the alliance is no longer functioning cohesively, raising questions about its ability

to present a united front in future elections. He also took aim at Sanjay Raut, a senior leader from Shiv Sena (UBT), over his recent remarks during a tour of Jalgaon district. Raut had advised party chief Uddhav Thackeray to begin preparations for the next Lok Sabha elections early, including selecting candidates and strengthening the party organization well in advance. Ban alleged that Raut's comments amounted to indirect criticism of Uddhav Thackeray and Aaditya Thackeray, suggesting that they were not sufficiently active on the ground. He further claimed that Raut's statements effectively exposed internal dissatisfaction within the Shiv Sena (UBT) leadership, portraying them as a sign of grow-



ing cracks within the faction. Ban noted that this was not the first time Raut had made such remarks, recalling earlier instances where the MP had drawn comparisons with Sharad Pawar, praising his continued political activity despite his age. According to Ban, such repeated comments by Raut indicate deeper internal divisions within the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction and undermine its leadership. Responding to Sanjay Raut's suggestion that all MVA partners should sit together and take collective

decisions, BJP spokesperson Navnath Ban accused him of speaking in contradictory tones and questioned his political stand within the alliance. He further alleged that Raut was "eating the salt of one group while acting as a spokesperson" for Sharad Pawar, hinting at divided loyalties and internal inconsistencies within the Maha Vikas Aghadi. Shifting focus to the issue of unseasonal rains in Maharashtra, Ban criticised the MVA, accusing it of being insensitive towards farmers despite its repeated claims of standing by the agricultural community. He alleged that Uddhav Thackeray had earlier promised financial assistance ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹50,000 for farmers during field visits, but claimed that these assurances were never fulfilled in reality. In con-

trast, Ban highlighted the steps taken by the current administration, stating that immediate damage assessments, or panchnamas, have been ordered for affected crops, especially banana plantations that have suffered significant losses due to the unseasonal weather. He also pointed to the tenure of Devendra Fadnis, noting that farm loan waivers of up to ₹2 lakh were announced even in the absence of elections, presenting it as an example of proactive governance. Overall, Ban's remarks underline the intensifying political confrontation in Maharashtra, with both sides continuing to exchange sharp allegations over leadership credibility, coordination within alliances, and their respective approaches to governance and farmer welfare.

## BJP to Organize Various Programs Across Maharashtra on Its Foundation Day

**Mumbai:** On the occasion of the foundation day of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a series of programmes will be across Maharashtra from April 5 to April 12, State Vice President Keshav Upadhye announced on Friday. Upadhye shared this information during a press conference held at the party's state office, in the presence of State Chief Spokesperson Navnath Ban.

As part of the celebrations, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, State President Ravindra Chavan, along with senior leaders like Raosaheb Danve, Sudhir Mungantiwar, Chandrakant Patil, and Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil will actively participate in public outreach and interact with party workers across the state. Upadhye highlighted that the celebrations aim to promote and reinforce nationalist ideology while strengthening the party's connection with the grassroots. He noted that April 6 marks the official foundation day of the BJP, and on this occasion, programmes will be conducted across all 288 assembly constituencies, 36 districts, and nearly one lakh booths in Maharashtra. A wide range of activities has been planned, including wall painting



at booths, felicitating of senior party workers, meetings of active outreach to prominent citizens, and cleanliness drives in public spaces. In addition, party representatives will connect with beneficiaries of central and state government schemes, aiming to highlight governance achievements and strengthen public engagement. State President Ravindra Chavan and other senior leaders will personally participate in wall painting activities within their respective constituencies, symbolising grassroots involvement. Upadhye further informed that information regarding the achievements of both the central and state

governments will be taken directly to households as part of a mass outreach campaign. He added that active party workers will hoist BJP flags at their homes, and on April 6 alone, the party aims to hoist flags at around 51 lakh homes across Maharashtra. A documentary showcasing the journey of the BJP—from having just two Members of Parliament to becoming the world's largest political party—will also be screened during these events. These programmes are set to be organised across approximately 1,200 mandals (organizational units), ensuring widespread participation at every level of the party structure. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis will be present in Mumbai during the celebrations, while Ravindra Chavan and other leaders will travel across all 36 districts on April 6 and 7 to engage directly with workers and the public. Special outreach initiatives such as "Gaoon Chalo" (Let's go to villages) and "Vasti Chalo" (Let's go to settlements) will also be undertaken, with party leaders and workers visiting rural and urban communities to strengthen connections and expand engagement.

## Major LPG theft racket busted; two tankers seized

**Ch. Sambhajinagar:** In a significant enforcement action, the District Supply Department, under the guidance of senior officials from the Civil Supplies Department, Mumbai, has busted an organised racket involved in illegally siphoning LPG gas from tankers. According to the press release from the District Information Office on Friday, the joint operation resulted in the seizure of assets worth ₹1,26,87,099. The raid was carried out following specific intelligence inputs and directives issued by the Controller of Rationing and Director of Civil Supplies, Mumbai. Acting on credible information, a joint team comprising the state-level flying squad and district officials conducted a late-night operation on April 2, 2026, at around 9:45 pm near an open area adjacent to Hotel Sai Yash in Gangapur taluka

along Vajapur Road. During surveillance in the dark, officials detected two LPG tankers from which gas was being illegally and dangerously transferred into commercial cylinders using ing pipes. The team swiftly intervened and caught the tanker drivers red-handed while the illegal refilling was in progress. Among the seized items were two LPG tankers bearing registration numbers MH-43-CK-5921 and MH-43-CK-5747, valued at

₹52.95 lakh each, totalling approximately ₹1.05 crore. Additionally, around 35,220 kilograms of LPG gas worth ₹20.04 lakh was confiscated. The authorities also recovered 17 filled commercial cylinders, six empty ones, along with several domestic and small 5-kg cylinders. Other equipment used in the illegal operation included four specialised rubber pipes fitted with valves, which were being used to extract gas from the tankers

and refill cylinders. The operation was led by Assistant District Supply Officer Sandeep Vishwanath Shinde, along with team members Sagar Singal, Hidayat Khan, Irfan Patel, Amol Kasar, Sandeep More, Panchal, Rameshwar Lokhande, and other staff from the District Supply Office, who carried out the raid with precision and courage. A case has been registered at MIDC Police Station, Waluj, against tanker drivers Shrikrishna Sakharam Dahiphale and Miraj M. Jaish Khan, businessman Mahesh Vishnu Thorat, and tanker owner Shrihar Chedi. The accused have been booked under provisions of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and the LPG Supply and Distribution Order, 2000. Further investigation into the case is being conducted by Police Sub-Inspector Pravin Patharkar.

## River Rejuvenation Projects Destroying Natural Habitats, Says Somnath Musudage

**Pune:** Environmental activist Somnath Musudage on Friday raised serious concerns over river rejuvenation projects being undertaken by the state government, claiming that many such initiatives are turning riverbanks into "concrete jungles" and damaging natural ecosystems. He warned that large-scale construction along rivers in the name of beautification and development is ultimately destroying biodiversity and disrupting the natural habitats that sustain river health. Musudage stressed the urgent need to make the government aware

of these unintended consequences. A resident of Dehu, Musudage has been leading a cleanliness drive for the Indrayani River for nearly two decades. In recognition of his sustained efforts, he was felicitated by Rangat-Sangat Pratishthan at a programme held at Aksharvel Hall. The honour was presented by noted Sant literature scholar Dr. Sadanand More, Chairman of the Maharashtra State Board of Literature and Culture. The award included a citation, shawl, and coconut, symbolising appreciation for his grassroots environmental work.

Speaking after receiving the felicitation, Musudage emphasised that access to clean and pure water is a fundamental right of every citizen. He expressed concern that even educated sections of society are contributing to environmental degradation through irresponsible behavior. He pointed out that untreated sewage flowing into rivers remains one of the biggest causes of pollution and called for immediate measures to stop it. He also urged communities at the village level to take collective responsibility for protecting water bodies.

