

# Aryan Age

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## Man gatecrashes his SUV into Delhi Assembly high-security zone, Arrested, Probe on



**New Delhi :** Sarjeeet Singh (40), a resident of Pilibhit in UP has gate-crashed into the high-security zone of the Delhi Assembly, on Monday afternoon, creating panic and raising questions on the security arrangements in the administrative nerve-centre of

the national capital. Singh drove his vehicle straight, crashing the tall iron gate and the boom barriers and drove himself back in the same vehicle after placing a bouquet near the Speaker's official vehicle.

Singh, who believed to have come to the capital to meet a cousin, is reported to be mentally unstable and under treatment.

Later, a total of four persons, including the driver, were detained from North Delhi by the Delhi Police, and the car was also recovered by security officials.

The situation inside and outside the Delhi Assembly was chaotic when Singh, wearing a mask, entered the premises driving his Tata Sierra SUV, breaking the main gate.

The incident took place around 2 PM on Monday, following which a high alert was issued in the entire capital.

Sources said that the SUV was registered in Pilibhit district (Uttar Pradesh) in the name of 40-year-old Sarjeeet Singh. The police is also in touch with the Puranpur police in Pilibhit, from



where the car belonged.

According to the information received, Sarjeeet Singh himself was driving the car. He had travelled from Pilibhit to Delhi to meet one of his cousins.

A senior police official, wishing anonymity, said that the car entered the high-security premises through Gate No. 2, which is meant only for VVIP entry.

He exited his vehicle, placed a bouquet on the porch near Speaker Vijender Gupta's car,

and then drove off the premises. He rammed both the tall iron gate and the boom barrier while entering and exiting.

Bomb disposal squads and Crime Branch teams were immediately deployed. The teams found no suspicious items.

Anil Shukla, Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell), and Ravindra Yadav, Special CP (Law and Order), also rushed to the spot. Later, Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golchha reached the Assembly

- Timeline of Incident – Delhi Vidhan Sabha**
- At 1:32 PM, the Assembly Speaker went towards the Education Department office.
  - After staying there for about 20 minutes, the Speaker returned to the Assembly premises along with other officials.
  - At 2:06 PM, the Speaker entered his office.
  - Around 2:10 PM, the accused entered the premises with a vehicle.
  - The accused was carrying a bouquet, a garland, and a bag.
  - After entering, he placed the bouquet near the Speaker's car.
  - The accused then drove away with the vehicle and fled the spot.
  - According to Assembly sources, the accused had conducted prior reconnaissance of the area before carrying out the act.

and met Vijender Gupta. Sources privy to the investigation said that the vehicle was registered in the name of Sarjeeet Singh.

Senior police officials also recorded statements of the police personnel and security staff who were on duty at the Assembly.

The SUV also hit a rickshaw-puller on the way, who is also being questioned.

A source said that Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta was present in his office

when the incident took place.

"Just prior to this incident, around 1:30 PM, Gupta visited the Education Department office within the Assembly premises. He then went to his office, and some time later, this incident took place," said a source.

An FIR in this regard has been lodged. Delhi Police said they are looking into the matter. Additional security personnel were deployed outside the Delhi Assembly following the incident.

### If the Assembly Isn't Secure, How Can Common People Feel Safe? - Sanjeev Jha on Security Breach



AAP MLA Sanjeev Jha raised serious concerns about an apparent security lapse in the Delhi Assembly on Monday. A car allegedly broke through the main gate and entered the high-security premises of the Delhi Legislative Assembly. Reacting to the incident, Jha questioned how a vehicle could breach multiple layers of security at such a sensitive location, while elected opposition legislators are often stopped at entry gates. He further pointed out a series of recent security concerns in the national capital, including repeated bomb threats and past attacks involving Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, stating that the latest breach adds to growing worries about public safety. He also highlighted that the Delhi Police functions under the union Ministry of Home Affairs, questioning who would take accountability for the incident. "If the Assembly itself is not secure, how can ordinary citizens feel safe?" he asked.

## ED to probe self-styled godman Kharat's assets, Fadnavis promises inquiry into call record leak

**Mumbai :** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has announced that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) will probe the assets of Ashok Kharat, a self-proclaimed godman facing multiple charges of rape and property fraud. Fadnavis also confirmed a separate investigation into the leak of call detail records (CDR) that allegedly reveal conversations between Kharat and several state politicians.

