

Aryan Age

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PM Modi Highlights India's Maritime Strength on National Maritime Day

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday marked National Maritime Day by paying tribute to India's rich seafaring legacy and the contribution of those working in the maritime sector, emphasizing its critical role in the country's economic growth and global connectivity. In a post on X, the Prime Minister said, "On National Maritime Day, we recall India's maritime heritage and the invaluable contribution of all those associated with this sector. Their dedication strengthens our economy, trade, and connectivity." He underlined that the efforts of maritime professionals, including seafarers, port workers, and logistics stakeholders, continue to play a vital role in sustaining India's trade networks and supply chains.



India observes National Maritime Day annually on April 5 to commemorate the historic voyage of the SS Loyalty in 1919, regarded as a significant milestone in the country's modern shipping history. Over the years, the day has served as an occasion to recognize the importance of the maritime industry, which handles around 90 per cent of India's trade by volume and remains central to its economic ambitions. Reaffirming the government's focus on the sector, Modi said, "We will continue to harness the immense potential of our maritime sector for a prosperous future." His remarks come amid ongoing efforts by the Centre to modernize port infrastructure, promote coastal shipping, and expand inland waterways as part of broader initiatives

aimed at improving logistics efficiency and boosting trade competitiveness. The government has, in recent years, pushed flagship programmes such as the Sagarmala Programme, aimed at port-led development, alongside investments in shipbuilding, digitalization, and green shipping practices. Officials say these initiatives are intended to position India as a key player in global maritime trade while also creating jobs and enhancing regional connectivity. Adding further momentum to this vision, the Centre is also working on integrating ports with industrial corridors and multimodal logistics parks, ensuring seamless connectivity between sea, rail, and road networks. Experts believe that with strategic policy support, increased private sector participation, and adoption of advanced technologies such as automation and smart port systems, India's maritime ecosystem could emerge as one of the most competitive in the world, significantly reducing logistics costs and

improving export efficiency. Moreover, India's vast coastline of over 7,500 km and its proximity to major international shipping routes place it in a uniquely advantageous position to become a global maritime hub. With a renewed focus on sustainability, including the adoption of green ports, alternative fuels, and environmentally friendly shipping practices, the country is aiming not only to expand its trade footprint but also to align with global climate commitments. Analysts note that sustained investments and policy continuity in the maritime sector could play a decisive role in accelerating India's journey towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy while strengthening its standing in global trade networks. In this context, continued policy focus and infrastructure expansion are expected to unlock new opportunities for coastal communities, boost employment, and reinforce India's position as a leading maritime nation in the years ahead.

US and Iran Clash Over Daring Pilot Rescue

Trump claims "miraculous" extraction while Tehran insists mission was crushed



Washington/Teheran : President Donald Trump announced a stunning victory on Sunday, claiming American special forces successfully rescued two F-15 fighter pilots from deep within Iranian territory. The pilots had been missing since their jet was shot down on Friday, sparking a high-stakes manhunt across the treacherous mountains of central Iran. Describing the mission as one of the most daring in U.S. history, Trump declared the airmen "safe and sound" and praised the military for achieving total air dominance without a single American casualty. The narrative from Tehran, however, tells a far more chaotic story. Iranian military officials quickly moved to "rubbish" the President's claims, asserting that they actually foiled the rescue attempt. A spokesman for Iran's central military command claimed that Iranian forces intercepted the mission

in Isfahan, shooting down two Black Hawk helicopters and a C-130 transport plane. While Iran released unverified footage of aircraft wreckage, Trump maintained that the mission was a flawless success, marking the first time in modern memory that two pilots were rescued separately from deep inside enemy lines. As the war of words escalates, the tension in the region has reached a breaking point. Following the rescue announcement, Trump issued a chilling 48-hour ultimatum for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or face "all hell." He further claimed that a "massive strike" in Tehran had already "terminated" several Iranian military leaders. Iran has dismissed these threats as the "foolish" moves of an unbalanced leader, warning that any further strikes on their infrastructure will trigger devastating retaliatory attacks on U.S. assets across the Middle East.

35,000 Crore Plan to Make Kumbh Mela 2027 Grand and Unforgettable



Nashik: The Maharashtra government is preparing large-scale development works worth 35,000 crore to make the upcoming Simhastha Kumbh Mela in Nashik and Trimbakeshwar grand and memorable. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said proper planning is being done to provide better facilities for devotees, and guidance from saints and religious leaders will play an important role. He said steps are being taken to ensure that devotees can take a holy dip in clean and flowing water of the Godavari River. Efforts are also being made to main-

tain water flow throughout the year at Trimbakeshwar, along with a water purification project at Kushavart. Development works include improving roads to Trimbakeshwar, upgrading the Nashik ring road, increasing the number and length of ghats, improving railway station facilities, preserving old temples, widening temple access roads, and expanding Ozar Airport. The government has decided to acquire permanent land for Sadhu Gram and provide all basic facilities there. A special Nashik Trimbakeshwar Kumbh Mela Development Authority has been created for better planning, based on the model of Prayagraj. Officials have studied arrangements there, and this time the number of devotees is expected to be ten times higher than before. Suggestions from saints and religious groups will also be included in the planning. The Chief Minister said the Kumbh Mela is one of the biggest spiritual events in India and a symbol of unity and culture, where people from all communities take part. He expressed confidence that the 2027 Kumbh Mela will be truly unforgettable.

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Serial molester held in Mumbai after CCTV shadow clue

Mumbai : Mumbai Police have arrested a serial molester who allegedly targeted women in the Bangur Nagar area, cracking the case despite having minimal evidence and relying largely on a shadow captured in CCTV footage. According to police officials, the accused, a 25-year-old electrician residing in Aarey Colony, is suspected of molesting three women over the past couple of months, with the most recent incident reported last week. He reportedly targeted women who were alone on the streets, approaching them on a motorcycle before inappropriately touching them and fleeing the spot. "All three incidents occurred within the jurisdic-

tion of Bangur Nagar police station. The accused was arrested four days ago after a detailed investigation," said Senior Inspector Ravindra Avhad. Investigators stated that the absence of clear leads posed a major challenge, as the motorcycle's registration number was not visible in the CCTV footage. However, police managed to identify the suspect by carefully analysing subtle details, including his footwear and the shadow captured on camera during the incidents. Officials confirmed that these minor but crucial clues enabled the police to trace and apprehend the accused, bringing an end to a series of molestation cases that had raised concern in the locality.

Jaishankar urges graduating students to lead India's Viksit Bharat journey

Raipur : India's External Affairs Minister, Dr S Jaishankar, on Saturday urged graduating students to recognise their role in shaping a developed India as he addressed the 15th annual convocation of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Raipur. He said that today's generation is uniquely placed after a decade of steady progress and global exposure. He added that the graduating batch will play a defining role in realising the vision of a "Viksit Bharat". A total of 552 students received their degrees at the convocation held at IIM Raipur's Naya Rai-

pur campus. This included 314 students from the flagship MBA programme, 230 from Executive MBA courses and eight doctoral scholars. The scale and diversity of the graduating cohort reflected the institute's expanding academic reach and growing stature. Dr Jaishankar said the graduating batch belongs to a generation that will play a defining role in realising the vision of a "Viksit Bharat". He noted that access to technology, information and global networks has opened up opportunities that would have been difficult to imagine even a generation ago. He said that the gradu-

ating class should consider itself fortunate, noting that India stands at a stage where it is ready to accelerate its development journey. "Your skill sets will help steer the nation in its quest for prosperity," he added, urging students to recognise both the opportunity and the responsibility that lie ahead. The External Affairs Minister said the country is now among the world's top five economies and has shown resilience in dealing with a series of global disruptions in recent years. He said the sense of optimism visible across India is rooted in the progress made over the past decade

and a growing confidence in the country's future direction. "There is a sense of confidence in India that is not as visible in many other parts of the world," he said. Gold medals were presented to the top-performing students during the convocation, with Shivang Chhikara, Shalini Dubey and Boban Chacko among the recipients. Institute officials said IIM Raipur continues to strengthen its position, with its Phase-II campus expansion underway and a strong placement season recording an average package of Rs 20.93 lakh per annum.

Officials Ordered to Finish Kumbh Projects on Time with High Quality

Nashik: State Chief Secretary Rajesh Agrawal has directed all departments to complete the ongoing development works for Kumbh Mela 2027 on time and with high quality in the Trimbakeshwar area. During his inspection visit, he said that providing safe, clean, and well-equipped facilities to devotees is the top priority. He asked officials to speed up the six-lane road project between Nashik and Trimbakeshwar while maintaining quality standards. He also stressed regular cleaning of Kushavart Kund and proper waste management. He said that while carrying out development work, the religious and historical importance of the area must be respected, and guidelines of the Archaeological Survey of India should be strictly followed. Special systems should be created to manage cleanliness

during large crowds. He also instructed that the water purification project in the Bilvatirth area should be completed on time without any technical flaws. Irrigation-related infrastructure at ghats and holy places should be finished quickly. Steps must be taken to ensure the Goda-



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Cong slams PM's 'film reviews', flags rising crimes against Women, announces free travel, Rs 1,000 stipend for girl students

Thiruvananthapuram : Senior Congress leader Renuka Chowdhury on Sunday launched a sharp attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of focusing on "film reviews" instead of addressing pressing governance challenges, while also raising serious concerns over rising crimes against women in Kerala. Addressing a press conference at the KPCC office, Chowdhury described a "disturbing

paradox" in Kerala—traditionally known for its high literacy and matriarchal legacy—now witnessing an increase in gender-based violence and misogyny. She said the situation reflects both social regression and administrative inaction. Highlighting Congress' proposed welfare agenda, Chowdhury announced two key promises for women if the party comes to power in the state: free bus travel for all women and a Rs 1,000 monthly stipend

for girls to support their education. She said these measures aim to ensure mobility, safety, and financial support for women across socio-economic backgrounds. Opening her remarks with Easter greetings, Chowdhury contrasted the Congress party's parliamentary engagement with the Prime Minister's recent public comments. "While we were debating crucial issues like the Transgender Bill, the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, and the union

Budget, the Prime Minister seemed to have time to act as a film reviewer," she said, referring to his remarks on films such as The Kerala Story and The Kashmir Files. On state-specific issues, Chowdhury raised an alarm over alleged irregularities involving temple assets at Sabarimala Temple, asserting that offerings made by devotees must be protected with utmost sanctity. She warned that any misuse of such assets would

have serious moral and political consequences. She also criticised the state government's handling of cases involving alleged misconduct against women, citing controversies linked to individuals such as Ranjith Balakrishnan and others. Questioning societal attitudes, she asked whether such incidents align with the idea of India as a "Matrubhoomi." Aiming for the BJP-led union government, Chowdhury

alleged a selective approach to governance—being "slow" in addressing crimes against women while acting "swiftly" through agencies like the Enforcement Directorate against political opponents. She also pointed to rising household burdens due to increasing prices of essentials such as LPG. On foreign policy, Chowdhury criticised what she termed a "hug-and-show diplomacy," claiming it had delivered "little tangible results." She contrast-

ed this with what she described as more strategic and dignified approaches under former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, and P V Narasimha Rao. The Congress leader said the party's focus remains on governance, social justice, and women's empowerment, asserting that the proposed initiatives would play a crucial role in addressing inequality and ensuring dignity and opportunity for women in Kerala.

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CPI launches 'door-to-door' campaign in Hyderabad, seeks public support

Hyderabad: The Communist Party of India (CPI) conducted an extensive outreach drive in Singareni Colony as part of its 'Door-to-Door' (CPI to Every Household) campaign, appealing to the public for financial support and participation in future movements.

Under the aegis of the CPI Hyderabad District Council, party members went door-to-door and shop-to-shop distributing pamphlets highlighting the party's achievements and struggles.

Addressing the cam-

paign, CPI Telangana Assistant Secretary E.T. Narasimha called upon people to "protect the CPI—the party of the poor" and extend financial assistance.

Leaders alleged that rising poverty and unemployment remain unaddressed, accusing those in power of diverting attention through "emotional politics." They also claimed that dissenting voices are being suppressed and laws are being framed in favour of corporate interests.

The CPI leaders expressed concern over global developments, stating that

ongoing international conflicts were impacting India, particularly fuel supply disruptions affecting livelihoods such as auto-rickshaw drivers and industries dependent on oil.

They urged the Government of India to take steps to ensure peace and stability and appealed to the public to support the campaign aimed at mobilising resources for future agitations.

Several party leaders and activists, including state and district representatives, participated in the programme.

KTR showcases Telangana growth story at Columbia Business School

Hyderabad: K. T. Rama Rao, Working President of the Bharat Rashtira Samiti (BRS), highlighted Telangana's rapid economic rise, describing it as the "most successful startup state of independent India" while addressing the 21st Annual India Business Conference at Columbia Business School in the United States.



Speaking on the theme of the 'Telangana Decade', KTR emphasised how the state has undergone a remarkable transformation since its formation, positioning itself as a leader in governance, innovation, and economic development.

He credited this progress to the leadership of K. Chandrashekar Rao, under whom Telangana focused on building strong institutions, modern infrastructure, and a business-friendly environment.

According to KTR, the state adopted a proactive approach to governance, ensuring policy stability and investor confidence, which played a key role in attract-

ing both domestic and global investments.

Highlighting Telangana's economic achievements, he noted that IT exports have surged significantly—from Rs 57,000 crore in 2014 to Rs 2.72 lakh crore in recent years.

He also pointed out that employment in the technology sector has grown rapidly, reaching nearly 10 lakh jobs, reflecting the state's strong position in India's digital economy.

The capital city of Hyderabad, he said, has emerged as a major hub for global technology companies, benefiting from clear

policies, efficient governance, and a skilled workforce.

KTR further emphasised Telangana's growing prominence in innovation and life sciences, sectors that have become key drivers of the state's economic expansion.

He highlighted that Telangana contributes a significant share to global vaccine production, underlining its importance in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries.

The state's startup ecosystem has also witnessed rapid growth, supported by dedicated innovation hubs such as T-Hub and WE Hub.

These institutions, he said, have played a crucial role in nurturing entrepreneurship, fostering innovation, and supporting emerging businesses across sectors. KTR also spoke about the broader strength of India's federal structure,

stating that the country's overall growth would be driven by states leveraging their unique strengths and competitive advantages.

Theatre is mirror of society; acting as public awareness gives new direction to society: CM Yogi

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said, "Theatre is the mirror of society and plays an important role in shaping its direction."

According to him, theatre is the space where emotions turn into words, words become performance, and performance transforms into public awareness that guides society toward a new direction.

He urged the Department of Culture and the Academy to move forward by connecting both the old and new generations, emphasizing that meaningful results will follow from such efforts. He encouraged the creation of plays centered on patriotism, with powerful dialogues, music, scripts, and carefully chosen words and sentence structures that attract audiences, as such cultural programs help unite society.

Chief Minister Yogi made these comments after inaugurating the Golden Jubilee Theatre Festival at the Bharatendu Natya Academy, scheduled from April 5 to April 12, here on Sunday. During the event, he shared several inspiring thoughts while also reflecting on challenges and concerns.

Responding to requests made by the Academy's chairman, CM Yogi assured government support. He directed the Additional Chief Secretary to construct a hostel and hand it over to the Academy so that it can operate within the institution itself.