"I have been serving the Indrayani River selflessly for the past 20-22 years without expecting recognition. A river that is clean at its source should remain equally clean at its confluence," Musudage said. Addressing the gathering as chief guest, Dr. Sadanand More highlighted that religious and cultural practices must evolve in response to changing environmental realities. He stated that river pollution and water scarcity are largely man-made problems. He cautioned that the global water crisis is one of the most serious challenges

facing humanity today and stressed that changes in rivers directly affect the society and culture built around them. Elaborating on the significance of the Indrayani River, More noted its deep mythological, historical, and cultural relevance in Maharashtra. He referred to the teachings and abhangs of Sant Tukaram, underlining the river's role in preserving spiritual and linguistic traditions. He further emphasised that rivers are not only cultural symbols but also critical ecological systems. "If rivers are polluted, the planet itself may become uninhabitable," he warned.

## Minister reviews availability of piped gas connections

**Pune:** Chandrakant Patil, Maharashtra's Higher and Technical Education Minister, has directed officials to ensure the availability of new (PNG) connections for citizens amid concerns over a possible shortage of LPG cylinders due to the ongoing West Asia conflict. Patil held a review meeting on Friday with officials from Maharashtra Natural Gas Limited (MNGL) to assess the situation and discuss the rising demand for natural gas as more households look for alternative fuel options. During the meeting, he specifically reviewed the PNG supply scenario across Pune city, includ-

ing the Kothrud assembly constituency, which he represents. Officials from MNGL briefed the minister on the current supply position, technical challenges in expanding the network, and the overall demand-supply dynamics in the region. In response, Patil stressed the need to fast-track pipeline expansion work to ensure that more households can be connected to PNG in a timely manner, especially given the surge in demand. He also underlined the importance of coordination with citizens during the expansion process to avoid delays and ensure smooth execution of infrastructure projects.

To support the accelerated rollout, Patil assured that additional manpower and resources would be made available if required, signalling the government's intent to proactively address the situation. The push for PNG connections comes at a time when concerns over LPG availability have increased, prompting authorities to explore more stable and continuous energy supply options for households. Senior MNGL officials, including Director Kumar Shankar, Commercial Director Shankar Karjagi, Independent Director Bageshree Manthalkar, Vice President Shatrughan Singh.

## Congress claims stake in Baramati, Rahuri following party high command's approval

**Mumbai:** In a significant political development ahead of the Baramati and Rahuri assembly by-elections, the Indian National Congress has decided to contest both seats, signalling a more assertive stance within the opposition space in Maharashtra. Reports suggest that the party high command has given its approval for the move, triggering fresh discussions around evolving political equations, particularly within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). After reviewing the ground situation in these key constituencies, the Congress leadership has made it clear that it intends to field candidates in both Baramati and Rahuri, indicating its determination to strengthen its presence. In Baramati, considered a politically high-profile constituency, the party has already conducted interviews for poten-

tial candidates. With a large number of aspirants in the fray, the leadership is expected to take a cautious and strategic approach before finalising a name. Similarly, in Rahuri, the candidate selection process has reached its final stage, with the party closely evaluating options based on local dynamics and electoral viability. Despite its decision to contest, Congress has indicated that final candidate announcements will be made only after consultations with its alliance partners, keeping coordination within the MVA in consideration. This move is likely to impact seat-sharing negotiations and the broader electoral strategy of the alliance, as each party recalibrates its approach ahead of the by-elections. State Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal shared details about the ongoing process, stating that the decision was

taken after discussions with the party's central leadership. He revealed that the party has received six applications for Baramati and four for Rahuri, reflecting keen interest among local to contest the elections. Sapkal added that online interviews with the aspirants have already been completed and that the party's official stand, including candidate names, will be announced within the next two days. With Congress officially entering the contest in both constituencies, the political battle in Baramati and Rahuri is expected to intensify significantly. The development underscores a rapidly heating political atmosphere in Maharashtra, where alliances, strategies, and leadership dynamics are likely to play a crucial role in shaping the outcome of the upcoming by-elections.

## Sharad Pawar pays tribute to Shivaji Maharaj, calls him symbol of justice

**Mumbai:** Marking the Punyatithi of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on April 3, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar paid tribute to the Maratha icon, calling him a timeless symbol of resistance against injustice and oppression. In a post on the social media platform X, Pawar shared a heartfelt message, recalling Shivaji Maharaj's historic role in ending foreign domination and establishing a self-reliant, just governance. The post, accompanied by a photograph, highlighted that the ideals of the legendary ruler continue to inspire contemporary struggles for justice, equality, and good governance.

In his tribute, Pawar highlighted the enduring relevance of Shivaji Maharaj's vision of "Hindavi Swarajya", describing it as a model rooted in courage, administrative excellence and public welfare. He noted that the Maratha king's principles transcend time and remain a guiding force in modern India, particularly in Maharashtra, where Shivaji Maharaj is revered as a symbol of pride, justice and inclusive governance. Political observers point out that such commemorative messages from senior leaders like Pawar carry significant weight in Maharashtra's socio-political landscape, especially during major historical observances.

Pawar, who has remained a central figure in state and national politics for over five decades, has consistently invoked Shivaji Maharaj's legacy in discussions around farmers' rights, regional identity and equitable development. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, born on February 19, 1630, at Shivneri Fort near Pune, founded the Maratha Empire through strategic military brilliance, including the use of guerrilla warfare tactics known as "Ganimi Kava". Rising against powerful forces such as the Mughal Empire and the Adilshahi Sultanate of Bijapur, he established an independent state across large parts of western India. His coronation as Chhatrapati in 1674 at Raigad

Fort formally marked the establishment of Swarajya, a self-governing kingdom that challenged centuries of external rule. Shivaji Maharaj is widely credited with strengthening Maratha identity, developing naval power, earning recognition as the "Father of the Indian Navy", and instituting an efficient administrative system based on merit, justice and inclusivity rather than caste or religion. He passed away on April 3, 1680, at Raigad Fort following illness. His Punyatithi is observed annually across Maharashtra and among Marathi communities worldwide through prayers, processions, cultural programmes and tributes at key histori-

cal sites, including Raigad and Shivneri. Leaders from across political parties and citizens are expected to pay homage throughout the day, reflecting the enduring emotional and cultural connection to the Maratha ruler. Pawar's tribute this year comes amid renewed discussions around Maratha history and reservation issues in the state, further underscoring its significance. As tributes continue to pour in, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's legacy as a visionary leader, military strategist and just ruler remains deeply embedded in the public consciousness, continuing to inspire the pursuit of justice and self-rule even in the 21st century.

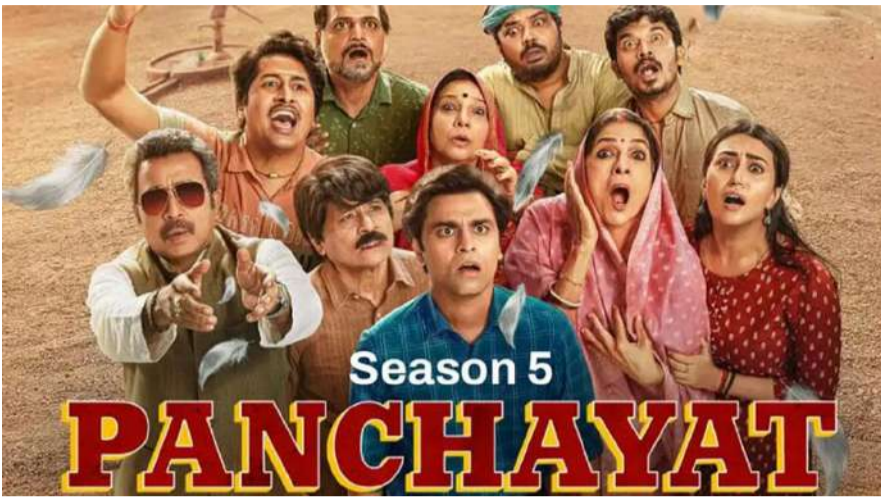
## 'Panchayat' completes six years, the makers confirm Season 5

**Mumbai:** The makers of the beloved series Panchayat have officially announced its much-anticipated Season 5, marking a special milestone as the show completes six years since its debut on April 3, 2020.