Speaking to reporters, Fadnavis emphasised that accessing CDRs is strictly prohibited for unauthorised individuals. "Only designated agencies have the right to such data. The state government will investigate how this information was leaked and who is responsible," he stated, adding that strict action would follow. He cautioned that allegations alone are insufficient in sensitive matters and that any

action must be based on concrete evidence.



His remarks come after social activist Anjali Damania claimed there were 17 phone exchanges

between Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the accused godman.

The Chief Minister further noted that all of Kharat's bank accounts and financial transactions have been identified. "I firmly believe that all illegal assets and wrongdoings will be exposed," he said. Fadnavis added that public confidence is growing, with more individuals coming forward to share information about Kharat. To

date, approximately 12 cases have been registered.

Urging the public to trust the Special Investigation Team (SIT) handling the case, Fadnavis assured that the probe would continue until the entire network is uncovered. "Strict punishment will be given in cases of misconduct or atrocities against women. This issue is above politics, and there is a consensus across Maharashtra on this matter," he affirmed.

## Damania unleashes Ashok Kharat's CDR bombshell: Demands SIT probe

**Mumbai :** The CDR (Call Detail Record) controversy involving arrested self-styled godman Ashok Kharat allegedly revealing his purported conversations with several politicians, which social activist Anjali Damania has made public, has sparked a major political storm in Maharashtra.

In a recent press conference, Damania took an aggressive stance, refuting allegations made by opponents, particularly Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare.

Anjali Damania clarified that she did not discriminate and had investigated the contact details of leaders across all political parties, who had allegedly been in contact with Kharat.

She presented a list of high-profile BJP leaders (including Devendra Fadnavis, Girish Mahajan, and the Munde siblings) whose names did not appear in the call records. "We fight on issues, we don't indulge in mindless politics," she stated while slamming her critics.

Damania made several sensational claims regarding call frequencies, between politicians and the jailed godman.

Milind Narvekar (Shiv Sena UBT): eight calls.

Rupali Chakankar & Sunil Patkar (both NCP, Ajit Pawar faction): Numerous calls. (Chakankar has already resigned as chairperson of the State Commission for Women following the surfacing of photos showing her with Kharat).

Shinde Faction: 17 calls from Deputy CM Eknath Shinde and 12 calls from his PA, Prabhakar Kale.

She also mentioned receiving the records from Minister Sanjay Shirsat (Shinde faction).

Her primary question remains, "Why do politicians protect such



"fraudulent" individuals and what is the nature of these frequent conversations?"

The most shocking part of her claim involves messages from the 'Samata' Credit Society linked to the dates surrounding the air crash involving Ajit Pawar.

She noted a surge in messages from the credit society between January 27 and January 31 (noting the date of the "accident" as January 28). She intends to demand a SIT (Special Investigation Team) probe to uncover what exactly transpired in those transactions.

Responding to Shiv Sena-UBT leader Sushma Andhare's criticism that she was being "selective," Damania retorted, "Keep your thoughts to yourself." She questioned why Andhare hadn't demanded an inquiry into Milind Narvekar since his name had also surfaced in the records.

By presenting these records, Anjali Damania has attempted to prove that she is not targeting any single party and that leaders across the political spectrum may be involved with Ashok Kharat.

The case is likely to escalate further if an SIT investigation is initiated.

### Political tremors likely in Maharashtra as Kharat probe deepens: Nana Patole



**Mumbai:** Senior Congress leader Nana Patole on Monday hinted at major political repercussions within the ruling Mahayuti alliance, citing developments in the ongoing Ashok Kharat case. Referring to the parallel investigations by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the state government's Special Investigation Team (SIT), Patole said the probe has raised serious doubts. He also indicated that funds belonging to several political leaders may have been routed abroad, intensifying the gravity of the case. Patole reiterated that these unfolding developments could trigger a "political earthquake" within the Mahayuti government, suggesting that the impact of the investigation may significantly alter the state's political landscape.

### Father Of Accused Arrested In Terror Related Activity Denies Charges

**Mumbai:** Jalaluddin Siddiqui, father of 19-year-old college student Mohammad Hamad Siddiqui, who was arrested here recently in a joint operation by the Delhi Police Special Cell and the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) over an alleged ISIS-linked terror plot, said that his son was not having any criminal record.

Speaking to mediapersons here on Monday, he said: "My son is a student, not a criminal," insisting the teenager was focused on studies and had no terror links. His other relatives said the arrest came as a shock and maintained that the materials cited by police were innocuous household items, urging a fair investigation.