The Department of Culture will also move forward with other proposals. CM Yogi also congratulated Dr. Anil Rastogi on receiving the Padma Award. He noted that even in 1976, when the country was going through the Emergency, the Bharatendu Natya Academy continued running its academic programs.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath praised the artists who performed a theatrical presentation based on the novel "Anandamath". He said the song "Vande Mataram" highlights the importance of patriotism and self-re-

ference. Referring to history, he said, "The British administration had treated the Bengal famine lightly, while people were dying of hunger and suffering from the Spanish Flu. Despite this, the colonial govern-



ment remained indifferent."

He pointed out that the 1921 Census data were shocking, as India's population declined during that decade instead of increasing. In a country with a population of less than 30 crore at the time, more than 3 crore people died due to the Spanish Flu, while the colonial government continued to impose taxes, exploitation, and oppression.

Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, CM Yogi highlighted the government's positive and sensitive approach, saying that when a government works with compassion, it can even overcome a disease through collective effort. He said Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote Anandamath to depict the suffering during the Bengal famine.

CM Yogi said that celebrations are being held across the country to mark 150 years of "Vande Mataram." He suggested that the Bharatendu Natya Academy should stage its performance in every district, extending it from a 15-minute presentation to a two-hour production so people can understand the cruelty and tragedy of that era.

He said, "Society often hesitates to honor its true heroes. As a result, there was a time when institutions were influenced by people who portrayed professional criminals and mafias as heroes while presenting real heroes of society as villains. This trend eventually influenced social character and values."

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that when cinema and theatre

present positive content, society embraces it. He cited the Ramayana television series as one of the most popular shows in the world, reflecting the emotional and cultural connection people have with it. Indian society, he said, knows how to respect its traditions, culture, and heritage.

He also praised the theatrical production "Samrat Vikramaditya" prepared by the Madhya Pradesh government, which he recently watched in Varanasi. He suggested starting local theatre series inspired by heroes such as Maharaja Suheldev, Rani Lakshmbai, Maharaja Mahendra Pratap Singh, and the heroes of the First War of Independence of 1857, encouraging artists to develop impactful scripts and performances that attract audiences and strengthen social unity. CM Yogi said, "While epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata are deeply integrated into India's cultural life, many other heroes remain neglected."

He encouraged schools and colleges to present stories of Rani Lakshmbai and Maharaja Suheldev through theatre. Referring to events from around a thousand years ago, he spoke about the valor of Maharaja Suheldev and said that after Suheldev defeated Salar Masud, foreign invaders did not dare attack India for nearly 150 years. However, society later forgot his contribution. He noted that earlier a fair used to be held in the name of Salar Masud at the site where Suheldev defeated him, while Suheldev himself was rarely remembered. Re-

calling his time as Member of Parliament from Gorakhpur, he said he attended the Suheldev victory celebration in Bahraich despite attempts to stop him administratively. Today, he said, crowds no longer gather for Salar Masud but instead visit Maharaja Suheldev's memorial.

Chief Minister narrated stories of several heroes and heroines such as Veerangana Avantibai, Jhalkari Bai, Uda Devi, Maharaj Bijli Pasi, Pandit Ram Prasad Bismil, Thakur Roshan Singh, and Chandrashekhar Azad. He said, "It is the responsibility of theatre academies to create short plays about such personalities."

He pointed out that society remembers these heroes briefly on special occasions but soon forgets them again. Those who tried to destroy India's culture, he said, should never be honored.

While Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay portrayed the Bengal tragedy through Anandamath, no writer emerged to similarly highlight the legacy of Suheldev. He added that although poetry recitations about Rani Lakshmbai exist, theatre could present her story even more powerfully. CM Yogi said Bharatendu Harishchandra was the pioneer of modern Hindi. The Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha played a crucial role in promoting the Hindi language and awakening public consciousness through literature.

He noted that Bharatendu's play "Andher Nagari" (1881) reflected the insensitivity of British rule, while his earlier play "Bharat Durdas" (1875) highlighted the suffering of the nation. Plays such as "Skandagupta" (1928) and "Chandragupta" (1931) by Jaishankar Prasad also helped awaken cultural nationalism during colonial times. He announced that a three-day event based on the works of the national poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar will be organized in Lucknow starting April 24. He also suggested organizing a theatre program based on the literary works of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, adding that the country possesses a rich cultural legacy and must focus on preparing the younger generation to carry it forward.

Bijnor arson case: Probe deepens as Pakistan-based handler's link emerges after Lucknow arrests

Lucknow: Investigation agencies have stepped up their probe into the March 4 pickup vehicle arson case in Bijnor after new leads pointed to a handler based in Pakistan. The development follows the recent arrest of four suspected terrorists in Lucknow, officials said on Sunday.

Sources revealed that a video of a burning pickup truck was shared through the messaging app Telegram by an individual identified as Abu Bakr, who is believed to be operating from Pakistan. He allegedly dismissed the act as insignificant and urged the accused to carry out a larger attack in return for financial rewards.

Investigators said the main accused, Abuzar, along with his associates, set the vehicle on fire after noticing a religious symbol on it. Despite executing the act, they

did not receive any payment, as the handler reportedly deemed it too minor.

Abuzar was part of a small Telegram group with five members. So far, three individuals, including him, have been arrested, while another member, Syed—suspected to be the group's admin—remains absconding. Authorities have not yet been able to trace Abu Bakr's exact location or phone number. Security agencies are now closely monitoring several suspicious social media groups that may be linked to Pakistan-based handlers. These handlers are believed to be recruiting individuals and encouraging them to carry out major attacks in India by offering large sums of money.

Preliminary findings by the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad suggest the accused were surveying sensi-

tive locations under instructions from their handler. They were also attempting to assemble arson materials and timer-based devices, pointing to possible plans for coordinated attacks.

The suspects had reportedly made multiple trips to Delhi, where they conducted reconnaissance of key government buildings, VVIP areas, and other sensitive locations. These visits are now a major focus of the investigation. Officials said that on March 4, Nimish Rastogi's pickup van was set ablaze in Bijnor. Abuzar and another accused, Zayed, were arrested on March 12. Police investigations indicate that Abuzar was facing financial difficulties and sought help from his cousin, Mohammad Zaid, who introduced him to Abu Bakr via Telegram.

Abu Bakr allegedly in-

structed them to target vehicles belonging to a specific community. Abuzar then carried out the arson near a temple, recorded the act, and sent the video to him. Investigators also found evidence linking Zaid to at least 12 different online groups.

The probe, being carried out by the National Investigation Agency and the UP ATS, later uncovered links between another suspect, Saqib, and Abu Bakr. Saqib was tracked through surveillance of his mobile phone and subsequently arrested along with three others—Vikas Gehlawat, Lokesh, and Arbaab. All four are currently in police custody for five days, and further interrogation is underway to uncover the full extent of the network, identify additional operatives and trace international connections behind the conspiracy.

Kavitha warns of agitation to protect Singareni, targets Telangana Govt

Hyderabad: K. Kavitha on Sunday warned of a fresh agitation to protect Singareni Collieries Company Limited, sharply criticising the state government during a 'Save Singareni' round table meeting held at the Telangana Jagruthi office in Banjara Hills.

The meeting was attended by representatives of multiple trade unions and organisations, including leaders from HMS and the Forward Bloc, along with Singareni workers, where key concerns about the future of the coal major and employee welfare were discussed.

Addressing the gathering, Kavitha alleged that the government lacks both understanding and commitment towards Singareni and its workforce, raising concerns over policy decisions affecting the company.

She argued that instead of focusing on inquiries into workers' appointments, the government should investigate alleged corruption in major contracts, including those related to solar and lithium projects.

Kavitha also demanded the imme-

diate release of pending dues amounting to Rs 47,000 crore to Singareni, stating that delays were adversely impacting operations, workers' safety, and wage payments.

She warned that financial strain on the company could weaken its functioning and long-term sustainability if corrective measures are not taken promptly.

Highlighting the resolutions adopted at the meeting, Kavitha said the state government should formally communicate with the Centre opposing the implementation of new labour codes.

She also called for the constitution of a medical board on humanitarian grounds to address health-related concerns of workers in the mining sector.

In addition, she urged authorities to resolve long-pending issues such as dependent jobs and cases involving alias names, which have remained a concern for many employees.

Kavitha further demanded that the government release a white paper on the Rs 2,250 crore lithium refinery deal,

seeking transparency in major industrial agreements.

She emphasised that coal blocks such as Naini and Tadicherla, along with future mining projects, should be operated exclusively by Singareni to safeguard the interests of the state and its workers.

Describing Singareni as the lifeline of Telangana, she appealed to all trade unions to rise above political differences and unite for the welfare of workers.

Kavitha stressed that collective action is necessary to ensure that the rights and livelihoods of thousands of employees dependent on the company are protected.

Issuing a strong warning, she said that if the government fails to address these concerns, a large-scale agitation similar to the Telangana Movement would be launched.

Such protests, she indicated, could include widespread demonstrations and even strike action across coal mines, potentially disrupting operations.

Mamata Banerjee targets BJP leadership over Bhabanipur violence

Kolkata: Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the BJP's top leadership over the violence linked to the nomination rally of Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari in Bhabanipur.

Addressing an election rally in Jagannj, Banerjee alleged that the unrest was "planned" and orchestrated by bringing in outsiders to create disturbances.

She accused the saffron party of deliberately inciting tension under the guise of a political roadshow held in connection with Adhikari's nomination.

Referring to the rally conducted in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Banerjee termed the episode a "planned attack."

She claimed that the incident occurred near her residence in Bhabanipur, where posters were allegedly disrespected and provocative gestures were made near a local Kali temple.

Banerjee further alleged

that shoes were shown towards the residence of her nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, adding that such actions angered local residents.

"This is not politics. They brought people from outside for the nomination," she said, asserting that the disturbances were not spontaneous.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of India has taken strict administrative action over the incident, signalling the seriousness of the situation.

Following reported displeasure from Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, four police officers were suspended for failing to maintain law and order.

The Commission also ordered departmental inquiries against the suspended officers to examine lapses in duty.

Earlier, senior officials of Kolkata Police, including DC (South Division II) Siddhartha Dutta and DC (Reserve Force) Manas Roy, were issued show-cause no-

tices. Authorities at Lalbazar headquarters have begun examining CCTV footage to identify individuals involved in the clashes during the rally.

According to sources, notices have already been issued to around 35 to 40 people in connection with the violence.

The clashes erupted on Thursday during Adhikari's roadshow from Hazra crossing to the Survey Building, where supporters of the Trinamool Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party confronted each other on Harish Mukherjee Road.

The situation escalated further when Trinamool workers staged protests, many of them wearing black cloth on their heads as a mark of dissent.

Political observers note that the Election Commission's decision to suspend officers highlights the gravity of the law-and-order breakdown in a politically sensitive area.

Akhilesh Yadav targets BJP over women's reservation and power woes, Calls for census before fixing quotas

New Delhi: Akhilesh Yadav, chief of the Samajwadi Party, has launched a sharp attack on the BJP-led government, raising questions over both the Women's Reservation Bill and the implementation of prepaid electricity meters in a series of messages shared on his WhatsApp channel.

Targeting the proposed women's quota, Yadav argued that the absence of updated population data undermines the credibility of the policy and raises serious concerns about its fairness.

He criticised the reliance on outdated census figures, particularly from 2011, stating that any reservation system must be rooted in accurate and current data to ensure proper representation.

"If the counting itself is wrong, how can the reservation be correct?" Yadav asked, emphasising that reservation is fundamentally a matter of mathematical allocation.

According to him, since

the proposed quota is based on a fixed proportion of seats, its implementation must rely on precise population figures rather than assumptions.

Using an analogy, he said that without a strong and accurate foundation, policies cannot yield effective outcomes, comparing flawed data to poor soil that cannot produce a healthy crop.

Yadav reiterated his party's demand for a nationwide census before implementing the Women's Reservation Bill, insisting that updated data is essential for fairness and transparency.

He accused the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies of attempting to mislead women voters, alleging that the policy is being pushed without proper groundwork.

"A government that does not want to count women—how will it give them reservation?" he questioned, adding that his party would oppose any move to implement the policy without a fresh census.



In the same communication, Yadav shifted focus to electricity-related issues in Uttar Pradesh, highlighting what he described as widespread distress caused by prepaid and smart electricity meters.

He coined the term "prepaid victims" to describe consumers who, despite paying in advance for electricity, are facing frequent outages due to technical glitches.

According to him, many households are being forced to endure power cuts and discomfort, particularly during periods of extreme heat, due to faults in the system.

Yadav also questioned the role of the government and electricity distribution companies, asking why consumers are being harassed despite making advance payments.

He alleged that the prepaid model reduces accountability, as companies receive payment upfront and therefore lack incentive to promptly resolve consumer complaints. Highlighting the plight of ordinary citizens, he said that people are being forced to run from one office to another without receiving proper grievance redressal. Sharpening his criti-

cism, Yadav remarked that under BJP rule, citizens have effectively become "sufferers" rather than consumers, bearing the burden of what he termed a flawed system.

Linking these concerns to his party's broader political narrative, he invoked the PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Apsankhyak) plank, suggesting that rising public discontent is expanding support for this social coalition.

He asserted that those affected by issues like prepaid meters are increasingly identifying with the PDA framework, which focuses on the concerns of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Striking a political note ahead of upcoming elections, Yadav expressed confidence that public sentiment is shifting against the ruling establishment. He concluded by saying that these "prepaid victims" believe change is imminent, adding that a government representing the oppressed would ensure reliable and accessible electricity for all.

LPG Theft Racket Busted Amid Supply Crisis

Mumbai : In the midst of an ongoing LPG supply crisis, Mumbai Police have uncovered a major cylinder theft racket, arresting three individuals and recovering 45 stolen cylinders along with three motorcycles. The operation was carried out by the Powai police following a series of thefts reported across Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, and Thane.

The main accused, identified as Raj Chandrakant Kamble, allegedly targeted LPG cylinders during the shortage and sold them at inflated prices. Investigators revealed that he used stolen motorcycles to transport the cylinders and evade detection.

Police action was initiated after multiple complaints surfaced, prompting the Crime Detection Unit to launch a coordinated operation. The accused were eventually tracked down and taken into custody, with the stolen goods recovered during the raid.

In a separate but related case, authorities in Vashi seized LPG cylinders worth ₹13.91 lakh and arrested two individuals for illegal hoarding and black-market sales. Officials stated that



such activities not only exploit the crisis but also violate essential commodity regulations.

These incidents have raised concerns about the vulnerability of supply chains during emergencies. Authorities have assured strict action against offenders and urged citizens to report any suspicious activity related to essential commodities.

The Mumbai police have successfully dismantled a sophisticated LPG cylinder theft and black-marketing operation that had been preying on residents during

a period of acute supply shortages. The breakthrough came after the Powai police initiated a high-stakes investigation into a series of coordinated thefts that had plagued not just Mumbai, but also the neighboring regions of Navi Mumbai and Thane. By arresting three key individuals, the authorities have managed to recover 45 stolen cylinders along with three motorcycles used in the commission of these crimes. This operation marks a significant victory for law enforcement in their ongoing battle against those looking to profit from

the desperation of citizens during essential commodity crises. The alleged mastermind behind the racket has been identified as Raj Chandrakant Kamble, a seasoned offender who reportedly saw the ongoing LPG shortage as a lucrative business opportunity. According to investigators, Kamble's strategy was to systematically siphon off cylinders from residential and commercial areas and then sell them to desperate consumers at heavily inflated black-market prices. To minimize the risk of being caught, he uti-

lized stolen motorcycles to transport the bulky cargo, allowing him to navigate narrow lanes and avoid the main road checkpoints where police presence is typically higher. This tactical use of stolen vehicles made the gang particularly difficult to track during the initial weeks of the crime spree.