Streaming platform Prime Video also confirmed that shooting for the new season has already begun, sparking excitement among fans who have closely followed the journey of Phulera and its quirky residents.

Since its premiere, Panchayat has emerged as one of India's most loved and relatable series, winning widespread acclaim for its simple storytelling, grounded characters, and slice-of-life humor that resonates across audiences.

The success of Season 4 further cemented its popularity, as it recorded the biggest opening in the franchise's history during its launch



week, reflecting the show's ever-growing fan base.

On its very first day, the series trended among the 'Top 10' titles in over 42 countries, including major markets like the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the UAE, showcasing its global

appeal. The show's reach extended across India as well, with viewership spanning 95 percent of the country's pin codes, highlighting its deep penetration and connection with audiences from both urban and rural regions.

Globally, the series was

watched in over 180 countries during its launch week, further proving that its themes of rural life, governance, and human relationships transcend cultural boundaries. This overwhelming response has played a key role in building anticipation for Season 5, which promises

to deliver yet another engaging mix of humor, emotion, and drama. The upcoming season will pick up from the gripping climax of Season 4, which left fans with several unanswered questions and emotional moments. Viewers are especially eager to see what lies ahead for Sachivji, whose future took a crucial turn following his CAT exam results. At the same time, Manju Devi is expected to grapple with the aftermath of her electoral defeat, adding emotional depth to the storyline. Meanwhile, Pradhanji continues to remain unsettled, hinting at further political and personal developments in the new season. Season 5 is expected to build on this tense narrative while retaining the signature Phulera-style humor and heartwarming storytelling that fans have come to love.

At the same time, Manju Devi is expected to grapple with the aftermath of her electoral defeat, adding emotional depth to the storyline. Meanwhile, Pradhanji continues to remain unsettled, hinting at further political and personal developments in the new season. Season 5 is expected to build on this tense narrative while retaining the signature Phulera-style humor and heartwarming storytelling that fans have come to love.

## Lisa Mishra opens up about losing her voice for six months in 2022

**Mumbai:** Singer-actor Lisa Mishra has opened up about one of the most challenging phases of her life, revealing that she lost her voice for nearly six months in 2022 due to vocal nodules caused by strain and overuse.

Recalling the ordeal, Mishra described the experience as deeply traumatic, especially given that her voice is not just a tool for performance but the very foundation of her identity and career. For an artist, such a loss can feel both professionally and emotionally devastating.

She shared that during this period, she struggled with fear and uncertainty, unsure if she would ever regain her ability to sing the way she once did. The inability to perform left her questioning her future in the music industry. Mishra explained that even basic attempts to sing were difficult, as her voice would fail to respond properly. Instead of clear notes, only a faint whisper of air would

come out, making it an incredibly frustrating and disheartening experience.

The condition, often associated with excessive strain on the vocal cords, forced her to step back completely and prioritise recovery. It required immense patience and discipline to allow her voice the rest it needed.

For months, she had to avoid speaking, whispering, or even humming—activities that most people take for granted. This strict vocal rest was essential to healing but also mentally exhausting.

Beyond the physical struggle, the emotional toll was significant. Mishra faced moments of self-doubt and anxiety, as the uncertainty of recovery weighed heavily on her mind.

However, her journey took a positive turn with time, care, and proper technique. Recently, she successfully performed four shows back-to-back without any issues, marking a major milestone in

her recovery.

For Mishra, these performances were more than just concerts—they symbolised resilience, healing, and a triumphant return to form after a long and difficult battle.

She emphasised that her voice now feels stronger than ever, thanks to conscious changes in her singing technique and a renewed focus on vocal health.

The experience taught her invaluable lessons about patience and discipline. She realised that maintaining a career in music requires not just talent but also consistent care and respect for one's craft.

Mishra also highlighted that being a professional singer involves far more than stage glamour and applause. It demands rigorous training, physical discipline, and emotional strength.

She credited proper vocal training, adequate rest, and listening to her body as key factors in her recovery.

## Sanjay Dutt starrer 'Aakhri Sawaal' teaser unveiled

**Mumbai:** Actor-producer Aamir Khan reportedly had a clear vision for launching his son Junaid Khan, hoping that the upcoming film Ek Din would serve as his official debut vehicle.

According to industry insiders, Aamir wanted to recreate a sense of legacy and nostalgia by aligning his son's entry into films with his own iconic debut journey. Aamir himself rose to fame with Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak, which was directed by his cousin Mansoor Khan.

The intention, sources suggest, was to have Junaid also begin his career under the direction of Mansoor Khan, thereby continuing a cinematic tradition within the family. This idea added an emotional and symbolic layer to the film's development.

Aamir was reportedly keen that his son start with a romantic film, a genre that has historically resonated strongly with audiences and helped shape several successful careers in Bollywood.

The decision was also influenced by the positive response Junaid received for his earlier project Maharaj, which showcased his acting potential and hinted at his

versatility as a performer.

With Ek Din, the makers aim to present Junaid in a soft, sincere romantic role, allowing him to connect with audiences through emotion-driven storytelling.

The film has already be-



gun generating significant buzz, thanks to its visually appealing trailer and melodious soundtrack, both of which have struck a chord with viewers.

Produced under the banner of Aamir Khan Productions, the film Ek Din promises a heartfelt narrative that revolves around love, relationships, and emotional growth, aiming to strike a

deep chord with audiences.

One of the biggest highlights of the project is the much-awaited reunion of Aamir Khan and Mansoor Khan after several years. Their collaborations have previously resulted in some of

the most iconic films in Hindi cinema.

The duo has delivered memorable classics like Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, Akele Hum Akele Tum, and Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na, all of which continue to hold a special place in the hearts of audiences. Their return to the romance genre with Ek Din has generated significant excitement among fans, who are eager to witness the magic of their storytelling once again on the big screen. The film also stars Sai Pallavi as the female lead opposite Junaid Khan, bringing together a fresh pairing that has already piqued audience interest. Directed by Sunil Pandey, the project reflects a blend of experienced filmmaking and new creative energy, aiming to appeal to both traditional and modern audiences. In addition to Aamir and Mansoor Khan, the film is co-produced by Aparna Purohit, ensuring a strong production backing and a well-rounded creative vision. Scheduled for a theatrical release on May 1, 2026, Ek Din is expected to mark a crucial milestone for Junaid Khan, potentially setting the stage for a promising and successful career in the film industry.

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## Akshay Kumar starrer 'Bhooth Bangla' to commence paid previews from April 16



**Mumbai:** The makers of the upcoming horror-comedy Bhooth Bangla, backed by noted producer Ekta Kapoor, have officially announced that paid previews of the film will begin at 9 pm on April 16, creating a wave of anticipation among cinema lovers. With excitement steadily building around the project, the film is being positioned as a fresh and entertaining addition to the horror-comedy genre. The early paid previews are expected to generate initial audience reactions and provide insights into how the film resonates with viewers even before its full-scale release. Ekta Kapoor revealed that the decision to delay the film's release by a week was taken after extensive discussions with distributors and exhibitors across major markets. She emphasised that the move was carefully planned to maximise the film's theatrical potential. According to Kapoor, the postponement also takes into account the phenomenal box office performance of Dhurandhar: The Revenge, which is currently dominating theatres. She acknowledged that the film's success is a positive sign for the industry as a whole. She further explained that exhibitors had requested a clear and uninterrupted run for the ongoing blockbuster, believing it would benefit the entire ecosystem, including producers, theatre owners, and audiences. By pushing the release date of Bhooth Bangla, the makers aim to ensure that both films receive adequate screen space, marketing attention, and audience focus without competing directly against each other.

Kapoor reiterated that the primary goal is to enhance the overall cinematic experience for audiences. She stressed that thoughtful scheduling plays a crucial role in ensuring that films get the attention they deserve. She also highlighted that the decision ultimately benefits all stakeholders in the film industry. From filmmakers and distributors to exhibitors and viewers, everyone stands to gain from a well-planned release strategy. One

of the most exciting aspects of the film is the long-awaited reunion of Akshay Kumar and director Priyadarshan. The duo has previously delivered several iconic comedy films that continue to enjoy immense popularity. Their past collaborations, including Bhooh Bhulaiyaa, Khatta Meetha, and Hera Pheri, are widely regarded as cult classics, making their reunion a major highlight for fans. The film boasts a strong ensemble cast featuring Wamiqa Gabbi, Paresh Rawal, Tabu, Rajpal Yadav, Jisshu Sengupta, and Mithila Palkar, promising a mix of humor, performance, and versatility. Presented by Balaji Motion Pictures, a division of Balaji Telefilms Limited, in association with Cape of Good Films, the film is backed by a strong production team. Helmed by Priyadarshan, the film is produced by Akshay Kumar, Shobha Kapoor, and Ekta Kapoor, bringing together experienced names from the industry. With a unique blend of horror and comedy, a proven director-actor duo, and a strategic release plan, Bhooth Bangla is shaping up to be one of the most awaited entertainers, with its paid previews set to kickstart the buzz ahead of its theatrical run.

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## Conversations about alcoholism either don't happen or are judged: Jahnvi Kapoor

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Jahnvi Kapoor has stepped forward with a powerful new awareness initiative titled Off The Rocks, aimed at reshaping how society perceives alcohol addiction. The campaign seeks to highlight that alcoholism is not a moral failing, but a serious and treatable mental health condition that requires empathy, understanding, and professional care. Through this initiative, Kapoor is attempting to break the long-standing silence and stigma surrounding addiction. She emphasised that many individuals struggling with alcohol dependence often suffer in isolation due to fear of judgment, which prevents them from reaching out for the help they desperately need.

Kapoor noted that conversations around alcoholism are either completely avoided or approached with harsh judgment. This environment of silence and criticism often deepens the problem, pushing individuals further

into denial and distress rather than toward recovery and healing.

"Off The Rocks" aims to create a safe and open space where discussions about addiction can take place without shame. By normalising these conversations, the initiative hopes to encourage individuals and families to recognise the signs of addiction early and seek timely intervention. A key focus of the campaign is education. It intends to inform the public that addiction is closely linked to mental health and often stems from underlying psychological struggles such as anxiety, depression, or trauma. Addressing these root causes is essential for effective recovery.

To strengthen the initiative, Kapoor has partnered with Amaha, a well-known mental health organisation that provides clinically backed treatment and support. This collaboration ensures that the campaign is grounded in expert knowledge and offers credible pathways to recovery. Amaha brings professional expertise to the initiative, offering resources, counselling, and structured treatment plans for those dealing with addiction. Their involvement adds depth and reliability to the campaign, making it more than just an awareness drive. Dr. Amit Malik, Founder and CEO of Amaha, highlighted the importance of understanding addiction as a medical condition rather than a personal weakness. He stressed that misconceptions about addiction often prevent people from accessing the help that could transform their lives. He further explained that addiction, regardless of its form, impacts both mental and physical health. Without proper treatment, it can lead to severe consequences for individuals and their families, making awareness and early intervention crucial. The initiative also aims to support families of individuals battling alcoholism. Often, family members struggle to cope or respond effectively due to a lack of awareness. "Off The Rocks" seeks to guide them on how to provide support without enabling harmful behaviors. Kapoor's involvement as a public figure is expected to ampl-

fy the message significantly. Her influence can help reach a wider audience, especially young people, who may be more open to discussing mental health issues but still face societal pressure and stigma. The campaign underscores the importance of seeking professional help instead of relying on self-judgment or denial. It encourages individuals to view therapy and medical intervention as essential steps toward recovery, not signs of weakness.

Another key aspect of the initiative is reducing fear around treatment. Many people hesitate to seek help due to concerns about being labeled or misunderstood. "Off The Rocks" aims to dismantle these fears by promoting compassion and acceptance. By reframing addiction as a health issue, the initiative aligns with global efforts to prioritise mental well-being. It reflects a growing shift in society where mental health is being recognised as equally important as physical health. Ultimately, "Off The Rocks" is not just an awareness campaign but a call to action. It urges society to replace judgment with empathy, silence with dialogue, and stigma with support, paving the way for a more compassionate and informed approach to addiction and recovery.

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## I wanted 'Ek Din' to be Junaid's first film: Aamir Khan

**Mumbai:** Actor-producer Aamir Khan reportedly had a clear vision for launching his son Junaid Khan, hoping that the upcoming film Ek Din would serve as his official debut vehicle. According to industry insiders, Aamir wanted to recreate a sense of legacy and nostalgia by aligning his son's entry into films with his own iconic debut journey. Aamir himself rose to fame with Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak, which was directed by his cousin Mansoor Khan. This idea added an emotional and symbolic layer to the film's development. Aamir was reportedly keen that his son start with a romantic film, a genre that has historically resonated strongly with audiences and helped shape several successful careers in Bollywood. The decision was also influenced by the positive response Junaid received for his earlier project Maharaj, which showcased his acting potential and hinted at his versatility as a performer. With Ek Din, the makers aim to present Junaid in a soft, sincere romantic role, allowing him to connect with audiences through emotion-driven storytelling. The film has already begun generating significant buzz, thanks to its visually appealing trailer and melodious soundtrack, both of which have struck a chord with viewers. Produced under the banner of Aamir Khan Productions, the film promises a heartfelt narrative centered around love, relationships, and emotional growth. One of the biggest

highlights of the project is the reunion of Aamir Khan and Mansoor Khan after many years. Their collaborations in the past have delivered some of Hindi cinema's most memorable films. These include classics such as Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, Akele Hum Akele Tum, and Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na, all of which continue to enjoy enduring popularity. Their return to the romance genre with Ek Din has sparked excitement among fans, many of whom are eager to witness the magic of their storytelling once again.

The film also stars Sai Pallavi as the female lead opposite Junaid Khan, adding further appeal given her screen presence and popularity. Directed by Sunil Pandey, the film is backed by a team that blends experience with fresh creative energy. In addition to Aamir and Mansoor Khan, the project is co-produced by Aparna Purohit, ensuring strong production support. Scheduled for a theatrical release on May 1, 2026, Ek Din is expected to be a significant milestone for Junaid Khan, potentially marking the beginning of a promising career in the film industry.

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# DC aim to rewrite history as MI look to extend their dominance

**New Delhi:** In a familiar script that seems to repeat itself with minor variations, Delhi Capitals will once again find themselves up against Mumbai Indians in what promises to be a closely contested Saturday day match yet a quietly lopsided narrative in the Indian Premier League 2026, with both sides chasing their second win of the season. Delhi arrive after a six-wicket victory over Lucknow Super Giants, a result that offered encouragement without quite erasing the old anxieties.

That linger at the top of their batting order. Mumbai, meanwhile, have already rediscovered their rhythm with a comfortable win over Kolkata Knight Riders, reminding everyone that form, like history, has a habit of favouring the familiar. Under Axar Patel's leadership, Delhi have shown a certain balance, particularly in their bowl-

ing and lower middle order. It is the top order, however, that continues to invite concern.

KL Rahul and Pathum Nissanka, men of pedigree and expectation, failed to deliver in the previous outing, leaving the side to depend on rescue acts rather than platforms. Sameer Rizvi's recent half-century has offered a temporary cushion, while Nitish Rana, Tristan Stubbs, and David Miller wait in the wings to either stabilise or salvage depending on how the innings unfolds.

Their bowling unit, in contrast, appears more assured. Lungi Ngidi, Mukesh Kumar, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, and T Natarajan bring a mix of pace, spin, and variation that can trouble even the most confident batting line-ups. Ngidi's knack for early strikes and Kuldeep's control in the middle overs may well decide whether Mumbai's

batting is contained or allowed to flourish. Mumbai, led by Hardik Pandya, continue to operate with a quiet confidence that borders on habit. Their record against Delhi, five wins in the last six encounters, serves less as a statistic and more as a reminder of a psychological edge that has grown over time.