Police action was triggered after a surge in complaints from various housing societies and delivery agencies who noticed a pattern of disappearing stock. Recognizing the organized nature of the thefts, the Crime Detection Unit was pressed into service to launch a co-ordinated sting operation. Through a combination of traditional human intelligence and modern technical surveillance, the unit was able to map the gang's movement patterns across the metropolitan region. The trail eventually led the officers to a hideout where the suspects were apprehended red-handed. The recovery of 45 cylinders during the raid provided the physical evidence necessary to link the trio to multiple pending cases across three different police jurisdictions.

Malicious APK Triggers ₹3.59 Lakh Cyber Fraud

Mumbai : A 30-year-old man from Bhandup became the victim of a cyber fraud after downloading a malicious APK file shared via WhatsApp, resulting in a loss of ₹3.59 lakh. The incident has once again highlighted the growing risks associated with unsecured digital activity and suspicious file downloads.

According to the police, the victim, originally from Rajasthan and currently working at a supermarket in Mumbai, had been part of a WhatsApp group with friends since 2021. On March 28, a file with a misleading title was shared in the group, which he downloaded without suspecting any foul play.

Soon after installing the file, his phone was allegedly compromised. He began receiving multiple calls and OTP messages from unknown numbers, prompting him to switch off the device. However, when he turned it back on two days later, he discovered that funds had already been siphoned off from his bank account.

Upon checking his account details at an ATM, he found that ₹3.59 lakh had been transferred through 11 unauthorised transactions. Realising he had fallen prey to a cyber scam, he immedi-

ately contacted the national cyber helpline and subsequently filed a complaint at the Bhandup police station.

Police have registered a case under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Information Technology Act. Investigations are underway to trace the perpetrators, while authorities have urged citizens to avoid downloading files from unknown or unverified sources.

A 30-year-old supermarket employee from Bhandup has become the latest victim of a sophisticated cyber-attack after a malicious Android Package (APK) file, shared through a trusted WhatsApp group, led to the theft of ₹3.59 lakh from his bank account. This incident serves as a grim reminder of how cybercriminals are increasingly exploiting social trust and familiar digital environments to deploy "dropper" malware. The victim, a native of Rajasthan residing in Mumbai, had been a member of a specific WhatsApp group with friends since 2021, making the source of the file seem inherently safe.

However, on March 28, a file with a deceptive title was posted to the group, which the victim downloaded and installed without

realizing it was a Trojan designed to hijack his device.

The mechanics of the fraud were swift and devastating, beginning almost immediately after the installation of the malicious software. Once the APK was executed, it granted the attackers remote access to the victim's phone, allowing them to intercept sensitive data and communications. The victim reported receiving an unusual barrage of phone calls and a flurry of One-Time Password (OTP) messages from unrecognized numbers. In an attempt to stop the digital onslaught and regain control, he made the intuitive but ultimately ineffective decision to switch off his mobile device. Unfortunately, the malware had already established its foothold, and the "quiet" period while the phone was off provided the attackers with a window to operate without interference.

When the victim powered his phone back on two days later, he was met with the realization that his financial security had been compromised.

Upon visiting a local ATM to check his balance, he discovered that his account had been systematically drained through 11 unauthorized transactions.

Yojana Row Sparks Political Firestorm

Mumbai : A major political controversy has erupted in Maharashtra after Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare alleged that as many as 71 lakh women have been disqualified from the state government's flagship Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana. The scheme, which provides ₹1,500 per month to eligible beneficiaries, has come under scrutiny with the opposition questioning the government's accountability and transparency in its implementation.

Addressing a press conference, Andhare demanded

answers from Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare, asking her to clarify the reasons behind such a large-scale disqualification. She further claimed that these women had already received a cumulative ₹255.60 crore since the scheme's rollout ahead of the 2024 Assembly elections, raising concerns about the financial implications for the state.

The opposition leader also questioned Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, alleging that

public funds may have been misused to influence voters during the elections. She went a step further, asking why a fraud case should not be registered in the matter if irregularities are established. According to government officials, around 68 lakh accounts were closed after beneficiaries failed to complete the mandatory e-KYC process before the March 31 deadline. This reduced the number of active beneficiaries to approximately 1.75 crore. However, authorities have now extended the deadline for e-KYC



completion until April 30, suggesting that some of the disqualified accounts may still be reinstated. The issue has intensi-

fied political tensions, with the opposition insisting on a thorough probe into the alleged discrepancies, while the government maintains

that procedural compliance is necessary to ensure that benefits reach genuine recipients. The political corridors of Maharashtra are currently witnessing a high-decibel confrontation as the Shiv Sena (UBT) has launched a blistering attack on the Mahayuti government over the implementation of its flagship "Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana." The controversy was ignited by Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare, who leveled serious allegations regarding the mass disqualification of approximately 71 lakh wom-

en from the scheme. This welfare initiative, which was designed to provide a monthly financial stipend of ₹1,500 to eligible women, has now become a central point of contention, with the opposition questioning the administrative transparency of a project that holds significant emotional and economic weight for the state's female population. During a pointed press conference in Mumbai, Andhare directed her queries specifically at Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare, demanding a comprehensive

explanation for why such a vast number of beneficiaries were suddenly removed from the rolls. The opposition leader highlighted the scale of the "exclusion," arguing that 71 lakh is not just a statistical variation but represents a significant portion of the intended target group. The demand for clarity is rooted in the fear that eligible and needy women may have been unceremoniously dropped due to bureaucratic hurdles or shifting eligibility criteria that were not clearly communicated to the public.

Bandstand Pet Signage Dispute

Mumbai : A sharp disagreement has broken out between the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and the Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust over the origin of controversial "anti-pet" hoardings.

The signage, which prohibited animal feeding and restricted pet access at the popular promenade, was recently dismantled by civic officials following intense pressure and formal complaints from animal rights activists.

While the Residents' Trust maintains that the signs were officially installed by the BMC to enforce sanitation and court-mandated bird-feeding restrictions, the civic body has explicitly denied any involvement in their erection. An official from the H/West ward clarified that the BMC only installs authorized notices

regarding bird feeding and would not have removed the hoardings had they been internal projects.

Activists continue to allege that the signs illegally used government logos to intimidate pet owners, leaving the question of who actually commissioned the structures unanswered.

The picturesque promenade of Bandra Bandstand has recently transitioned from a serene coastal walkway into a theater of administrative and social friction, following the emergence of controversial signage targeting pet owners and animal lovers.

What began as the installation of a few restrictive hoardings has quickly escalated into a high-stakes disagreement involving local residents, civic authorities, and passionate animal rights advocates. This dispute cen-

ters on the origin and legality of several metal boards that explicitly prohibited the feeding of stray animals and sought to curtail the access of domestic pets to certain areas of the popular public space.

The presence of these signs sparked an immediate outcry, as they appeared to challenge the long-standing inclusive culture of one of Mumbai's most iconic recreational landmarks.

As the controversy deepened, a significant "blame game" erupted between the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Bandra Bandstand Residents' Trust (BBRT), with both entities offering conflicting accounts of how the signage came to be.

The Residents' Trust has remained steadfast in its position, claiming that the boards were not a private

initiative but were instead officially commissioned and installed by the BMC. According to the Trust, these measures were necessary interventions to maintain public sanitation and to uphold specific court-mandated restrictions regarding the feeding of birds, which had become a point of concern for residents living in the immediate vicinity of the promenade.

However, the BMC has issued an explicit and categorical denial regarding any involvement in the creation or erection of these "anti-pet" hoardings.

Officials representing the H/West ward, which oversees the Bandra region, have clarified that the civic body's jurisdiction and policies do not extend to such sweeping prohibitions against domestic animals in public spaces.

Housing Society Rules Clarified on Quorum Requirements

Mumbai : Clarity has been provided regarding quorum rules in housing societies, addressing common confusion among members about the validity of decisions taken during meetings. The guidelines outline specific requirements for committee meetings, Annual General Meetings (AGMs), and redevelopment-related gatherings.

For a managing committee consisting of 13 members, the quorum is defined as a simple majority, which in this case would be seven members.

It is mandatory that this quorum is maintained not just at the beginning but throughout the meeting while discussing each agenda item. If the number falls

below the required threshold at any point, decisions taken thereafter are considered invalid.

The rules also specify that if reserved category members are not elected or available, their positions are excluded while calculating the quorum. This ensures flexibility while maintaining governance standards within societies.

In the case of AGMs, the quorum requirement is either two-thirds of the total membership or 20 members, whichever is lower. For a society with 120 members, the quorum would therefore be 20.

If the required number is not present, the meeting can be adjourned and reconvened later, where pro-

ceedings can continue even without quorum.

However, stricter norms apply to redevelopment meetings, where at least two-thirds of the members must be present, and a minimum of 51 per cent approval is required for decisions to pass. These provisions ensure that major decisions, particularly those affecting property and finances, are taken with adequate participation and consensus.

The governance of housing societies in Mumbai has long been a source of internal friction, but recent clarifications on quorum requirements are providing a much-needed roadmap for committee members and residents alike.

At the core of these rules

is the principle of "active participation," ensuring that decisions—ranging from monthly maintenance to multi-crore redevelopment projects—are not made in a vacuum or by a select few without the mandated oversight.

The "Continuous Quorum" Rule: For managing committees, it is not enough to have a majority at the start of the meeting. If a member leaves halfway through and the number falls below the threshold (e.g., from 7 down to 6), any subsequent decisions taken during that session are legally void. This prevents "walkouts" from being used as a tactic to stall specific items, while also protecting against minority-led decision-making.

Bridge Demolition Stalls Mumbai Lifeline

Mumbai : The dismantling of the historic Elphinstone railway bridge has triggered widespread chaos across the Central Railway network this Sunday. The engineering work, centered between Parel and Prabhadevi, necessitated the cancellation and short-termination of numerous local and express services, leaving thousands of travelers stranded.

The disruption has been most severe on the corridor between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and Dadar, with ripple effects delaying trains heading toward Kurla and Thane. Platforms remained packed throughout the morning as commuters faced irregular operations and a lack of clear communication. While railway authorities have deployed extra personnel to manage the surging crowds and are working to clear the



tracks, officials warn that travel will remain difficult until the demolition is fully completed.

The dismantling of the historic Elphinstone railway bridge has introduced a period of significant logistical strain for Mumbai's suburban commuters, as the

removal of this century-old structure necessitates extensive power and traffic blocks. Spanning the critical junction between Parel and Prabhadevi, the bridge has served as a vital east-west link for over a hundred years, but its aging iron and stone framework eventually

became a bottleneck for the modern expansion of the rail network. The decision to demolish the structure was driven by the need to make way for a more advanced, higher-capacity double-decker bridge designed to integrate with the Sewri-Worli Elevated Corri-

dor and the Atal Setu. While the long-term benefits of this infrastructure upgrade are clear, the immediate reality for Sunday travelers has been one of missed connections, overcrowded platforms, and a general sense of frustration.

Central Railway authorities had scheduled the most intensive phase of the demolition for this weekend, specifically targeting a massive block that halted both local and express services. This window was intended to allow engineering teams to safely lower the heavy girders that sat directly above the high-tension overhead wires and the tracks below. Despite the work being planned for a Sunday—traditionally a day of lower ridership—the sheer volume of Mumbaiers who rely on the "lifeline" meant that the impact was felt instantly across the city.

Churchgate Metro Gate Closure

Mumbai : The Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation has announced a short-term closure of a key entry point at Churchgate Metro Station on the Aqua Line. The A4 entry and exit gate, which features a staircase near Marine Plaza, is currently inaccessible to the public and will remain closed through the night of April 5.

Normal operations are scheduled to resume on April 6, with the gate opening for passengers at 5:55 am. Travelers are encouraged to utilize alternative gates at the station during this brief maintenance period. This update follows the recent inauguration of several new access points at Worli, Acharya Atr Chowk, and Jagannath Shankar Sheth stations, designed to provide better connectivity to landmarks like Kamala Mills and Maratha Mandir. Despite these infrastructure improvements, commuters

have noted that mobile network connectivity remains a significant issue within the underground sections of the corridor.

The Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation has recently implemented a short-term closure of a strategic entry point at Churchgate Metro Station on the Aqua Line, affecting the daily routines of commuters in South Mumbai. Specifically, the A4 entry and exit gate, which includes the staircase access located near Marine Plaza, has been cordoned off to the public for necessary maintenance and will remain inaccessible through the night of April 5. This localized closure is part of the operational fine-tuning required for the underground corridor, and transit officials have confirmed that normal services for this specific gate are scheduled to resume promptly at 5:55 am on April 6. During this brief

window of unavailability, travelers are being directed to use the multiple alternative gates situated around the station perimeter to ensure their journey remains as seamless as possible.

This maintenance update comes at a time of rapid infrastructure expansion for the Aqua Line, which has seen the recent inauguration of several new access points aimed at improving last-mile connectivity to major city landmarks. New gates at Worli and Acharya Atr Chowk now provide more direct routes to the Kamala Mills business district and the MCGM Engineering Hub, while a new entry at the Jagannath Shankar Sheth station offers streamlined access to the Maratha Mandir area. However, while physical connectivity is reaching new heights, many daily commuters have pointed out a persistent digital divide within the system.