Their batting, which clicked efficiently in the previous game, remains their strongest suit. At the top, Ryan Rickelton and Rohit Sharma provide both aggression and assurance, capable of setting or chasing imposing totals.

The middle order, featuring Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, and Hardik Pandya, adds both flair and depth, while Sherfane Rutherford and Naman Dhir ensure that momentum does not taper off too early.

The bowling, however, remains an area where



Mumbai would prefer greater consistency. Jasprit Bumrah, their most reliable

asset, will once again shoulder the responsibility of leading the attack, support-

ed by Trent Boult, Shardul Thakur, Mayank Markande, and AM Ghazanfar. Their performance on a batting-friendly surface will be crucial in determining whether Mumbai can maintain control or merely react to the flow of the game. The conditions at the Arun Jaitley Stadium are expected to favour batsmen, with the surface offering minimal assistance to spinners and only moderate help to pacers who rely on variations.

With the average first-innings score last season hovering around 203 runs, another high-scoring contest appears likely. Chasing has been the preferred route here, with six of the last seven matches won by teams batting second, making the toss an early determinant of strategy. Weather conditions are expected to remain partly cloudy, with temperatures around 24°C at the start of play and mod-

erate humidity, offering generally comfortable playing conditions. Historically and statistically, Mumbai hold the upper hand, both in head-to-head records and in overall team composition. Delhi, despite showing improvement at home and winning their last three matches at this venue, continue to grapple with consistency and execution when faced with stronger, more settled opposition. On paper, Mumbai appear marginally ahead due to their superior batting depth and proven record in this fixture. Yet, cricket, like most things in Delhi, has a way of defying logic when least expected.

The conditions are favourable, the stakes are balanced, and the opportunity exists—whether Delhi can seize it or once again defer to history remains the central question in this under-stated rivalry. Teams: Delhi Capitals: Karun Nair, Nit-

ish Rana, Sameer Rizvi, David Miller, Pathum Nissanka, Sahil Parakh, Prithvi Shaw, Ashutosh Sharma, Axar Patel (Captain), Ajay Jadav Mandal, Madhav Tiwari, Tripurana Vijay, Aqib Nabi Dar, Abishek Porel, KL Rahul, Tristan Stubbs, Dushmantha Chameera, Kuldeep Yadav, Mukesh Kumar, T Natarajan, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Lungi Ngidi, Kyle Jamieson. Mumbai Indians: Naman Dhir, Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Danish Malewar, Sherfane Rutherford, Hardik Pandya (Captain), Raj Bawa, Will Jacks, Mayank Rawat, Corbin Bosch, Mitchell Santner, Shardul Thakur, Atharva Ankolekar, Robin Minz, Ryan Rickelton, Quinton de Kock, Trent Boult, Ashwani Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Deepak Chahar, Mayank Markande, AM Ghazanfar, Raghu Sharma, Mohammed Salahuddin Izhar.

## Klaassen anchors SRH to big win over KKR

**Kolkata:** Heinrich Klaassen anchored Sunrisers Hyderabad's commanding batting display with a composed and authoritative half-century, setting the tone for a comprehensive 65-run victory over Kolkata Knight Riders in the sixth match of the Indian Premier League 2026 at Eden Gardens on Thursday night. Batting first after KKR opted to bowl, Hyderabad posted a formidable 226 for 8 in 20 overs, built around aggressive top-order contributions and Klaassen's stabilizing presence in the middle overs. Klaassen's 52 off 35 balls held the innings together after an explosive start, ensuring that Hyderabad did not lose momentum despite periodic wickets. He rotated strike smartly, punished loose deliveries, and provided the perfect balance between consolidation and acceleration. The innings began with Travis Head (46 off 21) and Abhishek Sharma (48 off 21)



providing a blazing start, striking boundaries at will and putting the KKR attack under immediate pressure. Klaassen then took control of the middle phase, absorbing pressure while maintaining a healthy scoring rate. Nitish Kumar Reddy added further impetus with a brisk 39 off 24 balls, helping SRH finish strongly. Late contributions from Harsh Dubey (9\* off 3) and Blessing Muzarabani (4\* off 2) ensured the total

crossed the 225 mark. For Kolkata, Blessing Muzarabani was the standout bowler with figures of 4 for 41. He accounted for Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Klaassen, and Shivang Kumar, striking at key moments to prevent Hyderabad from pushing beyond an already challenging total. Vaibhav Arora picked up 2 for 47, while Kartik Tyagi (1 for 48) and Anukul Roy (1 for 16) chipped in with wickets.

Sunil Narine remained wicketless, conceding 39 runs. In reply, Kolkata's chase never gained full control despite a promising start. Finn Allen (28 off 7) provided an explosive beginning, while Angkrish Raghuvanshi (52 off 29) and Rinku Singh (35 off 25) attempted to anchor the innings. However, regular wickets and untimely dismissals, including run-outs, disrupted partnerships and increased pressure on the batting side. Hyderabad's bowling unit executed their plans effectively. Jaydev Unadkat led the attack with 3 for 21, dismissing Ajinkya Rahane (8), Kartik Tyagi (5), and Varun Chakaravathy (0). Nitish Kumar Reddy returned 2 for 17, removing Anukul Roy and Rinku Singh at crucial junctures. Eshan Malinga also claimed 2 for 14, accounting for Sunil Narine (12) and Ramandeep Singh (10), while maintaining tight control through his spell.

## Atletico Madrid, FC Barcelona start 3-games to capture attention in Spain

**Madrid:** La Liga leader FC Barcelona returns to Atletico Madrid's Metropolitan Stadium on Saturday evening for a match that could prove decisive in this season's title race and begins a run of three games in 11 days between the two sides. Just four days after Saturday's league game, the two teams will meet again next Wednesday in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal, with the return leg at the Metropolitan on April 14. Barcelona returns to La Liga action with a four-point lead over Real Madrid in the standings, although that could be cut to one point if Real Madrid wins away to struggling Mallorca on Saturday afternoon. Atletico Madrid and Barcelona have already met three times this season, and the results make it difficult to predict what will happen in the coming days, according to Xinhua. Barcelona first beat Atletico 3-1 at Camp Nou at the start of December, but Atletico then produced a stunning display to exploit Barcelona's high defensive line in a 4-0 win in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinal in February. Barcelona then dominated a tense second leg and won 3-0 at Camp Nou, al-



though that was not enough to deny Atletico Madrid a place in the Copa del Rey final. Barcelona suffered a major setback during the international break when Raphinha picked up a hamstring injury that will keep him out for at least a month. His importance was underlined by the fact that he missed Barca's 4-0 defeat at the Metropolitan through injury, but started three weeks later in the 3-0 win. Barcelona coach Hansi Flick should have right back Jules

Kounde and Eric Garcia available, but Alejandro Balde remains a doubt, while striker Robert Lewandowski may need a rest after his efforts with Poland during the international break. Atletico Madrid also has players who made a big effort for their countries, with winger Ademola Lookman, who Barcelona struggled to contain in its last visit to the Metropolitan, playing two full games for Nigeria, while David Hancko did the same for Slovakia.

## From forest fields to national podiums: How tribals are keeping Hockey legacy alive

**Raipur :** Odisha capped a dominant campaign by clinching both the men's and women's hockey gold medals at the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 in Raipur, with the finals held at the Vallabh-hai Patel International Hockey Stadium. The men defeated Jharkhand 4-1 in the final, while the women edged Mizoram 1-0 in a closely-fought summit clash. Jharkhand men settled for silver, with Chhattisgarh taking bronze, while in the women's competition, Jharkhand secured a creditable bronze to complete the podium. At the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 in Raipur, Odisha's double gold in men's and women's hockey was more than a sporting triumph—it was a

powerful reflection of how the game is reshaping lives across the tribal belts of Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. The north-eastern states, always a reservoir of sporting talent, was not left behind with Mizoram making the knockout rounds at KITG 2026. Odisha's men scripted an emphatic 4-1 win over Jharkhand in the final, while the women edged Mizoram 1-0 in a tense summit clash. Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh also made the podium, underlining the depth of talent emerging from these regions. But beyond medals, the real story lies deeper in villages, forests, and communities where hockey has become both identity and opportunity. For decades, hockey has been ingrained in tribal culture.