Editorial

Struggle for National Hegemony

Currently, a political maelstrom is unfolding across five key geographical regions in India. Campaigning for the legislative assembly elections in four major states—West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala—and the Union Territory of Puduchery has reached its zenith, and the entire nation's attention is now fixed on the polling scheduled for April 9th. Over the past month, these elections had remained somewhat out of the media spotlight, largely because war clouds were gathering globally in the Middle East, and the media had prioritized coverage of that conflict. However, considering the political significance of these five regions and the social dynamics at play within them, these elections are not merely confined to a change of power at the state level; rather, they are poised to determine the future trajectory of national politics. Notably—since these five regions collectively account for more than one-fifth of the total seats in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament), representing a tally of 116 seats—this election has evolved into a historic battle for national parties and regional forces alike: a struggle not merely for power, but for survival and supremacy. Throughout this entire electoral process and the accompanying political discourse, the state that has remained most centrally positioned—and most embroiled in controversy—is West Bengal. Here, the conflict between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) has transcended the realm of mere political rivalry; it has escalated to a level involving personal prestige and constitutional impasse. Given the unprecedented success achieved by the BJP in the previous assembly elections—and the all-out effort it is now exerting to make a direct bid for the seat of power—Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee faces the most formidable challenge she has encountered in the last decade. The most significant—and controversial—feature of this election has been the 'Systematic Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls' (SIR) campaign implemented by the Central Election Commission. In fact, this campaign has been executed with extreme rigor across all five regions currently facing elections. In a large state like Tamil Nadu, for instance, the names of approximately 9 million suspicious or duplicate voters have been removed from the electoral rolls under this campaign. However, the sheer vehemence with which Mamata Banerjee opposed this process in West Bengal has rendered the political atmosphere in the state extremely volatile. The ruling party finds itself in a severe predicament, as the courts have repeatedly—and decisively—rejected every legal maneuver employed by the Trinamool Congress to obstruct this process. Consequently, political analysts across the entire Asian continent are watching closely to see how peacefully and transparently this democratic exercise unfolds in Bengal. In the eastern state of Assam, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—along with its allies—has entered the electoral fray with a firm resolve to achieve a 'hat-trick' of power. Here, the contest is a direct face-off between the BJP and the Congress—the two traditional national rivals—and issues such as infiltration, citizenship, and local Assamese identity have once again taken center stage in the election. Turning to South India, the politics of Tamil Nadu has always been fiercely competitive and emotionally charged. There, DMK leader M.K. Stalin—whose party has been in power for the past ten years—is striving tirelessly to retain his hold on power and achieve a hat-trick of victories. However, the AIADMK—a party that had languished and been plagued by internal rifts following the demise of its late leader J. Jayalalithaa—has now staged a vigorous resurgence, rising like a phoenix from the ashes. By forging an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party and other smaller Tamil parties, the AIADMK—operating under the banner of the 'National Democratic Alliance' (NDA)—has mounted a formidable challenge to the incumbent government. Furthermore, with the entry of Tamil cinema superstar T.K. Vijay's new party, the 'Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam' (TVK), the electoral battle in Tamil Nadu is no longer a mere two-way contest; it has evolved into a multi-cornered fight, taking a fascinating and intriguing turn. There is no doubt that this election will prove instrumental in determining the new generation of future leadership for Tamil Nadu. The political culture in Kerala stands distinct from that of other states across the country, characterized by a tradition wherein power alternates every five years between the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF). However, having held power for the last ten years, the Left Front is now attempting to break this established tradition and achieve a hat-trick of consecutive terms. On the other hand, the significant success achieved by the Congress in the recently concluded local body elections has buoyed their hopes and expectations. Although the BJP is striving to establish a foothold in Kerala, the primary electoral battle appears to remain confined to the two traditional political fronts. While Puduchery is a small Union Territory, its strategic significance is by no means negligible. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) currently holds power here, and the ruling dispensation is making every conceivable effort to retain it. From the perspective of political expansion in South India, a victory in Puduchery would be a matter of immense prestige for the BJP. A close observation of the political landscape across these five states reveals that the conflict between national parties and regional identities within Indian politics has intensified. In some regions, the contest involves a direct face-off between two national parties, while in others, a national party stands pitted against a regional one. The Election Commission's remarkably stringent stance and the rigorous purification of voter lists have lent this year's electoral process a greater degree of credibility. The fierce, high-stakes contest in West Bengal and the emergence of new political forces in Tamil Nadu stand as testaments to the vitality and maturity of Indian democracy. Regardless of the outcome of this electoral battle, the fact that the issues concerning citizens across various corners of the country have found a place on the national stage through this process constitutes the true fulfillment of democracy. While it remains difficult to predict the direction in which the political winds are currently blowing across these five regions, indications suggest that the voters' mandate will not be driven solely by emotive issues, but will instead be grounded in development and administrative efficiency. With the integration of advanced technology, the growing influence of social media, and strict initiatives undertaken by the Election Commission—such as the 'SIR' system—this year's electoral process is poised to be a truly historic one. Mamata Banerjee's battle for survival, the BJP's aspirations for a hat-trick in the eastern states, and the assertion of self-respecting identities by southern parties—the verdict on all these matters is now set to be sealed within the ballot boxes. Conducted under the shadow of conflict and amidst a period of global instability, this grand democratic exercise will demonstrate India's inherent strength to the world. The 9th of April will not merely determine the fate of five states; it will also underscore a new balance of political forces within the country's federal structure. Consequently, this phase of voting across these five regions will serve as a major trial by fire for Indian democracy and a master key to its future development.

Registrations for institution-led exposure tours across paired regions under Yuva Sangam Phase-VI held from March 2–25, covering 22 States/UTs.

Since 2023, the programme has scaled across phases, covering 20+ States/UTs and engaging thousands of youths through 5–7-day exchange tours.

Aligned with NEP 2020, it promotes experiential learning by linking classroom knowledge with real-world exposure across regions.

Connecting Youth Through the Spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat

India is experienced, not just studied. To truly understand our nation, is to engage directly with its people, its landscape, and its rich tapestry of traditions. Yuva Sangam opens that window for young Indians. The programme operationalises experiential learning and national integration as complementary pillars of youth development.

Launched under the Government of India's Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB) initiative, Yuva Sangam is a youth exchange programme that brings young people from different parts of the country together. It is designed for those aged 18–30 years, including students, National Service Scheme and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan volunteers, and young professionals. Anchored by the Ministry of Education and implemented through Higher Education Institutions, it creates a structured platform for youth engagement across regions[1].

Launched on 31st October 2015, on the occasion of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB) was envisioned to strengthen national unity by deepening connections between States and Union Territories. It recognises that India's diversity is best understood not in theory, but through shared experience.

At its core, EBSB creates a structured framework where States and Union Territories are paired with each other for sustained engagement across language learning, culture, traditions & music, tourism & cuisine, sports and sharing of best practices, etc. What sets the programme apart is its continuity. It goes beyond one-time events and builds long-term, year-round engagement between regions, enabling people to interact, learn and collaborate over time.

The programme follows a whole-of-government approach, involving multiple ministries and institutions. This ensures that engagement happens at multiple levels, from classrooms and campuses to communities and cultural spaces.

In essence, EBSB creates a national learning ecosystem. It allows people to experience India beyond their immediate surroundings. Initiatives like Yuva Sangam build on this vision, turning the idea of "One India" into a lived and shared reality. Participants travel to paired States and Union Territories for structured tours. They step into new cultural settings, hear unfamiliar languages, share meals, ideas and experiences with people from different backgrounds. They visit institutions, development projects and innovation centres. Through these interactions, they begin to understand how different regions contribute to a shared national journey.

Yuva Sangam reflects a larger national vision. It supports the experiential learning approach of the National Education Policy 2020, where learning extends beyond classrooms into real-world con-

Yuva Sangam



texts.

The sixth edition of Yuva Sangam is currently open, offering young Indians an opportunity to be part of a structured national exchange. Registrations were held from 2nd March 2026 to 25th March 2026, marking a defined window for participation this year.

Phase-VI covers 22 States and Union Territories, continuing the model of paired interstate visits. Selected participants will travel to host States/UTs for five to seven-day structured exposure tours, where they engage with local culture, institutions and communities.

This ensures that participants are not just visiting places, but interacting with systems and institutions that shape development on the ground.

Both UG, PG students and off-campus youth are eligible to apply. Selection is carried out by the nodal Higher Education Institutions, with emphasis on balanced representation across gender, academic disciplines and regions, including rural and remote areas[7].

Participants are expected to be medically fit, maintain discipline, follow group guidelines and respect the cultural sensitivities of the host States/UTs. Participants explore cultural heritage, engage with local communities, and visit institutions linked to governance, innovation and entrepreneurship. The experience is immersive and interactive. It allows youth to connect what they learn with what they see and experience. In this sense, Yuva

understanding of India's knowledge systems, diversity and development pathways. Programmes like Yuva Sangam translate this vision into practice by creating opportunities for real-world learning across regions. Since its rollout in early 2023, Yuva Sangam has steadily built a footprint across the country. What began as a set of cultural-

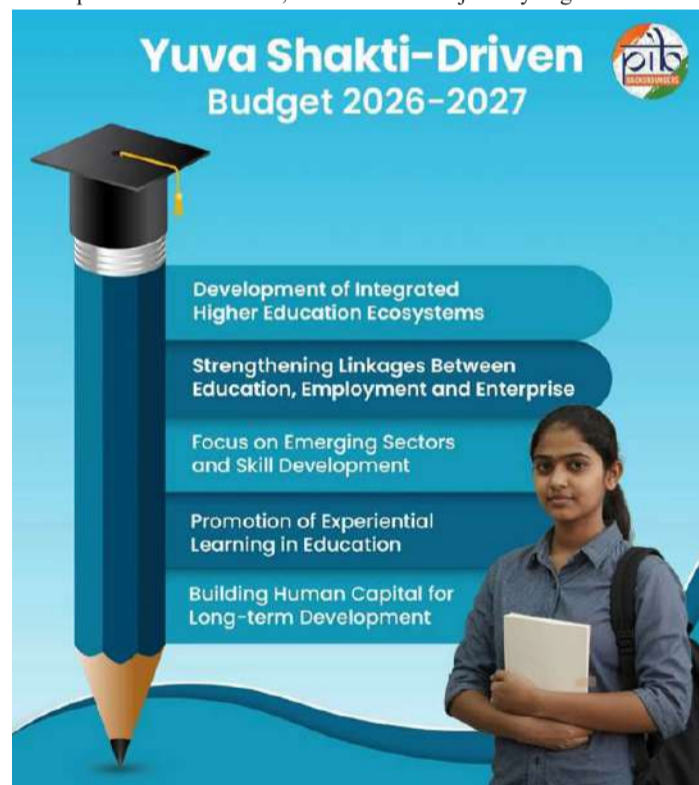
way movement ensured that exposure was not one-sided, but shared.

A conscious effort was made to maintain balance, with an approximate 40:60 participation ratio between North Eastern and other youth. Conducted between 20 February and 7 April 2023, the phase saw 29 tours across 21 States/UTs, with 1,178 delegates (1,057 youth



cum-educational exchanges has, over successive phases, grown into a structured and recurring platform for youth engagement across States and Union Territories. The initiative has been implemented through a multi-ministerial effort, bringing together sectors such as culture, tourism, education, youth affairs and regional development. This has allowed each tour to go beyond a single theme, offering participants a layered understanding of the host State or UT.

The journey began with a clear



Sangam reflects the approach of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which places strong emphasis on experiential learning and multidisciplinary exposure. It encourages learning beyond classrooms and promotes a deeper un-

focus—the North Eastern Region. Phase I placed it at the centre of the exchange, enabling youth from across India to spend 5–8 days in North Eastern States, while participants from the region travelled to other parts of the country. This two-

tions covering 25 States/UTs, reflecting both scale and deeper institutional integration. In total, 21 tours were conducted, bringing together 938 youth and 100 coordinators, making it one of the most extensive phases of the programme.

By this stage, Yuva Sangam had clearly moved beyond its initial rollout phase. It had emerged as a recognised and high-engagement national platform, combining scale with a consistent and structured learning experience for youth across regions. Phase V continued this trajectory, signalling a shift from periodic implementation to a more ongoing national effort. As of 31 December 2024, 15 tours had been completed, with 686 youth and 67 coordinators participating, and more tours planned thereafter.

At this stage, the programme's structure had stabilised, with consistent institutional participation and growing youth engagement. What began as an initiative had now evolved into a sustained platform for youth interaction across regions.

Across these phases, the numbers tell one part of the story. The more significant shift is in how these exchanges are experienced.

Over time, Yuva Sangam has created a growing network of young participants who have experienced India beyond their own regions. It has also established a model where exposure, mobility and interaction become central to how young people engage with the country.

Across phases, a consistent theme emerges from participant experiences. Delegates often speak about stepping into unfamiliar cultures, interacting with people from different regions, and experiencing India beyond textbooks. The exposure to local traditions, institutions and communities creates a sense of connection that is both personal and lasting. In several instances, this experience is shaped by unique moments within each phase. In Phase II, participants highlighted their interactions with national and state leadership as particularly significant, offering them insights into governance and public life that extended beyond academic understanding. In Phase IV, delegates described the tours as deeply immersive, where cultural engagement, institutional visits and community interaction came together to make learning more real and participatory. The Union Budget 2026–27 placed youth at the centre of India's development story. Described as a "Yuva Shakti-driven Budget," it links aspiration with capacity-building and treats young people as active partners in the journey towards a Viksit Bharat. In this wider context, Yuva Sangam becomes more than a youth exchange programme. It becomes a meaningful platform through which education, exposure and national integration come together. Yuva Sangam has shown how meaningful exposure can shape understanding. As the programme enters its newer phases, it is no longer just about exchange. It is about building a sustained framework for youth engagement across regions. Phase-VI reflects this shift. With wider coverage across States and Union Territories and stronger institutional participation, it signals a move towards greater scale and continuity. As more Higher Education Institutions come on board and partnerships deepen, the programme has the potential to evolve into a more regular and structured national platform for youth mobility. Looking ahead, this creates new possibilities.

Record Food and Horticulture output amid Declining Average Landholdings

As per Agriculture Census 2015-16, conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, the average size of operational holdings is 1.08 hectares, against 1.15 hectares in 2010-11. However, the production of total food grains at the all-India level has increased from 265.0 Million Tonnes in 2013–14 to 357.7 Million Tonnes in 2024–25. Similarly, the production of total horticulture crops at the all-India level has increased from 277.4 Million Tonnes in 2013–14 to 369.1 Million Tonnes in 2024–25 (Third advance estimates).

To ensure productive use of land, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has implemented several initiatives to promote crop diversification, increase cropping intensity and enhance farmer's income. Under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and the Crop Diversification Programme, States are supported to adopt region-specific high-value crops, pulses, oil-

seeds, and horticultural crops. Schemes such as Soil Health & Fertility (SH&F), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO)-Oil Palm, National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO)-Oilseeds, Mission for Atmanirbharta in Pulses, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) for organic and sustainable farming, Rainfed Area Development (RAD) to further encourage farmers to adopt climate-resilient, high-value and diversified crops.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) conducts research programme to develop location specific varieties for enhancing the production, productivity of farmholdings and initiated several technological measures to increase the area under cultivation. This includes location specific bio-engineering to check soil erosion due to run-off of rainwater, sand dune stabilization and shelter belt technology to check wind erosion and

reclamation technology for problem soils in the country. ICAR has also developed the gypsum technology package, consisting of land levelling, bunding, flushing, removal of excess water, good quality irrigation water, application of amendments, selection of crops and efficient nutrient management. Further, to address the impacts of climate change, ICAR has released 2,900 crop varieties during 2014–2024, out of which 2,661 are tolerant to one or more biotic and/or abiotic stresses.

Government of India has been implementing the Central Sector Scheme for Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) since 2020 to organize farmers including small & marginal farmers, into collectives and enable them to enhance their bargaining power, leverage economies of scale, reduce cost of production and enhance farmers' incomes through aggregation of their agricultural produce.

Under the scheme, financial assistance up to Rs. 18.00 lakh per FPO is provided for a period of three years. In addition, matching equity grant up to Rs. 2,000 per farmer member subject to a limit of Rs. 15.00 lakh per FPO and credit guarantee facility up to Rs. 2 crore of project loan per FPO is provided to ensure institutional credit accessibility. Further, Rs. 25 lakh is provided to Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) for handholding support to each FPO for a period of five years. Presently 10,000 FPOs have been registered under the said scheme. These initiatives have empowered millions of small & marginal farmers to overcome the limitations of shrinking landholdings by enabling collective farming, input procurement, value addition and better market access.

This information was given by Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Ramnath Thakur in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.

Fadnavis Highlights Cultural Significance of Kumbh Mela

Nashik : Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis described the Kumbh Mela as a powerful symbol of India's cultural ethos and inclusive spiritual tradition. Speaking at a religious gathering in Nashik, he emphasised that the festival reflects the essence of Sanatan culture, where people come together beyond caste and ideological differences.

He stated that preparations for the Simhashta Kumbh Mela 2027 are already in full swing, with large-scale infrastructure projects underway to accommodate the expected surge in devotees. According to him, development works worth ₹30,000 crore are currently



in progress and are expected to rise to ₹35,000 crore upon completion. Fadnavis highlighted

that the Kumbh Mela is a rare occasion where social distinctions dissolve, and millions gather with a shared

spiritual purpose. He noted that no one questions caste or beliefs during the event, making it a true reflection of

unity and harmony.