Children fashion sticks from tree branches and play barefoot on uneven grounds. The talent was always there, but the pathway wasn't. That is now changing. With Centres of Excellence run by the union sports ministry and states, improved infrastructure, and structured grassroots programmes, a robust ecosystem is finally taking shape. Former Olympian Ajit Lakhra, who was part of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics Indian hockey team and is now head coach at the Bilaspur Centre of Excellence, sees this shift first-hand and says, "The entire system, right from grassroots to junior and then senior levels is gradually becoming stronger. Athletes from tribal regions, in particular, are benefiting greatly. The timing and tone of

## LSG owner-Pant post-match chat sparks viral controversy

**New Delhi :** A brief but intense post-match interaction between Lucknow Super Giants owner Sanjiv Goenka and captain Rishabh Pant has emerged as a major talking point in Indian Premier League 2026.

The incident has sparked widespread debate about the role of franchise owners and team dynamics following LSG's defeat to Delhi Capitals.

The controversy gained momentum after a video of what appeared to be an animated exchange between Goenka and Pant went viral on social media. Many viewers interpreted the interaction as a tense discussion in the immediate aftermath of the loss.

The clip quickly drew reactions from the cricketing world, with several former players and analysts weighing in on the situation.

The timing and tone of

the exchange became central to the debate.

Reacting to the incident, former England captain Michael Vaughan questioned the necessity of such an interaction so early in the tournament. "One game into the tournament... no need for this," he remarked, suggesting that the situation could have been handled differently.

The controversy escalated further when former IPL chairman Lalit Modi publicly criticised Goenka's conduct. His remarks added a sharper edge to the ongoing discussion.

Modi stated that he was "seriously embarrassed" by the behaviour on display and went on to say that, had he still been in charge, he would have taken strict action. He also claimed that franchise agreements contain provisions to address such incidents.

As the debate intensified, questions began to sur-



face about the extent to which franchise owners should be involved in on-field or immediate post-match matters. The incident reignited long-standing discussions about professional boundaries in franchise cricket.

In response to the growing criticism, LSG moved quickly to provide its version of events. The franchise sought to counter the narrative that had formed around the viral clip.

The team released additional footage of the interaction, aiming to present a more complete picture of

the exchange. The move was intended to challenge the perception created by the short viral video.

In a statement, the franchise said, "Not everything you see is the true story. Here's the unfiltered post-match vibes, when cameras don't cut," suggesting that the original clip lacked context.

Earlier, Goenka had publicly backed Pant and the team, underlining his confidence in their abilities. His remarks reflected a more supportive stance amid the scrutiny. He emphasized that the

tournament is a long one and that moments of tension are part of the journey. "This is a long season, and moments like these are part of building something meaningful," he said.

The situation has also brought attention to the pressures faced by captains and players in a high-stakes league like the IPL. With constant media scrutiny, even brief interactions can take on larger significance.

Experts have pointed out that such incidents highlight the evolving nature of franchise cricket, where management, ownership, and players operate in a closely linked ecosystem.

The episode has now evolved into a broader conversation about perception, accountability, and communication in modern cricket. It underscores how quickly narratives can form and spread in the digital age, especially during a high-profile tournament like the IPL.

## From Tribal Roots to National Colours: Kiran Pisda's Story of Grit and Growth

**Raipur:** When Kiran Pisda took up the goalkeeping gloves for the penalty shootout against Arunachal Pradesh in the semi-finals of the Khelo India Tribal Games here, she was relying on all experience she had gathered dealing with challenges and disappointments that only led to making her more resilient.

At 24, Kiran is probably at the peak of her skills and abilities and has already played league football in Europe and is knocking on the Indian team doors for major international events.

But this journey was far smoother despite the early support she got from her school and family with her brother Girish, himself a national level player, being her

inspiration. "I got a lot of support in school. That's where I got opportunities to play at the state and national level, and with every selection, my confidence kept growing," Kiran told SAI Media.

Kiran then moved to Raipur to pursue a physical education degree and it was during the Chhattisgarh Women's League that she caught the attention of scouts and earned a call-up to a national camp.

"At that time, I was not physically fit enough and my mind-set was not at the level required to compete with senior players," Kiran admits while explaining why that stint with in the national camp did not result in selection for the national team. "I realised that whatever

experience I gained there, I had to work on it."

What followed was a phase of intense self-improvement. She worked on her physical fitness, began analysing matches closely, and improved her positional awareness. But the most significant change came in Kiran's mental approach.

"I told myself that no matter what happens, I will not think negatively. If you become negative, it directly affects your performance," she explains.

A crucial pillar in this transformation was her mentor, coach Yogesh Kumar Jangra. "Whenever I feel low or think that I am not performing well, I speak to him. He always tells me to stay positive and keeps motivat-

ing me," she says. Her hard work gradually paid off. Performances at the domestic level opened doors to clubs like Kerala Blasters, where she continued to evolve. One of her biggest strengths became her versatility. "I started as a striker, then played in midfield, and now I play as a full-back for the national team. As a footballer, you should be ready to play in multiple positions for your team," she says.

Kiran has gone on to represent India multiple times, including being part of the SAFF Championship squad in 2022 and also played for Croatian Women's League for Dinamo Zagreb. Yet, even at this stage, rejection has remained part of the journey.

## GT seek turnaround as in-form RR arrive in Ahmedabad

**Ahmedabad:** Ahmedabad has seen its share of spectacles, but every IPL evening still arrives with the optimism of a new bride and the unpredictability of an old gambler.

On Saturday, the Narendra Modi Stadium will host Gujarat Titans and Rajasthan Royals, two sides that have begun their 2026 campaign on very different notes, yet converge here with equal desperation for relevance and rhythm.

Gujarat walk in with a slight limp, having stumbled in their opening encounter after posting a modest total that their bowlers could not defend. There is a familiar dependence on the top order—Sai Sudharsan, Shubman Gill, and Jos Buttler—three names that carry both promise and pressure in equal measure.

Sudharsan, elegant and productive in his previous season, is searching for fluency. Gill, reliable against most opponents, has a respectable average against Rajasthan and will be expected to lead from the front. Buttler, once the destroyer-in-chief, has lately resembled a man trying to rediscover a lost

key rather than break open a locked game.

The middle order, as is often the case with many modern sides, appears more decorative than dependable. Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, and Shubman Gill provide options rather than assurances. Phillips, however, retains the reputation of a man capable of turning a quiet over into a noisy one. Gujarat's bowling, in contrast, carries a more settled look. Rashid Khan remains their talisman, capable of extracting wickets from the most unpromising surfaces.

Prasidh Krishna showed encouraging form in the last outing, while Mohammed Siraj and Kagiso Rabada add pace, pedigree, and the occasional burst of hostility that can unsettle even the most composed batsman.

Across the field, Rajasthan arrive with the confidence of a side that has already tasted success this season. Their opening victory was not merely a win; it was a statement delivered with brisk authority. Their bowlers first subdued the opposition to a below-par total, and their batsmen then chased it

down with the sort of nonchalance that borders on arrogance, an attribute that, in sport, often separates contenders from champions.

At the heart of this early momentum stands Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, a young man who bats as though he has made a personal pact with haste. His rapid scoring in the previous match was not just an innings; it was an announcement. Alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, he forms an opening pair that believes in settling arguments quickly, usually within the first six overs. Riyan Parag and Dhruv Jurel offer composure in the middle, while Shimron Hetmyer waits like a finishing artisan, ready to apply the final strokes.