The government is also focusing on improving infrastructure, including river purification, construction of ghats, temple restoration, and expansion of transport facilities. Plans include upgrading railway stations and developing a new terminal at Ozar airport to handle increased traffic.

He further announced that land would be acquired to establish a permanent Sadhugram, ensuring better arrangements for saints and devotees in future events. The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the upcoming Nashik Kumbh would witness significantly higher participation compared to previous editions.

Nephew kills uncle, cousin during wedding procession over property dispute in Wardha

Wardha: A shocking double murder case has emerged from Wardha district, where a minor boy allegedly killed his uncle and cousin during a wedding procession, sending shockwaves through the local community.

According to police officials, the victims have been identified as Prabhakar Bhalme and his son Nitin Bhalme. The accused, who is reportedly their nephew, has been taken into custody by local authorities.

The incident took place on Saturday night in Wardha city while a wedding procession was underway. What should have been a moment of celebration quickly turned into a scene of tragedy and panic.

Preliminary investigations suggest that a long-standing property dis-

pute within the family may have been the primary cause behind the crime. Police believe that the accused had been harboring resentment for some time, which eventually escalated into violence.

During the procession, the minor allegedly attacked both victims with a knife, fatally injuring them on the spot.

The suddenness of the assault left little room for intervention, and both individuals succumbed to their injuries immediately.

Authorities have indicated that the act may not have been spontaneous. Investigators revealed that the accused had allegedly purchased the knife online prior to the incident, pointing toward possible premeditation.

The fact that the weapon was acquired in advance has

added a serious dimension to the case, suggesting that the attack may have been planned rather than carried out in the heat of the moment.

Following the incident, police quickly moved into action and apprehended the accused. Given that he is a minor, the case will be handled in accordance with juvenile justice procedures.

Officials are currently working to reconstruct the sequence of events leading up to the crime. They are also gathering evidence and recording statements from family members and witnesses who were present during the procession.

The role of the property dispute is being closely examined, as such conflicts have often been known to escalate into serious violence if left unresolved.

Man killed in tiger attack in Chandrapur

Chandrapur: A 58-year-old man was killed in a tiger attack while collecting mahua (moha) flowers in a forest area of Nagbhid taluka in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district, officials said today. The deceased has been identified as Haridas Mahadev Kubde, a resident of Navegaon (Mintur) village under the Nagbhid forest range.

According to sources, Kubde had gone to a nearby forest area on Saturday morning to collect mahua flowers but did not return home by evening, prompting family members to launch a search.

During the search, his nephew, Akshay Kubde, reportedly spotted two tigers along with two cubs near the farm area and returned home out of fear.

Subsequently, Kubde's body was found in the forest on Sunday morning.

Forest officials suspect that he was killed in a tiger attack.

The incident comes days after a similar fatal tiger attack in the same taluka, triggering panic among villagers and highlighting the rising cases of human-wildlife conflict in the region.

Further investigation is underway.

Dr Hulgesh Chalwadi Appointed RPI (A) State Vice President

Pune: Ramdas Athawale, national president of the Republican Party of India (Athawale) and Union Minister of State for Social Justice, has appointed Dr. Hulgesh Chalwadi as the party's State Vice President in Maharashtra. The announcement was made during a State Working Committee meeting held at the Residency Club on Sunday. The decision reflects the party leadership's confidence in Dr. Chalwadi's organizational capabilities and long-standing involvement in social and political work.

Dr. Chalwadi, a prominent Bahujan leader and former corporator from Pune, brings with him over three decades of experience in the social, educational, and political spheres. His consistent engagement with grassroots issues and public outreach initiatives has earned him recognition within the Bahujan movement.

Before joining RPI (A) last month, Dr. Chalwadi was associated with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). His shift to RPI (A) is seen as a strategic move aimed at strengthening the party's

base among marginalized communities in Maharashtra. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Chalwadi expressed gratitude to Ramdas Athawale for entrusting him with such a significant responsibility. He described the appointment as both an honour and a challenge, emphasizing his commitment to fulfilling the expectations placed upon him.

He assured party members that he would work tirelessly to strengthen the Bahujan movement and advocate for the rights of deprived, oppressed, and mar-

ginalized sections of society. He also highlighted the importance of integrating these communities into the mainstream through sustained efforts. The meeting witnessed the presence of several key party leaders, including Rajabhai Saravde, State President of RPI (A), and Gautam Sonawane, the State General Secretary. Also in attendance were Chandrakala Sonkambale, State Women's President, Parshuram Wadekar, Deputy Mayor of Pune, and Himaalita Kamble, group leader in the Pune Municipal Corporation.

Digital census to begin in Ch. Sambhajinagar from May 1; 3,800 civic staff deployed

Ch. Sambhajinagar: In line with directives issued by the Central Government, Ch. Sambhajinagar will launch a fully digital population census drive starting May 1, with the Municipal Corporation mobilising nearly 3,800 employees for the exercise.

An official said on Saturday that training of the designated staff is currently underway to ensure smooth implementation of the technology-driven initiative.

The first phase of the campaign will span one month, during which enumeration of all households across the city will be carried out. During the

initial 15 days, residents will be given the option to complete self-registration through a government application. Submission of the required information between May 1 and May 15 has been made mandatory for citizens.

The entire operation is being led by Municipal Corporation Deputy Commissioner Vikas Nawale, under whose supervision the campaign will be executed. Following the completion of digital data entry, authorised personnel will visit residences to carry out the process of assigning identification numbers to houses.

GHRCEM, Pune organise National Level Project Competition 2026 with Pan-India Participation

Pune: The Department of Electronics & Telecommunication Engineering at GH Raisoni College of Engineering and Management, Pune, in collaboration with the IETE Pune Center and the IETE Professional Activity Center, successfully inaugurated the National Level Project Competition 2026 in a hybrid format, drawing participation from across the country. The event witnessed an overwhelming response, with more than 180 project entries submitted by students from various engineering colleges. The competition served as a dynamic platform for showcasing innovation, technical expertise, and problem-solving capabilities among budding engineers.

Participants from multiple states, including Karnataka, Punjab, Telangana, and Hyderabad, actively took part in the event. Teams from outside Pune presented their projects virtually, ensuring inclusivity and transforming the competition into a truly national-level initiative.

The hybrid mode of the competition enabled seamless participation, combining physical presentations with online submissions. This approach not only expanded the reach of the event but also encouraged broader engagement from institutions across India. The inaugural ceremony was graced by Chief Guest Surendra Oturkar, Manager - Digital Product at Comau India Pvt Ltd.

He was joined by Guest of Honour Gopal Das Davra and several distinguished academicians and dignitaries. Among those present were Dr. R. D. Kharadkar, Vice President of IETE New Delhi and Campus Director of GHRCEM Pune, Dr. N. B. Hulle, In-Charge Director, GHRCEM, and Dr. Amol Bhoi, Head of the E&TC Department. The event also saw participation from Dr. Sarika Khoppe, Head of the Innovation Center, and Dr. Sudhir Hate, along with other faculty members and organizers who played a key role in coordinating the competition. Addressing the participants, Surendra Oturkar highlighted the importance of moving beyond purely academic ap-

proaches while developing projects. He encouraged students to focus on creating solutions that are practical, user-centric, and relevant to real-world challenges. He stressed that successful projects must meet three essential criteria—cost-effectiveness, quality, and applicability. According to him, innovation should not only be technically sound but also feasible for implementation in real-life scenarios. Oturkar also advised participants to consider market demands and budget constraints while designing their projects. He noted that understanding user needs and industry expectations is critical for transforming ideas into impactful solutions.

Three engineering students arrested for businessman's murder in Nagpur

Nagpur: Three engineering students have been arrested for allegedly murdering a 44-year-old businessman and stealing his car in Maharashtra's Nagpur, police officials said today.

The accused, Aryan Nareish Shende (22), Rishank Tareish Kamble (20) and Anuj Ramesh Waghmare (19), are all second-year engineering students of KDK College.

The victim, Suchit Upasrao Bhojapure (44), a spare parts businessman and resident of Wadi, was found dead after the accused allegedly attacked him and dumped his body

near a crematorium under the jurisdiction of Wadi police station.

According to police, the incident occurred on Thursday after the trio appeared for their examinations. While travelling on a moped, they spotted Bhojapure sitting alone in his car on Wardhaman Nagar bridge in a heavily intoxicated state.

After shortly leaving the spot, they returned to find him still there, with one leg hanging outside the vehicle.

The students approached him under the pretext of offering help. Bhojapure asked them to

drop him at a distant location, and they agreed.

Later, they picked up Anuj again and proceeded towards the outskirts of the city.

During the journey, Bhojapure realised that some of his belongings were missing and asked them to take him back home in Wadi.

The accused contacted his wife, who initially asked them to bring him home. However, upon reaching the residence, they found it locked. When contacted again, she refused and disconnected the call.

By evening, the trio drove Bhojapure to a se-

cluded area near the Lava crematorium on Khadgaon Road.

Tempted by his car, they allegedly decided to kill him. Taking advantage of his intoxicated condition, they repeatedly struck his head with a stone, killing him on the spot.

In an attempt to destroy evidence, the accused removed his clothes and dumped the body in nearby bushes before fleeing with his car and two mobile phones.

The crime came to light after police received information about a suspicious vehicle and a missing person.

Airbnb highlights Maharashtra's rise as India's event tourism hub

Pune: Concerts, sporting events, and cultural festivals are increasingly emerging as powerful drivers of tourism in Maharashtra, positioning the state as a major hub for event-led travel, according to a recent report by Airbnb.

The report, titled "Unlocking Maharashtra's Event Economy, Powering Tourism and Local Communities," highlights how large-scale events are translating into measurable growth in travel activity across the state. It points to a significant surge in visitor demand during major occasions, reflecting the growing importance of events in shaping tourism patterns. For instance, during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 matches, Maharashtra recorded a 50% year-on-year increase in night stays, along with a 75% rise in guest check-ins around match periods.

These figures underscore the strong link between sporting events and tourism inflow. Similarly, the concerts of Coldplay held in Mumbai in January 2025 triggered a 100% increase in nights booked and a 170% surge in guest arrivals during the event dates. Visitors not only attended the concerts but also extended their stays, turning them into multi-day



travel experiences. The trend is further reinforced by festivals like Lollapalooza India 2026, where bookings in Mumbai grew more than 50 times year-on-year. The festival weekend alone accounted for over 80% of total bookings in January, demonstrating the massive pull such events have on tourism. Changing travel behavior, especially among younger audiences, is playing a key role in this growth. Increasingly, travellers are planning trips around concerts, festivals, and cultural events rather than traditional sightseeing itineraries. A recent survey cited in the report reveals that younger Indians are spending significantly

on event-led travel, with average trip costs around ₹51,000. Notably, six out of ten travellers are allocating between 21% and 40% of their monthly income specifically for music-driven travel experiences. Industry estimates further highlight the broader economic impact of such events. For every ₹1,000 spent on a concert ticket, an additional ₹1,500 to ₹2,000 is generated in the wider tourism ecosystem, including accommodation, transportation, food, and local services. As demand spikes during major events, platforms like Airbnb are helping bridge the accommodation gap by enabling travellers to stay in local

homes. This not only increases lodging capacity but also allows visitors to stay closer to event venues.

The report notes that in 2025 alone, Airbnb contributed over \$832 million to India's economy and supported approximately 222,000 jobs across sectors, reflecting the platform's growing role in the tourism value chain.

According to Amanpreet Bajaj, Country Head for India and Southeast Asia at Airbnb, events are fundamentally reshaping how people travel. He emphasized that Maharashtra is already witnessing longer stays and increased local spending as a direct result

of event-driven tourism. He also pointed out that ensuring flexible accommodation options will be crucial as the state continues to attract large-scale events. Expanding such capacity will help meet rising demand while enabling more communities to benefit economically. The report further suggests that India's experiential travel economy is expanding rapidly, with event-led tourism expected to play a central role in its growth. States with strong infrastructure, connectivity, and a steady pipeline of events are likely to lead this transformation.

Echoing this sentiment, Rahul Sharma, Managing Director - India at the U.S.-India Business Council, stated that Maharashtra is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this opportunity. He made these remarks during a joint roundtable with Airbnb and MITRA, focusing on the state's role in India's emerging multi-billion-dollar event economy.

With its vibrant cultural scene, world-class venues, and growing popularity as an event destination, Maharashtra is poised to remain at the forefront of India's tourism growth, driven by the rising appeal of experiences over traditional travel.

Spirit of Pinkathon returns with 160 km Mumbai to Pune Endurance Run, Celebrating Women's Strength and Resilience

Pune: The spirit of endurance, resilience, and women's empowerment came alive once again as the Spirit of Pinkathon flagged off its 6th edition, featuring an extraordinary 160 km run from Mumbai to Pune.

The run commenced on April 2 from Shivaji Park, Mumbai, and culminated at the AFMC Ground, Pune on April 4, over the course of three days.

Leading this inspiring journey are two remarkable runners, Captain Pooja Mehra (Retd.), a 49-year-old ultra-marathoner, psychotherapist, motivational speaker, and former Indian Army officer, and Poonam

Karanjkar, a 45-year-old endurance runner and former IT professional. Together, they will undertake this demanding multi-day run, embodying the core ethos of Pinkathon, empowering women to push boundaries and prioritize their health, said release today.

The Spirit of Pinkathon has consistently championed women's fitness and well-being, encouraging women from all walks of life to embrace an active lifestyle and challenge their perceived limits.

Speaking about the initiative, Pinkathon founder Milind Soman said: "The Spirit of Pinkathon is a pow-

erful reminder that fitness and endurance are not just physical, they are deeply connected to mind and emotion. Every year, women across the country continue to redefine what strength looks like, and this 160 km Mumbai to Pune run is a testament to that spirit."

Poonam and Captain Pooja embody resilience, courage, and purpose, inspiring countless others to take that first step towards their own fitness journey. Pinkathon has always stood for empowering women to believe in themselves, and initiatives like this bring that vision to life in the most extraordinary way.

Congress firm on contesting Baramati byelection

Mumbai: Maharashtra Pradesh Congress President Harshvardhan Sapkal on Saturday clarified that the Congress remains firm on fielding a candidate against NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) candidate Sunetra Pawar in the Baramati by-election. The party has already scouted potential candidates and is expected to finalise and announce the name by Sunday afternoon. Sapkal mentioned that the decision follows discussions with all key leaders at both the state and national levels. The Congress party's sentiments have also been communicated to Shashikant Shinde, a



leader of the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar faction). On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Ajit Pawar's faction have requested that the election be held unopposed. Citing Maharashtra's political traditions, Devendra Fadnavis urged all parties to support Sunetra Pawar to ensure an unopposed election. Fadnavis recalled that following the passing of R.R. Patil (Aaba), the BJP had decided not to contest that by-election.

He suggested that all parties should show "magnanimity" to maintain this precedent.