The bowling unit complements this aggression with quiet efficiency. Jofra Archer, once feared and still dangerous, leads the attack with pace that can rattle timing and temperament alike. Nandre Burger supports him with discipline, Ravi Bishnoi provides spin with bite, and Ravindra Jadeja contributes the rare blend of economy and experience that often proves invaluable in Indian conditions.

## Piyush Goyal meets with Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao over trade cooperation

**New Delhi:** Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal held a meeting with China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao to discuss bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the World Trade Organisation's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14).

Sharing the details of the meeting, spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India in a social media post on X said during the meeting, both the leaders expressed willingness to deepen engagement between the two countries.

"China's Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao met with Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry of India, during the 14th WTO ministerial conference. China stands ready to work with India to fully leverage the role of bilateral economic and trade coop-



eration as a ballast," the post read.

Earlier, sharing his experience at the WTO meeting, Goyal had highlighted India's engagement with the United States and said India is pushing for preferential access. He also mentio and the best possible deal in its ongoing trade engagement

with the United States, underlining that the country is currently in a very sweet spot among emerging economies.

"Our approach is that India should get preferential access, market access and, having got the best deal compared to any of our competitors or any other

emerging or developing economy, we are sitting on a very sweet spot," Goyal said. He added that as the world's fastest-growing major economy, India offers a compelling India opportunity that global investors are expected to increasingly tap.

Piyush Goyal also held

extensive diplomatic outreach, including 12 multilateral and 24 bilateral meetings aimed at strengthening trade partnerships at the WTO.

While addressing the media after the four-day conference, Minister Goyal said the discussion witnessed intensive deliberations on key global trade issues, including WTO reforms, fisheries subsidies, investment facilitation for development, e-commerce, agriculture, and other developmental concerns.

He informed that three key decisions were announced during the conference, including measures aimed at strengthening the integration of small economies into the multilateral trading system, with a focus on improving trade logistics, connectivity, and border processes to enhance their participation in global trade.

## IndiGo to deploy second A321XLR aircraft on Delhi-Istanbul route from April 19

**Kolkata:** IndiGo is set to deploy its second Airbus A321XLR aircraft on the Delhi-Istanbul route starting April 19, marking another step in the airline's ongoing international expansion strategy.

The move is part of IndiGo's broader plan to strengthen its global footprint by introducing long-range aircraft capable of operating direct flights to key international destinations. The Delhi-Istanbul sector is seen as a strategic addition in this roadmap.

The airline stated that the route will play a crucial role in enhancing global connectivity for Indian travellers. Through its codeshare partnership with Turkish Airlines, passengers will gain access to more than 50 onward international destinations.

This partnership significantly expands IndiGo's reach beyond its own network, allowing seamless

travel to Europe, North America, and other regions via Istanbul, a major global aviation hub.

As part of the service upgrade, IndiGo will introduce a dual-class cabin configuration on this route. The aircraft will feature 183 economy-class seats along with 12 IndiGoStretch seats, which represent the airline's premium offering.

The IndiGoStretch product is designed to provide enhanced comfort and additional services, positioning it as a business-class-like experience within the airline's otherwise low-cost model.

Passengers across both cabins will be offered complimentary hot meals and beverages, reflecting a shift toward improved onboard service on longer international routes.

Vegetarian meals will be served by default, while non-vegetarian options can be selected through pre-

booking. This approach is aimed at catering to diverse passenger preferences while maintaining operational efficiency.

In addition to meals, beverage services will vary by cabin. Alcoholic drinks will be available for purchase in economy class or via pre-booking, while IndiGoStretch passengers will receive them as part of their inclusive service package.

The aircraft will also be equipped with a modern digital in-flight entertainment system. This system allows passengers to stream movies, TV shows, and games directly onto their personal devices, eliminating the need for seat-back screens. The Delhi-Istanbul route holds strategic importance for IndiGo, not just as a direct connection but as a gateway to a wider international network. Istanbul's geographic location makes it an ideal transit hub between Asia, Europe, and beyond.

## Sree Sai Flour Mills launches Fortified Multigrain Atta 'MINAR' to Boost Nutrition

**Hyderabad:** Actress Shriya Saran on Thursday unveiled 'MINAR', described as India's first fortified protein-plus multigrain atta, aimed at tackling malnutrition and widespread micronutrient deficiencies.

The product launch marks a significant step in combining nutrition science with everyday food staples, targeting improved health outcomes through commonly consumed diets such as wheat-based meals.

The event was held in the presence of several prominent figures, including Sanjay Thumma, Avnish Kumar, Aditya Bansal, V. Sesikeran, and Monojit Indra.

The fortified atta has been developed by Sree Sai Roller Flour Mills Pvt Ltd, a Hyderabad-based firm known for its focus on innovation in food processing and nutrition.

MINAR atta combines high-quality Sharbati wheat with a blend of soy, maize, and chana, creating a nutritionally enhanced multigrain flour aimed at improving daily dietary intake.

In addition to the grain mix, the product is fortified with plant-based protein isolates, making it a richer source of protein compared to conventional wheat flour.

The atta is also enriched with essential micronutrients, including iron, folic acid, vitamin B12, zinc, and vitamin A. These nutrients are critical in addressing common deficiencies, particularly in developing regions.

According to the company, the product offers up to 50 percent higher protein content than regular wheat flour. This makes it particularly beneficial for populations with protein-deficient

diets.

It was further claimed that consuming just three rotis made from this atta can meet nearly one-third of an adult's daily protein requirement, making it a practical dietary solution.

Speaking at the launch, Shriya Saran emphasized the importance of fortified foods in addressing nutritional gaps. She highlighted how such innovations can contribute to better public health outcomes.

She noted that integrating nutrition into everyday staples like atta ensures wider reach and impact, as these foods are consumed across all sections of society. Alongside the product launch, a technical workshop on wheat flour fortification was also conducted. The session brought together experts and stakeholders from the nutrition and food industries.

## Global PVC leaders to gather in Mumbai on April 9-10 for landmark industry summit

**Mumbai:** Mumbai is set to host a major global gathering of the polyvinyl chloride (PVC) industry as the 13th edition of Vinyl India 2026—widely regarded as the world's largest PVC summit and exhibition—will be held on 9-10 April 2026 at Hotel Sahara Star.

The two-day event is expected to bring together more than 1,200 delegates representing over 530 organisations across the globe, making it one of the most influential platforms for stakeholders across the global PVC value chain.

The summit comes at a time when the global PVC industry is grappling with rising uncertainty driven by geopolitical tensions, volatile trade flows, fluctuating prices, and ongoing supply chain disruptions. Against

this backdrop, the event aims to provide a platform for industry leaders to exchange insights and explore emerging growth opportunities. India continues to emerge as a major driver of global PVC demand, supported by large-scale infrastructure development, irrigation and water supply projects, housing expansion, sanitation initiatives, and industrial growth. The domestic PVC market is currently estimated at around 4.3 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTA), registering a robust annual growth of 6-8 per cent—significantly higher than the country's GDP growth rate.

In value terms, the market is pegged at approximately Rs 35,000 crore and is projected to reach nearly Rs 50,000 crore by 2030, un-

derlining strong long-term demand fundamentals.

Despite rising demand, India's domestic PVC manufacturing capacity remains limited at around 1.5 million metric tonnes, as expansion has lagged due to high capital investment requirements and production complexities. However, the sector is now witnessing renewed momentum with fresh capacity additions underway, reflecting growing investor confidence. Industry projections indicate that by 2030, the market size could reach 6 MMTA, while domestic capacity is expected to increase to 4 MMTA, supported by expansions from major players such as Adani and Reliance Industries Limited. The summit will address key industry challenges through the frame-

work of VUCA—volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. It will feature global keynote speakers, business sessions, and panel discussions focusing on critical themes, including the future roadmap for PVC, global and Indian economic outlook, demand drivers in agriculture and water infrastructure, geopolitical impacts on trade, price volatility, supply chain resilience, sustainability strategies, next-generation applications, and the role of artificial intelligence in the chemical sector. The event will see participation from a wide spectrum of the PVC ecosystem, including resin producers, pipe and profile manufacturers, converters, additive and chemical companies, machinery manufacturers, technology provid-

ers, traders, and other key stakeholders.

Speaking ahead of the summit, Nidhi Verma, Founder and Managing Director of ElitePlus Business Services, said the event comes at a defining moment for the global PVC industry as it navigates evolving trade dynamics and supply-side challenges. She noted that the summit would provide a unified platform for industry participants to exchange perspectives, address emerging issues, and identify new avenues for growth. She added that VINYL INDIA has consistently served as a catalyst for collaboration and innovation, reinforcing India's growing role as a key driver of global PVC demand and long-term industry development.

## Rockworth to invest ₹70 cr to expand Sri City facility

**Sri City (Tirupati Dist, AP):** Rockworth Systems Furniture India Pvt Ltd on Friday announced plans to expand its manufacturing facility in Sri City with a proposed investment of ₹70 crore.

The expansion includes capacity enhancement of the existing plant and the setting up of a new manufacturing unit, aimed at strengthening the company's long-term growth and

reinforcing Sri City's position as a key industrial hub.

Managing Director and CEO Shailesh Kumar Singh said the initiative reflects the company's focus on responsible growth by combining business expansion with social impact.

Highlighting its corporate social responsibility initiatives, the company said,

The Meena Devi Memorial Foundation, set up in

memory of Singh's mother, continues to support education for children from economically weaker sections.

The foundation currently supports around 100 children, including 37 new beneficiaries added this year, with educational assistance of about ₹67 lakh earmarked for the academic year 2026-27.

Sri City Managing Director Ravindra Sannareddy welcomed the expan-

sion, stating that the investment would further strengthen the region's industrial ecosystem while setting an example of responsible corporate citizenship.

Rockworth Systems Furniture India Pvt Ltd, established in 2011, manufactures office, educational and laboratory furniture using advanced production techniques and international quality standards.

## Sonalika Tractors Posts Record FY'26 sales of 1,80,504 Tractors in Its Landmark 30th year!

**Pune:** Sonalika Tractors has marked a major milestone in its 30th year by recording its highest-ever annual sales of 1,80,504 tractors in FY'26, reinforcing its position as India's leading tractor export brand.

The achievement represents a significant moment in the company's growth journey, highlighting its steady expansion and strong performance in both domestic and international markets.

According to a company release issued on Friday, the record-breaking sales reflect Sonalika's disciplined execution and farmer-centric approach to business.

The company has consistently focused on delivering technologically ad-

vanced and heavy-duty tractors designed to meet the evolving needs of farmers across regions.

This milestone also underscores the growing trust that farmers have placed in the brand over the years, driven by reliable products and consistent performance. Sonalika stated that its success is rooted in its ability to cater to diverse agricultural requirements, supported by a strong understanding of regional farming practices.

Despite a challenging global environment, the company has managed to maintain strong momentum. It attributed this to focused execution, continuous product innovation, and manufacturing excellence.

A key contributor to this success has

been its state-of-the-art production facility, described as the world's No. 1 tractor manufacturing plant, which enables large-scale and efficient production. The company also highlighted that its recent product launches in FY'26 have played a crucial role in driving growth and expanding its market reach.

Looking ahead, Sonalika plans to further strengthen its research and development capabilities. The company aims to introduce cutting-edge solutions to support future growth and innovation in the agricultural sector. Speaking on the achievement, Raman Mittal, Joint Managing Director of International Tractors Limited, described the milestone as a defining moment in the company's journey.

Looking ahead, Sonalika plans to further strengthen its research and development capabilities. The company aims to introduce cutting-edge solutions to support future growth and innovation in the agricultural sector. Speaking on the achievement, Raman Mittal, Joint Managing Director of International Tractors Limited, described the milestone as a defining moment in the company's journey.

# Hormuz disruption triggers global trade shock, fuels economic uncertainty: UNCTAD

**New Delhi:** The near-total disruption of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has sent shockwaves across the global economy, threatening trade flows, pushing up energy prices and heightening financial and geopolitical risks, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The report notes that the Strait, a critical lifeline for global oil and gas supplies, is now "virtually closed," with ship movements witnessing an unprecedented collapse.

Average daily transits dropped sharply from '129' vessels in February to just '6' in March, a staggering 95 percent decline effectively bringing one of the world's busiest energy corridors to a near standstill.

This disruption has emerged as a major shock for global trade, which is now

expected to slow in 2026 after showing signs of recovery in recent years.

The uncertainty surrounding supply chains, particularly for energy, is weighing heavily on trade momentum and investor sentiment.

Crude oil prices have surged significantly across global benchmarks following the escalation on February 28. Prices for Brent, WTI, Dubai and Urals crude have risen sharply, in several cases crossing the USD 100 per barrel mark.

The situation has been compounded by supply constraints, including the suspension of crude nominations, dependent on the Strait route. Adding to the pressure, the cost of transporting oil has increased steeply.

Freight indices for tankers have jumped, with the Dirty Tanker Index reaching 215 and the Clean Tanker In-

dex climbing to 188 (base level 100 on February 27), reflecting tightening shipping capacity and rising logistics costs.

The surge in energy prices is already feeding into inflation. The report highlights that when oil prices rise sharply, the cost of living follows, with global inflation trends showing renewed upward pressure.

This is particularly concerning for developing economies, where higher fuel costs quickly translate into increased food and transportation expenses.

Financial markets have reacted negatively to the unfolding crisis. Stock markets across regions have recorded sharp declines since the escalation began, while currencies in developing economies have weakened against the US dollar.

At the same time, borrowing costs have risen, with

sovereign bond yields increasing across developing regions—adding strain to already fragile fiscal positions.

The report also flags a sharp rise in geopolitical risk, with global indices in-



dicating heightened uncertainty comparable to previous major crises.

If the disruptions persist, the economic fallout is expected to spread further, affecting growth, trade, and financial stability worldwide,

the report warned.

Global growth projections have been revised downward. According to UNCTAD, the world economy is now expected to grow at around 2.6 percent in 2026, with developed econ-

omies projected at 1.5 percent and developing economies at 4.1 percent—both reflecting a slowdown from earlier trends.

The crisis is also intensifying debt vulnerabilities. An estimated 3.4 billion

people live in 46 developing countries that already spend more on servicing debt than on health or education, making them particularly exposed to rising borrowing costs and external shocks.

The collateral effect of these disruptions also affected multiple sectors of India.

In March alone, there has been a depreciation of over 3pc witnessed in the rupee as per the dollar, and stock markets also have a turbulent month due to war escalation in west Asia.

According to the government data, India imports about 60pc of its LPG consumption and out of it, 90pc come through Strait of Hormuz which has been severely impacted due to current happenings.

The government took certain measures such as excise duty reduction on diesel and petrol, securing LPG stocks and increasing the al-

location of commercial LPG to ensure the minimal effect on the supply chain from war.

In March, Centre has also constituted a three-member committee of executive directors from IOCL, HPCL and BPCL to review LPG allocations to restaurants, hotels and other commercial users.

On the current scenario of fuel-related sectors in India, Hemant Mallya, Fellow at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), said: "About 46 per cent of crude oil, 55 per cent of natural gas, and 94 per cent of India's LPG imports came from West Asia in FY 2024-25. About 65 per cent of our nitrogen fertilizer imports also come from the region.

He said continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz will necessitate India scouting for other sources to sup-

ply petroleum and fertilizers; Russia and West Africa will compensate for some, but not all, of the deficits.

Mallya observed that global scarcity will keep prices high. An increase in transport and food costs will have spillover effects into other sectors and put downward pressure on GDP growth.

The level of impact will depend on how prolonged the closure continues. The transition of the transportation sector to EVs and green hydrogen, electric cooking, and the use of green ammonia in fertilizer production are the long-term solutions to enhance energy security.

Overall, the UNCTAD report underscores that prolonged disruption of the Strait could have cascading effects across sectors, amplifying inflationary pressures and weakening economic momentum globally.