Aditya Dhar considering mythological, historical or sports drama after 'Dhurandhar 2' success

Mumbai: The massive box-office success of "Dhurandhar 2" has firmly established filmmaker Aditya Dhar as one of the most bankable directors in contemporary Hindi cinema. Riding high on the film's extraordinary performance, Dhar is now at a crucial juncture in his career, carefully evaluating his next move. Known for his ability to mount large-scale cinematic spectacles with strong storytelling, the filmmaker is reportedly considering multiple ambitious projects that could further redefine his creative trajectory. Among the most talked-about possibilities is the revival of his long-cherished dream project, "The Immortal Ashwathama." This mythological epic has been close to Dhar's heart for years, and he has often expressed his desire to bring it to life on the big screen. The project, inspired by one of the most intriguing characters from Indian mythology, was earlier shelved due to its enormous budget and technical demands. Industry insiders reveal that Dhar had invested significant time and effort into developing "The Immortal Ashwathama," envisioning it as a groundbreaking cinematic experience blending mythol-



ogy with cutting-edge technology. However, at the time, the scale of the project made it financially unviable. Now, with the resounding success of "Dhurandhar 2," the scenario appears to have changed dramatically. Sources suggest that production houses are now more willing to back Dhar's ambitious vision, given his proven track record at the box office. The success of "Dhurandhar 2" has not only elevated his status in the industry but has also instilled confidence among studios to invest in high-budget, high-concept films. This renewed faith could pave the way for the long-awaited revival of "The Immortal Ashwathama." While the mythological epic remains a strong

contender, Dhar is also exploring the idea of directing a historical film set during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan Empire. This project is expected to delve into the rise of one of India's greatest rulers, offering a grand narrative filled with political intrigue, warfare, and drama. Reports indicate that Dhar has already initiated discussions with Ranveer Singh for the lead role in this historical epic. Known for his dynamic screen presence and versatility, Ranveer Singh could potentially bring immense energy and depth to the character of Chandragupta Maurya. If the collaboration materializes, it would mark a significant pairing between a visionary

director and a powerhouse performer. The historical project is said to be envisioned as a visually spectacular film, featuring large-scale battle sequences, elaborate set designs, and a compelling narrative structure. Dhar's penchant for blending realism with cinematic grandeur could make this film a landmark in the historical genre, much like his previous works have done in their respective spaces. In addition to mythology and history, Dhar is also reportedly working on a sports drama that is currently in the ideation stage.

While details about this project remain scarce, insiders suggest that it will be mounted on a grand scale, aligning with Dhar's signature style of storytelling. The filmmaker's ability to infuse emotional depth into high-stakes narratives could make this sports drama a unique offering. The exploration of a sports-based film also indicates Dhar's willingness to diversify his portfolio and experiment with different genres. From military dramas to mythological epics and historical sagas, and now potentially sports, Dhar appears keen on expanding his creative horizons while maintaining his focus on macraa6 and storytelling excellence. Meanwhile, "Dhurandhar 2" continues its phenomenal run at the box office, rewriting records and setting new benchmarks for Hindi cinema.

'Love on the Spectrum' to reprise for fifth season

Mumbai: The Emmy-winning reality series "Love on the Spectrum U.S." is officially set to return for a fifth season, following the strong reception of its recently released fourth instalment. The renewal underscores the show's growing popularity and its meaningful impact on audiences around the world.

Streaming giant Netflix made the decision after witnessing sustained viewer engagement and positive feedback. Since its debut, the series has carved out a unique space in the reality television landscape by offering an honest, compassionate portrayal of people on the autism spectrum navigating relationships. The U.S. version of the show was developed after the success of "Love on the Spectrum," which first premiered in Australia and quickly gained international acclaim. Its universal themes of love, connection, and self-discovery resonated with viewers, paving the way for a global adaptation. Created by Karina Holden and Cian O'Clery of Northern Pictures, the series has been widely praised for its sensitive storytelling and respectful approach. The creators also serve as executive producers, ensuring continuity in tone and vision across versions.

At its core, "Love on the Spectrum U.S." offers a heartfelt glimpse into the lives of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder as they explore dating and relationships. The show stands out for its authenticity, allowing participants to share their experiences in their own voices without sensationalism. Season 4 introduced audiences to a diverse group of participants, including Connor Tomlinson, Dylan Aguilar, Emma Sue Miller, Georgie Harris, James B. Jones, Logan Pereira, Madison Marilla, Shelley Wolfec, and Tyler White. Each individual brought their own unique perspective and journey, adding depth and relatability to the series. The show's format combines moments of vulnerability, humor, and genuine connection, making it both entertaining and educational. It has helped break stereotypes and foster greater understanding of autism in mainstream media. Since its launch in 2022, "Love on the Spectrum U.S." has steadily built a loyal fan base. Its success reflects a growing appetite for content that prioritizes inclusivity and real human stories over manufactured drama. The original Australian version, which premiered in 2019 on ABC TV, laid the foundation for this success.

Janhvi Kapoor opens up on 'biggest trauma' after Dhadak: "Losing my mom was my biggest trauma"

Mumbai: Actor Janhvi Kapoor has opened up about one of the most emotionally challenging phases of her life, reflecting on the period following her debut film "Dhadak." Speaking candidly on the Raj Shamani Podcast, Kapoor shared deeply personal insights into grief, vulnerability, and the pressures of living under constant public scrutiny.

Recalling her mental state at the time, Janhvi revealed that she experienced depression in the aftermath of her debut. She explained that much of her emotional validation had always come from her mother, and losing that anchor left her feeling lost and overwhelmed. The actress described the passing of her mother, Sridevi, as the most defining trauma of her life. She spoke about how the loss unfolded in full public view, making an already devastating experience even more difficult to process.

Janhvi emphasized that while grief is something many people go through, her circumstances made it uniquely isolating. Being in the public eye meant that her personal pain was constantly observed, discussed, and often misunderstood by others.

She expressed that this sense of isolation made it hard for her to explain her emotions to others. According to her, the journey of coping with such a profound loss is deeply individual, and not easily understood by those outside that experience. The actress also spoke about her deep dependence on her mother while growing up. She admitted that she had relied on her for nearly every decision, from everyday choices to larger questions about identity and values. This dependence, she said, left her unprepared to navigate life independently after her mother's passing. Suddenly having to make her own decisions while dealing with grief created an overwhelming sense of pressure and confusion. Compounding this emotional turmoil was the intense scrutiny she faced from the public and media. Janhvi recalled how her behavior was constantly judged—whether she smiled too much, appeared too sad, or did not express grief in a way people expected.

She also mentioned that there were frequent assumptions and accusations about her family dynamics, which added another layer of stress during an already fragile time.

Reflecting on that period, Janhvi admitted that she made several mistakes in her personal life. She acknowledged allowing certain people into her inner circle who did not have her best interests at heart.

According to her, some individuals took advantage of her vulnerability during that phase. She candidly spoke about how her emotional state made it difficult to set boundaries or recognize harmful situations.

Importantly, she also took accountability for her role in those experiences. Janhvi admitted that she had not been protecting her own well-being and often compromised her mental and physical safety.

Her reflections highlight the importance of self-awareness and the need to establish personal boundaries, especially during times of emotional distress. She recognized that learning to prioritize her own safety and mental health was a crucial part of her growth.

The actress's candid admission sheds light on the complex intersection of personal grief and public life. It underscores how fame can intensify deeply personal struggles,

Parineeti Chopra to host Mom Talks on ZEE5; celeb parents open up on modern parenting

Mumbai: Streaming platform ZEE5 has joined hands with BULLET Microdrama to introduce a new content-driven IP titled "Mom Talks, Maa Ki Baat - Maa Ke Jazbaat," a talk-based series hosted by Parineeti Chopra. The initiative marks a fresh attempt to tap into the growing demand for relatable, experience-led parenting content in the digital space.

The nine-episode series is designed to explore the realities of modern parenting through candid and heartfelt conversations. By combining celebrity perspectives with expert insights, the show aims to present a nuanced view of parenting that resonates with contemporary audiences. "Mom Talks" brings together a diverse lineup of well-known personalities, including Vikrant Massey and Sheetal Thakur,

Neha Dhupia, Imran Khan, as well as Gauahar Khan and Zaid Darbar, among others. Each guest contributes personal anecdotes and lived experiences, adding authenticity to the discussions. The format of the show is intentionally intimate, with Parineeti Chopra leading open and engaging conversations. The episodes delve into everyday parenting challenges, emotional journeys, and the evolving dynamics of raising children in today's fast-changing world. What sets the show apart is its blend of sincerity, humour, and practical advice. Rather than presenting a one-size-fits-all approach, "Mom Talks" encourages diverse perspectives, allowing viewers to relate to different parenting styles and choices. Speaking about her role as host, Parineeti Chopra emphasized the impor-

tance of individuality in parenting. She encouraged parents to seek advice from various sources—be it doctors, elders, or even the internet—but ultimately trust their instincts and make decisions that feel right for their child. Her message strongly focuses on removing guilt and societal pressure often associated with parenting. She expressed hope that the show will empower mothers to feel confident in their choices and not be overwhelmed by external expectations or judgments. The series is part of ZEE5's AVOD (advertising-based video-on-demand) library, making it accessible to a wider audience without subscription barriers.



Saqib Saleem injured during a dangerous stunt in 'Kaptaan'

Mumbai: Actor Saqib Saleem recently faced a minor setback while filming his action-thriller series "Kaptaan," after sustaining an injury during a high-risk stunt sequence. Despite the incident, the actor has continued to impress audiences with his dedication and commitment to delivering authentic action on screen.

Saqib Saleem has been receiving widespread praise for his performance in "Kaptaan," which is currently streaming on Amazon MX Player. The series has quickly gained popularity for its gripping storyline, intense action, and strong ensemble cast, positioning it as one of the notable releases in the digital space.

Speaking about the incident, Saleem revealed that the injury occurred while filming a particularly demanding chase sequence. The actor explained that the moment required quick movement and precision, but the intensity of the scene led to an unfortunate fall.

According to Saleem, he landed awkwardly on his wrist during the sequence, which resulted in the injury. Although the stunt was performed under controlled conditions with proper safety measures in place, the unpredictable nature of action scenes can sometimes lead to such mishaps.

He shared that the movement was sudden and unexpected, which made it difficult to avoid the impact. However, he emphasized that the injury was not severe and did not disrupt the shooting schedule significantly.

Demonstrating profes-



sionalism and resilience, Saleem returned to the set soon after recovering. His quick comeback ensured that the production remained on track and that the momentum of filming was not lost.

The actor also highlighted the importance of realism in action sequences, stating that he wanted the scenes in "Kaptaan" to look as raw and authentic as possible. This commitment often requires actors to push their physical limits, which can sometimes come with risks.

"Kaptaan" is set in the fictional backdrop of Jwalabad, a region depicted as being under the grip of powerful criminal cartels. The narrative delves into a dark and gritty world where control and influence define power structures rather than outright chaos.

The series explores themes of crime, authority, and survival, offering viewers a layered and intense viewing experience. Its sto-

rytelling is driven by a blend of high-stakes action and emotional depth, making it engaging for a wide audience.

In addition to Saqib Saleem, the show features a strong ensemble cast, including Siddharth Nigam, Kavita Kaushik, and Varun Badola, all of whom play pivotal roles in shaping the narrative.

The cast also includes Anjum Shharma, Aarif Zakaria, Pooja Gor, Vikram Kochhar, and Anushka Kaushik, each contributing to the layered storytelling with their performances.

The collaborative effort of the cast and crew has been instrumental in bringing the intense world of "Kaptaan" to life. The show's production values, combined with its action choreography, have been widely appreciated.

Saqib Saleem's dedication to performing his own stunts, despite the risks involved, has further enhanced the realism of the series.

Kangana Ranaut's 'Queen' likely to be monickered 'Queen Forever'

Mumbai: The much-anticipated sequel to the critically acclaimed film "Queen" is steadily gaining momentum, with fresh developments sparking excitement among fans and industry insiders alike. Headlined once again by Kangana Ranaut, the sequel is reportedly being considered under the working title "Queen Forever," signaling a continuation of the beloved character's journey with a new perspective. According to industry sources, the makers explored multiple title options before "Queen Forever" emerged as the frontrunner. The title is said to encapsulate the enduring spirit of the protagonist, Rani, whose story of self-discovery and independence resonated deeply with audiences in the original film. Kangana Ranaut is expected to reprise her iconic role as Rani, a character that became a cultural phenomenon following the release of the first film in 2014. Her portrayal of a sheltered young woman who embarks on a solo honeymoon trip and discovers her own identity earned widespread acclaim and remains one of her most celebrated performances. Unlike the original narrative, which primarily unfolded across European cities, the sequel is expected to shift its focus closer to home. Reports suggest that "Queen Forever" will chronicle Rani's journey across various cities in India, offering a fresh narrative that blends travel with personal growth and introspection. This change in setting is likely to bring a new flavor to the

story, highlighting the diversity and vibrancy of India while continuing to explore themes of independence, self-confidence, and emotional evolution. The narrative is expected to delve deeper into Rani's character, presenting her at a different stage of life. The project will be produced by Amit Chandra under his banner Trigger Happy Entertainment. His production house, Trigger Happy Studios, has previously backed notable projects, including "120 Bahadur," which starred Farhan Akhtar and was co-produced with Excel Entertainment. The original "Queen" featured a talented ensemble cast, including Rajkumar Rao, Lisa Haydon, and Nayani Dixit, all of whom contributed to the film's charm and authenticity. Their performances, combined with a relatable storyline, helped the film connect with a wide audience. Commercially, "Queen" turned out to be a major success, earning over ₹61 crore at the box office—a remarkable feat for a female-led film at the time. Interestingly, the film demonstrated strong word-of-mouth appeal, with its second-week collections surpassing those of its opening week. Critically, the film achieved significant recognition, most notably at the 62nd National Film Awards, where it won the awards for Best Hindi Film and Best Actress. Kangana Ranaut's performance, in particular, was widely praised for its depth, authenticity, and emotional resonance. The sequel will once

again be directed by Vikas Bahl, who helmed the original film. His return to the director's chair is expected to ensure continuity in tone and storytelling, while also bringing a fresh vision to the new chapter. Interestingly, the makers have consciously decided against naming the film "Queen 2," opting instead for a more distinctive and evocative title. "Queen Forever" is believed to better reflect the evolution of the story and the timeless nature of Rani's journey. The decision to revisit such a beloved film comes with its own set of expectations and challenges. Sequels often face the pressure of living up to the legacy of their predecessors, especially when the original holds a special place in the hearts of audiences. However, with Kangana Ranaut returning to one of her

most iconic roles and Vikas Bahl at the helm, the project carries strong creative backing. The combination of nostalgia and a fresh narrative direction could work in its favor. Moreover, the shift to an India-centric journey opens up numerous storytelling possibilities, allowing the filmmakers to explore new cultural landscapes and emotional arcs. This could make "Queen Forever" both relatable and visually engaging. As of now, further details regarding the film's supporting cast, shooting schedule, and release timeline remain under wraps. Nevertheless, the buzz surrounding the sequel continues to grow, reflecting the lasting impact of the original film.



KKR seek turnaround as Punjab Kings ride winning momentum

Kolkata: Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) will take on Punjab Kings in Match 12 of the Indian Premier League 2026 at Eden Gardens, here, with both teams entering the contest in contrasting form and confidence levels.

Kolkata Knight Riders have endured a difficult start to the season, suffering back-to-back defeats and slipping down the points table. Their batting unit has shown flashes of potential but has lacked consistency, with captain Ajinkya Rahane expected to provide stability at the top.

Young batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi has been one of the positives so far, while Finn Allen offers explosive intent in the powerplay. The middle order, featuring Cameron Green, Rinku Singh, and Ramandeep Singh, will need to convert starts into impactful contributions to challenge a strong opposition.

KKR's bowling attack has struggled for control, with Varun Chakaravathy yet to find rhythm in the middle overs.

Pace options such as Vaibhav Arora, Kartik Tyagi, and Blessing Muzaraba-



ni will be key in providing early breakthroughs, while all-round options like Sunil Narine and Anukul Roy add balance. Depth in the squad is further supported by experienced campaigners such as Manish Pandey.

In contrast, Punjab Kings have started the season strongly with consecutive wins and appear well settled across departments.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer has been in good touch and holds an impressive record against KKR, making him a central figure in their batting lineup. Openers Prabh-

simran Singh and Cooper Connolly have given solid starts, while the middle order, including Nehal Wadhwa, Shashank Singh, and all-rounder Marcus Stoinis, provides depth and firepower.

Punjab's bowling unit has also been effective, led by Yuzvendra Chahal, whose wicket-taking ability in the middle overs will be crucial. The pace attack, featuring Arshdeep Singh, Xavier Bartlett, Vijaykumar Vyshak, and all-round option Marco Jansen, adds both variety and control.

Impact players such as Priyansh Arya further strengthen their bench.

The Eden Gardens surface is expected to be batting-friendly, with high scores likely given recent trends at the venue. Conditions under lights may assist chasing sides due to dew, making the toss an important factor, with teams likely preferring to bowl first.

Overall, the contest presents a clear contrast: Kolkata Knight Riders searching for stability and a first win of the season,

while Punjab Kings aim to extend their winning streak and consolidate their position at the top of the table.

Teams
Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane, Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Rinku Singh, Finn Allen, Rahul Tripathi, Sarthak Ranjan, Ramandeep Singh, Anukul Roy, Cameron Green, Rachin Ravindra, Sunil Narine, Daksh Kamra, Tim Seifert, Tejasvi Dahiya, Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Varun Chakaravathy, Prashant Solanki, Kartik Tyagi, Matheesha Pathirana, Blessing Muzarabani, Saurabh Dubey, Navdeep Saini

Punjab Kings: Shreyas Iyer, Priyansh Arya, Pyla Avinash, Harnoor Singh, Nehal Wadhwa, Mitchell Owen, Musheer Khan, Shashank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Suryansh Shedge, Cooper Connolly, Azmatullah Omarzai, Marco Jansen, Praveen Dube, Prabhsimran Singh, Vishnu Vinod, Arshdeep Singh, Xavier Bartlett, Yuzvendra Chahal, Lockie Ferguson, Harpreet Brar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Yash Thakur, Ben Dwarshuis, Vishal Nishad.

Late goals rescue Bayern Munich in Freiburg comeback

Berlin: Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich recovered from a two-goal deficit to defeat Freiburg 3-2 away, with Lennart Karl scoring deep into stoppage time to seal a dramatic turnaround.

Bayern travelled without Harry Kane, absent due to an ankle issue, yet still controlled possession early on Saturday.

Tom Bischof tried his luck from distance, but Freiburg gradually imposed themselves and threatened through Philipp Treu, who fired narrowly wide.

Manuel Neuer was called into action with sharp saves against Lucas Holer and Philipp Lienhart, though both chances were later ruled offside. According to Xinhua.

Freiburg maintained its aggressive pressing and found greater reward immediately after the break. Johan Manzambi drove inside and struck from around 25 meters to open the scoring in the 46th minute.

The hosts pressed for more, and Holer missed two clear opportunities before making it 2-0 in the 71st minute, finishing after Neuer failed to clear Beste's corner.

Bayern responded with changes, introducing Michael Olise, Konrad Laimer and Aleksandar Pavlovic,



but clear chances remained scarce. Olise soon squandered a close-range opportunity,

and the visitors struggled to break through a compact Freiburg side. The momentum shifted late when Bischof struck from distance in the 81st minute to reduce the deficit. As pressure mounted, Olise set him up again in stoppage time, and Bischof curled home his second to level the match.

Freiburg appeared to have lost control, and Bayern pushed forward relentlessly. Alphonso Davies delivered a decisive cross in the ninth minute of added time, allowing Karl to tap in from close range and complete the comeback. The result ensured Bayern extended their dominance over Freiburg, who have now gone 46 Bundesliga matches without a victory against the record champions.

Bayern consolidated their position at the summit with 73 points from 28 matches, holding a 9-point advantage over second-placed Dortmund, while Freiburg remain eighth on 37 points, continuing to trail the European qualification places.

"It is difficult to fault my team. Of course it does not feel good to let a lead slip, but the key is to keep going after conceding the equaliser, and we did not manage that," said Freiburg coach Julian Schuster. Elsewhere, second-placed Borussia Dortmund saw off Stuttgart 2-0 with two late goals. Bayer Leverkusen came from behind to beat Wolfsburg 6-3, RB Leipzig won 2-1 against Werder Bremen, Mainz defeated Hoffenheim 2-1, Heidenheim drew 2-2 with Borussia Monchengladbach, and Hamburger SV shared a 1-1 stalemate with Augsburg.

Barcelona takes big step towards title with Atletico win, Real Madrid loses in Mallorca

Madrid: FC Barcelona took a massive step towards winning this season's La Liga title with a 2-1 win away to Atletico Madrid, while Real Madrid lost to Mallorca with the same score.

The result gives Barcelona a seven-point lead at the top of La Liga with eight matches left. Robert Lewandowski scored the decisive goal in the 87th minute after a brilliant action from Joao Cancelo, who turned the defense inside out before hitting a shot from close range that Atletico goalkeeper Juan Musso could only parry, while it rebounded in off Lewandowski's shoulder on Saturday. An entertaining first half sprang to life in the 39th minute when Giuliano Simeone put Atletico ahead with an assured finish after running onto a long ball from former FC Barcelona defender Clement Lenglet to beat goalkeeper Joan Garcia, according to BBC sport. Atletico's lead lasted just three minutes before Marcus Rashford made it 1-1 with a low shot after exchanging passes with Dani Olmo. Atletico was reduced to 10 men in first half injury time as Nico Gonzalez was sent off after bringing down Lamine



Yamal on the edge of the Atletico penalty area. Barcelona controlled the ball in the second half, with Musso making two fine saves to deny Ferran Torres. Earlier in the day, Real Madrid was stunned by a 2-1 defeat away to Mallorca, who climbs out of the bottom three with the three points. Real Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa brought Kylian Mbappe into the starting 11, while Vinicius Jr began the game on the substitutes' bench after picking up a slight knock while on international duty. Both of Mallorca's goals came after poor defending from Real Madrid, with Manu Morlanes given plenty of space to control and fire home the opening goal in the 41st minute.

Real Madrid put Mallorca under intense pressure in the second half and looked to

have saved at least a point when Eder Militao, returning after five months out with a knee injury, powered in a stunning header. Mallorca hit back almost immediately, and Real Madrid's defense was missing again as a ball came in from the left and Vedat Muriqi was able to pick his spot in the 91st minute. Real Sociedad enjoyed a 2-0 win at home to relegation-threatened Levante with Jon Martin's first-half header and a tap-up from substitute Brais Mendez with around 10 minutes left to play. Real Sociedad suffered a setback in the second half when newly capped Spain international Ander Barrenetxea had to leave the pitch due to injury. Real Betis' poor recent form continues with a goalless home draw against Espanyol, who has still not won a game in 2026.

Kochhar finishes fifth at International Series Japan; Smyth emerges winner

Chiba (Japan): India's Karandeep Kochhar hit a late hattrick of birdies in the thrilling fourth round to finish fifth in the US\$ 2 million International Series Japan, while Travis Smyth of Australia clinched the title with an eagle on the last hole at the Caledonian Golf Club on Sunday.

Kochhar remained bogey-free on the final day after a tumultuous third round and hit birdies on the 4th, 16th, 17th and 18th holes to finish the tournament with 12-under 272, three shots behind winner Smyth.

Meanwhile, Smyth's dream run continued when he made an eagle putt on the par-five 18th to sensationally win the tournament by one. In a riveting finish, he drained a 20-footer to narrowly avoid a play-off with Thailand's Pavit Tangkamolprasert and Ryoosuke Kinoshita from Japan - at Caledonian Golf Club, near Tokyo.

The Australian's brilliant final putt saw him shoot a seven-under-par 64 to move to 15-under, with Pavit and Kinoshita both in the clubhouse on 14-under. Pavit and Kinoshita had earlier turned the tournament on its head by shooting scintillating rounds of 62 and 63, respectively, to come through from much further back. The former was in the 10th from last group and Kinoshita the sixth.

Korea's Hongtaek Kim and Shugo Imahira from Japan had started the day sharing the lead but were unable to keep up with the fast pace being set. Kim shot a 69 to tie for fifth while Imahira returned a 70 for equal seventh.

This week's US\$2million event is the opening event of the season on The International Series, and it is Smyth's first success on the Series - the upper level of events on the Asian Tour that provide a pathway to the LIV Golf League, via The International Series Rankings.



It's also his second victory on the Asian Tour, having won the Yeangder TPC in 2022, and comes during a remarkable run of form. He claimed the ISPS Handa Japan-Australasia Championship last month which put him on course to win the Challenger PGA Tour of Australasia Order of Merit for the 2025/26 season.

The 31-year-old also finished third and fifth in the first two events of the season on the Asian Tour and now leads the Order of Merit, as well as The International Series Rankings.

"That's what dreams are made of right there," said the Australian about his closing putt. "As a young kid, you know, you're on the putting green hav-

ing putting comps with your mates, you're trying to chip in to win, you're trying to hole 25 footers to win. And that was unbelievable. You know, I won a tournament two weeks ago, probably a pretty similar putt downhill, left to right - just drew upon that. But yeah, for it to go in like that, it's the best feeling ever."

Having started the day two behind the leaders, he gradually worked his way through the field on the front nine with birdies on one, two and six. With the course playing nearly three shots easier today and players making a deluge of birdies on the back nine he still had a lot of work to do. Birdies on 13 and 16 saw him move one behind Pavit and Kinoshita before he gained two shots on the last to finish the job in regulation play.

Austen Truslow finished in fourth on his own, two behind the champion. He closed with a 65, helped by an unlikely and adventurous eagle on the par-four 16th. Remarkably, his first tee shot hit some overhanging cables, which allowed him to replay the shot. He promptly found the putting green in one and made his eagle putt from about 30 feet. The American faced a similar length for eagle on 18, but was unable to convert that attempt to catch Pavit and Kinoshita.

The Asian Tour heads to the Singapore Open presented by The Business Times next. The US\$2 million event will be played on The Serapong at Sentosa Golf Club from April 23-26 and is also part of The International Series.

Jharkhand Judo Association elects new office-bearers

Ranchi: The election of the Jharkhand Judo Association was held at the Press Club here on Sunday, with K N Tripathi elected president, Parikshit Tiwari general secretary and Anshuman Ray treasurer.

Observers deputed by the Judo Federation of India, Ram Uday Singh and Surya Dev Tyagi from Bihar, were present during the election process. Rajendra Prasad attended as observer on behalf of the Jharkhand Olympic Association.

Office-bearers from 20 district units of the state participated in the election, following which the new executive body of the association was formed unanimously.

According to the results announced after the election, Pappu Kumar, Nand Gopal Tripathi, Shashi Pandey, Vinendra Kumar Verma and Prince Kumar Mishra were elected vice-presidents.

Rajiv Kumar Singh, Chandan Sahni, Anish Ray, Abhishek Kumar Singh and Sudip Chakraborty were elected joint secretaries.

The newly elected executive members include Aarti Kumari, Ujjwal Kumar Singh, Vinayak Vaibhav and Anish Kumar Ray.

Weatherald sparkles in first knock of maiden county campaign

London: Australian opener Jake Weatherald has made an impressive start to his county cricket career, top-scoring for Leicestershire County Cricket Club in their season opener against Sussex County Cricket Club.

Weatherald, who recently earned his maiden contract with Cricket Australia after featuring in all five Ashes Tests over the summer, announced his arrival in style by striking a boundary off his very first ball.

The left-handed opener went on to score a fluent 83 off 107 deliveries, showcasing his attacking intent and solid technique at the top of the order.

His innings was laced with 13 boundaries, making him the standout performer for Leicestershire in an otherwise underwhelming batting display.

Despite Weatherald's efforts, the lack of support from the rest of the batting lineup proved costly, as no other player managed to cross the 50-run mark.

Earlier, Sussex had posted a strong first-innings total of 361, putting pressure on Leicestershire from the out-

set. Weatherald eventually became the seventh batter to be dismissed, chopping the ball onto his stumps off a delivery from Ollie Robinson.

Robinson, the former England seamer, was the pick of the bowlers, finishing with impressive figures of 5 for 42.

With a lead of 116 runs, Sussex resumed their innings aggressively, looking to extend their advantage further.

Former New South Wales opener Daniel Hughes played a key role, scoring a fluent 72 to build on Sussex's strong position.

Hughes, 37, had a challenging previous season, having been left out of the

NSW contract list, although he did feature in the Big Bash League for the Sydney Sixers.

Meanwhile, at the Rose Bowl in Southampton, Jake Lehmann made a steady start for Hampshire County



Cricket Club.

Lehmann, who qualifies as a local player due to his mother's British passport, remained unbeaten on 30 as Hampshire struggled at 3 for 48 in response to Essex County Cricket Club's declared total of 461 for 7.

At Edgbaston, Sean Abbott played a crucial role in rescuing Surrey County Cricket Club after a poor start against Warwickshire County Cricket Club.

Surrey had been reeling

at 6 for 65 before a remarkable recovery, led by Ben Foakes (128), Tom Lawes (83), and Abbott's contribution of 40.

Their combined efforts helped Surrey post a competitive total of 328 after a disastrous beginning.

However, Warwickshire responded strongly, led by Beau Webster, and reached 330 for 2 by stumps, taking firm control of the match.

Abbott managed to pick up one wicket, finishing with figures of 1 for 37, but his side faced an uphill battle.

In another match, Nathan McSweeney endured a tough initiation for Northamptonshire County Cricket Club.

He survived a testing spell from legendary seamer James Anderson, who returned outstanding figures of 5 for 64, before being dismissed for 32.

Teammate Harry Conway contributed with the ball, taking 2 for 94 in Lancashire's first innings.

Conway also showed resilience with the bat, facing 26 deliveries to support Lewis McManus, who remained unbeaten on 54.

Former Chelsea & Brazil midfielder Oscar retires with heart condition

Rio De Janeiro: Former Chelsea and Brazil midfielder Oscar has retired from football after a professional career spanning almost 18 years.

The 34-year-old said his contract with Sao Paulo, due to expire in December 2027, had been terminated by mutual consent after he was diagnosed with a heart condition.

"I wanted to do more for Sao Paulo, I wanted to play more," Oscar said in a statement on Saturday.

"I think I still had both the football and the age to keep playing, but unfortunately, this happened. Now I will retire and continue supporting Sao Paulo, continue my life as a fan." Oscar collapsed during a fitness test at the club's Barra Funda training center last November and was taken to the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo, where he spent five days under observation, including time in an intensive

care unit, according to Xinhua. He was later diagnosed with vasovagal syncope, a temporary loss of consciousness caused by a drop in blood pressure and heart rate. "I am ending a career that took me to several places and practically crossed the world. I want to thank everyone for the affection, all the Sao Paulo fans who supported me since my return and during this difficult moment I am going through," he added.

Stokes was expected to feature for Durham in the County Championship but is currently recuperating from a broken cheekbone, which he sustained while assisting in the nets back in February. The England all-rounder is expected to be back in action by May, according to ICC. "The first six or seven weeks of Championship cricket, I think it's go-

ing to be a very big one and people should use that as an opportunity to push their case as far forward as they possibly can and hope they're giving themselves the best chance of coming up for selection when we get together to do that," Stokes said. The 34-year-old had last featured for England in January, when the visitors were trounced 4-1 by Australia in the Ashes Down Under. England currently sit seventh in the ICC World Test Championship Standings with six defeats from 10 outings in the ongoing cycle.

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Stokes marks 'great opportunity' for England's Test hopefuls

London: As England prepare for a much-anticipated home summer, Test captain Ben Stokes has outlined the ongoing domestic red-ball season as the pathway for an England call-up.

"I think it's a great opportunity for a lot of people around the country," Stokes said on the County Championship season.

"Obviously, we had the Lions in Australia at the same time as we were, so you look at some of the players that are coming through that system at the moment.

"The talent that we have in England is just unquestionable. The pool of players, the talent that we have, it's probably as good as it's been in a very long time," he added.

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Moody's cut down India's economic growth for current fiscal to 6pc amid Iran War

New Delhi : Amid the ongoing Middle East War leading to the blockage of Strait of Hormuz and affecting the global economy at large, Moody's Ratings has slashed India's economic growth estimates for the current fiscal to 6 per cent from 6.8 per cent earlier.

It said the ongoing conflict in West Asia will moderate growth momentum and raise inflation risks.

Moody's said prolonged disruptions, particularly LPG shipments due to the conflict, would lead to near-term household shortages, higher fuel and transport costs, and spillovers to food inflation through India's reliance on imported fertilisers. The region accounts for around 55 per cent of crude oil imports and over 90 per cent of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supplies to India.

"While inflation remains contained for now, geopolitical risks have tilted



the inflation outlook to the upside," Moody's said while projecting inflation to average 4.8 per cent in FY27, up from 2.4 per cent in FY26.

With inflation risks re-emerging and growth remaining robust, policy rates are likely to be held steady or raised gradually in fiscal

2026-27, depending on the duration of geopolitical tensions and their pass-through to food and fuel prices, Moody's said.

The report further said that "in light of India's economic exposure to the ongoing military conflict in the Middle East, we expect real GDP growth to moder-

ate to 6 per cent in fiscal 2026-27 from 6.8 per cent earlier, driven by subdued private consumption, softer industrial activity and a weakening in the momentum of gross fixed capital formation amid elevated prices and higher input costs." Earlier, EY has also said that India's real GDP

growth for FY27 could erode by around 1 percentage point, while retail inflation could rise by about 1.5 percentage points from their baseline estimates if the West Asia conflict persists through 2026-27.

On the other hand, ICRA expected the growth to moderate to 6.5 per cent in FY27, owing to the adverse impact of elevated energy prices and concerns around energy availability amid the West Asia conflict. Amid the ongoing crisis, the central government has said it will come up with a new credit guarantee scheme which will be on similar lines as it did during the Covid pandemic times.

The proposed scheme aims to ease funding access for companies facing higher input and logistics costs. The scheme is likely to provide guarantees up to Rs 2-2.5 lakh crore, and will be unveiled in two weeks.

SAIL supplied special-grade steel plates for the construction of INS Taragiri

New Delhi : The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has played a pivotal role in strengthening India's defence manufacturing capabilities by contributing significantly to the commissioning of INS Taragiri, according to an official statement released on Sunday.

INS Taragiri, inducted into the Indian Navy on April 3, is the fourth warship under the advanced Nilgiri-class (Project 17A) stealth frigates programme, marking another milestone in India's indigenous naval expansion.

The warship has been constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), one of India's premier shipbuilding companies, which has been at the forefront of delivering modern naval platforms for the country. A key highlight of the project is the use of approximately 4,000 tonnes of special-grade steel plates supplied entirely by SAIL, demonstrating India's growing self-sufficiency in criti-



cal defence materials. These specialised steel plates are essential for naval warships, as they offer enhanced strength, durability, and resistance to extreme maritime conditions, including corrosion and high stress. The Ministry of Steel, in its statement, emphasised that the steel used in INS Taragiri meets stringent quality standards required for modern stealth warships, reflecting India's technological progress in metallurgy. The steel for this ambitious project was produced across SAIL's integrated plants located in

Bokaro, Bhilai, and Rourkela, showcasing coordinated industrial capability across multiple regions. These plants have long been recognised for their advanced steelmaking processes and their ability to produce high-grade materials required for strategic sectors like defence, infrastructure, and energy. SAIL's contribution to naval shipbuilding is not new, as the company had earlier supplied special steel for the indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, a landmark achievement in India's maritime history.

DP World Cochin handles record 8,000 TEUs from single vessel operation

Kochi : DP World Cochin has set a new operational benchmark by handling more than 8,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) from a single vessel, marking the highest volume ever achieved at the terminal.

The record was set with the arrival of MSC Ilaria, a 366-metre-long ultra large container vessel (ULCV), surpassing the previous high of over 6,000 TEUs handled from MSC Aurora.

The milestone highlights the terminal's growing capability to efficiently manage next-generation container ships and rising trade volumes. MSC Ilaria, one of the largest vessels to call at the port, has a carrying capacity of 16,616 TEUs, an overall length of 366 metres, a beam of 51 metres, deadweight tonnage of 171,079 tonnes, and a maximum draft of 17 metres.

Officials said the achievement reflects the increasing scale of global maritime trade and the corre-

sponding need for advanced port infrastructure.

DP World Cochin has undertaken significant upgrades in recent years, including the deployment of new ship-to-shore cranes,



electrified rubber-tyred gantry cranes (e-RTGs), and expansion of yard space, raising the terminal's total capacity to approximately 1.4 million TEUs.

The terminal has also strengthened its power infrastructure from 3 MVA to 5

MVA to ensure uninterrupted operations during peak demand. Additionally, the complete electrification of yard cranes and the integration of an in-house solar power plant have helped re-

duce the carbon footprint of cargo handling operations. Dipin Kayyath, Chief Executive Officer of Ports & Terminals at DP World Cochin, described the development as a significant milestone.

He said handling a vessel of this scale for the first time reinforces the terminal's position as a premier gateway for South India and reflects its commitment to efficient global trade facilitation through enhanced infrastructure and faster turnaround times.

Strategically located with minimal deviation from major international shipping routes, the terminal offers logistical advantages for EXIM trade, particularly for cargo originating from Kerala and southwest Tamil Nadu. It also ensures strong coastal connectivity across India, linking ports from Gujarat to Kolkata.

DP World has further strengthened its presence in the region by establishing Kerala's first Free Trade Warehousing Zone (FTWZ) within Cochin Port—the only such facility in India co-located within a major port—aimed at boosting trade efficiency and supporting regional economic growth.

Market valuation of six of top-10 firms declines by over Rs 64,000 Cr.

New Delhi : The combined market valuation of six of India's top-10 most valued companies declined by Rs 64,734.46 crore last week, reflecting a broader weakness in the equity markets.

Among the biggest laggards was Bharti Airtel, which saw the sharpest erosion in its market capitalisation, dropping by Rs 29,993.07 crore to Rs 10,20,420.26 crore.

The overall market sentiment remained subdued during the holiday-shortened week, with benchmark indices witnessing modest declines amid volatility.

The BSE Sensex fell by 263.67 points, or 0.35 per cent, while the NSE Nifty 50 slipped 106.5 points, or 0.46 per cent during the same period.

In terms of rankings, Reliance Industries retained its position as the most valued firm in the country, followed by HDFC Bank and Bharti Airtel.

Other companies in the top-10 list included State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, and Hindustan Unilever.

Despite the broader downturn, Reliance Industries managed to buck the

trend, adding Rs 3,518.45 crore to its valuation, taking its total market capitalisation to Rs 18,28,034.07 crore.

On the downside, ICICI Bank witnessed a significant drop of Rs 12,845.81 crore, bringing its valuation down to Rs 8,70,705.49 crore.



Similarly, HDFC Bank's market capitalisation declined by Rs 7,822.79 crore to Rs 11,56,195.90 crore, reflecting pressure on banking stocks.

State Bank of India also experienced a marginal dip, with its valuation falling by Rs 553.84 crore to Rs 9,41,015.31 crore.

Among non-banking financial companies, Bajaj Finance witnessed a notable decline during the week, with its market capitalisation falling by Rs 11,169.36 crore to Rs 5,14,226.12 crore.

Meanwhile, Hindustan Unilever also saw its valuation drop by Rs 2,349.59 crore to Rs 4,85,190.60 crore, reflecting subdued sentiment in the FMCG segment.

In contrast, Larsen & Toubro emerged as a gainer, adding Rs 6,575.43 crore to its market valuation, which rose to Rs 4,97,111.62 crore.

The IT sector stood out as a key outperformer during the week, showing resilience amid broader market weakness.

Tata Consultancy Services led the gains, with its valuation increasing by Rs 22,359.78 crore to reach Rs 8,87,028.43 crore.

Similarly, Infosys recorded strong growth, as its market capitalisation surged by Rs 12,374.76 crore to Rs 5,27,409.43 crore.

On the final trading day of the week, Indian stock markets ended on a positive note despite experiencing high volatility throughout the session.

The rally was largely driven by buying interest in IT stocks, which provided crucial support to the benchmark indices.

The BSE Sensex closed 185.23 points higher, registering a gain of 0.25 per cent to settle at 73,319.55.

Pharmexcil meet charts vision to make India global benchmark in pharma quality

Hyderabad : A Chintan Shivir on the pharmaceutical industry, organised by the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India, on Saturday outlined a strategic vision to position India as a global benchmark for pharmaceutical quality and reliability.

The event, held with the support of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, brought together policymakers, industry leaders and experts to deliberate on strengthening India's pharmaceutical export ecosystem.

Union Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, who chaired the inaugural session, emphasised the need for policy support, regulatory alignment and digital transformation to reinforce India's leadership in global pharmaceutical exports.

He said India's pharma sector is well-positioned to move towards high-value segments such as biologics and biosimilars, while strengthening its reputation for quality and reliability.

Pharmexcil Chairman Namit

Joshi said that despite global challenges such as supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions, India's export sector remains resilient with positive growth trends.

Director General of Pharmexcil Raja Bhanu said pharmaceutical exports reached about USD 28.29 billion during April-February FY26, registering a 5.6 per cent growth year-on-year.

He added that the sector, currently valued at around USD 60 billion, is projected to reach USD 130 billion

by 2030.

The deliberations covered key areas such as the role of artificial intelligence and digital transformation in regulatory processes, utilisation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), and strategies to enhance export competitiveness and market access.

Participants also discussed the importance of strengthening regulatory frameworks, reducing procedural bottlenecks and supporting MSMEs to expand India's footprint in global markets.

NAREDCO NextGen NCR Chapter launched to empower young real estate leaders and drive sustainable urban growth

New Delhi : In a significant move to strengthen the future of India's real estate sector, the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) announced the official launch of its NextGen NCR Chapter, bringing together emerging leaders from across the National Capital Region (NCR) to promote sustainable and responsible urban development.

The launch took place during the NAREDCO Maharashtra NextGen Excelerate 2026 event, which served as a key platform for collaboration between young professionals and industry veterans in the real estate ecosystem. Participants at the event included developers, entrepreneurs, and responsible urban development.

NAREDCO President Parveen Jain emphasised the significance of the NCR region as a major real estate hub, citing its scale, complexity, and consistent demand as key drivers of growth.

He stated that the formation of the NextGen NCR Chapter would ensure structured participation of young leaders, thereby strengthening industry dialogue and encouraging more coordinated and forward-looking development strategies.

Echoing these sentiments, Siddharth Jain, President of NAREDCO NextGen NCR, described the initiative as a timely step towards building leadership for the future of the sector.

He added that the platform would foster collaboration among young professionals, enabling them to exchange ideas and actively contribute to the industry while upholding the values of transparency and policy advocacy established by NAREDCO.

The newly announced leadership team reflects a di-

verse mix of talent, with Siddharth Jain as President, Nikhil Aggarwal as President Elect, Aashi Dua as Vice President (Policy), Mughda as Vice President (Membership), Shivani Aggarwal as Vice President (Events), Muskan as Secretary, and Nakul Bajaj as Treasurer.

Looking ahead, the chapter plans to organise leadership summits, panel discussions, study tours, and roundtable interactions with government bodies and regulatory authorities.

These initiatives align with NAREDCO's broader vision of fostering innovation, ethical practices, and sustainable growth within the real estate sector.

Launched nationally in December 2021, NAREDCO NextGen serves as the youth wing of NAREDCO, focusing on empowering young professionals and encouraging leadership development across the country.

With its expansion into the NCR region, the initiative aims to create new opportunities for networking, learning, and collaboration among emerging industry leaders. As one of India's largest economic and real estate hubs, the NCR continues to play a crucial role in infrastructure development, employment generation, and capital investment. The formation of the NextGen NCR Chapter is expected to further strengthen the region's growth trajectory by enabling the next generation of real estate professionals to drive transparency, innovation, and sustainable urban development.

Venu Srinivasan quits key Tata Trust post after Mehli Mistry challenges his eligibility

Mumbai : Venu Srinivasan, Chairman Emeritus of TVS Motor and "Vice Chairman" of seven Tata Group trusts, resigned from the Bai Hirabai Charitable Trust on Saturday morning, citing his preoccupation with "other business commitments", adding a fresh dimension to the ongoing internal tensions within the Tata Trusts structure.

The Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution (BHJTNCI) is one of the several trusts which collectively hold a major stake in Tata Sons, which is the holding company of the Tata Group.

The Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution was established in 1923 as a philanthropic institution focused on Parsi Zoroastrian community welfare in Navsari, Gujarat, with a mandate spanning education and healthcare. It forms part of the allied Tata Trusts and

shares a common Board of Trustees with the Sir Ratan Tata Trust. Srinivasan resigned after former trustee Mehli Mistry filed an objection application with the Maharashtra State Charity Commissioner, contending that neither Srinivasan nor Singh ever met the qualifications to be trustees and were therefore expressly disqualified as per Trust Deed rules.

Srinivasan was appointed as a "Vice-Chairman" and trustee for several key Tata Trusts, including the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT).

Mehli Mistry, former trustee of three-key trusts of the Tata Group including the Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution (BHJTNCI), formally challenged the appointment of Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh in the BHJTNCI on Friday, April 3, 2026.

Mistry's objection application invoked Clauses 6 and 18 of the Trust Deed, under which any disqualified trustee must be treated as "deemed dead".

Mistry's objection application stated that both Venu Srinivasan and another trustee Vijay Singh have never been of the Parsi Zoroastrian faith and hence do not hold permanent residence in Mumbai. As per trust norms, these are the two conditions which Mehli Mehta cited as mandatory for trusteeship. Based on these conditions, Mehta sought a suo motu inquiry by the Maharashtra State Charity Commissioner, urging it to direct all trustees to file affidavits confirming their eligibility.

Mistry has alleged that the appointment of these ineligible individuals (namely Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh) constitutes fraud and criminal breach of trust, which amounts to misman-

agement under the Indian Penal Code (BNS) 2024 and the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act, 1950. He contends that any action taken by them as trustees is legally void. Mistry clarified in his application that the purpose of his complaint is not to seek his reinstatement or reinstatement in the trust.

According to Mistry, his sole objective is to expose the alleged illegal practices of the trust and to preserve the values of Ratan Tata and the founders for the welfare of the Parsi community.

Mehli Mistry had raised governance objections within the Tata Trusts ecosystem earlier as well. In October 2024, the Tata Trusts board had passed a resolution to re-appoint Mehli Mistry as a life trustee, but the appointment was not approved due to opposition from three trustees. However, instead of escalating the controversy, Mehli Mistry took an honor-