Apart from Hamad Siddiqui, two others have been arrested. Mosaib Ahmad (30), alias Sonu alias Kalam, was apprehended from Khadavli in Thane, while a third accused, suspected handler Bada Imran, was held in Odisha.

investigators, the three were allegedly in touch through encrypted apps (Telegram/Signal) and were part of an online radicalisation network. They recovered electronic devices, incriminating documents and materials—including a toy train, wires and circuits—suspected to have been used to assemble an improvised explosive device on instructions from the Odisha-based handler. The Delhi Special Cell has registered a case of criminal conspiracy and taken custody of the accused for further probe.

The operation was part of a wider, multi-state sweep across Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and other states targeting online propaganda and self-radicalisation networks, officials added.

## Punjab finalises Rs 1,388 cr agri roadmap, prioritises stubble control and diversification

**Chandigarh :** The Punjab government, led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, has finalised a comprehensive annual action plan of ₹1,388 crore for the Agriculture Department for the financial year 2026-27.

Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian announced on Monday that the plan has been submitted to the union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare for formal approval. The roadmap is designed to transform the state's agrarian landscape by focusing on critical areas such as crop residue management, water conservation, diversification, and the promotion of natural farming.

A major portion of the budget, amounting to ₹600 crore, has been allocated to the Crop Residue Management (CRM) scheme. This investment aims to provide a permanent solution to the persistent issue of farm fires by offering subsidised in-situ and ex-situ machinery to farmers.



emphasised that the primary goal is to empower the farming community with the necessary tools to handle stubble responsibly, thereby mitigating environmental concerns associated with crop burning.

To address the state's depleting groundwater levels, the action plan earmarks ₹33.33 crore for the 'Per drop More Crop' initiative, which promotes high-efficiency irrigation systems like drips, sprinklers, and rain guns.

Additionally, ₹50.30 crore has been set aside specifically for crop diversification to encourage a shift from water-intensive paddy to pulses, maize, and oilseeds. The plan also includes ₹95 crore for the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) to

enhance overall farm efficiency and ₹8.25 crore to support the transition toward chemical-free natural farming.

Further allocations include ₹51.85 crore for seed improvement and cotton demonstration projects, ₹20 crore for soil health management, and ₹60.59 crore for agricultural extension activities. Minister Khudian asserted that these integrated interventions are vital for securing Punjab's ecological future while simultaneously raising farm incomes. While reviewing the projects, the Agriculture Minister directed department officials to expedite preparations for the upcoming kharif season to ensure the timely and effective implementation of these strategic initiatives.

## Mumbai Metro Gets Faster and Easier from April 8

**Mumbai :** Mumbai's metro travel is set to become smoother and more convenient from April 8, 2026, as the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority introduces new, easy-to-follow timetables along with the launch of two important metro lines. The opening of Metro Line 9 from Dahisar East to Kashigaon and Metro Line 2B from Mandale to Diamond Garden marks a major step in improving

connectivity across the city, especially in Thane and Harbour Line areas.

With this expansion, the metro network will work in a more organised way. Metro Line 2A and Line 7 will now run as separate routes, while Line 7 will connect with Line 9 to provide a direct journey from Andheri East to Mira-Bhayandar. This change is expected to save time and make travel more comfortable for daily passengers.

### New Lines 9 and 2B Open, Simple Timetables to Improve Daily Travel

The new schedules are designed to make metro travel simple, fast, and reliable. Trains will arrive more frequently, especially during busy hours, reducing waiting time and making trips more predictable. Passengers can expect smoother journeys with better planning and fewer delays.

Metro Line 2A will continue to run between Andheri West and Dahisar East with improved timing and better service reliability. Meanwhile, the extended Line 7, now linked with Line 9, will offer a longer and more connected route from Gundavali to Kashigaon, helping suburban commuters travel with ease. The newly launched Line 2B will connect key areas like

Chembur and nearby regions, opening up fresh travel options in the eastern part of the city.

Interchange at Dahisar station between Line 2A and Line 7 will remain easy, allowing passengers to switch trains without leaving the station area. Overall, the updated system aims to reduce crowding, improve comfort, and make

daily commuting less stressful.

Officials say these changes are a big step towards building a fully connected metro network for Mumbai. With better frequency, clearer schedules, and wider reach, the metro is moving closer to its goal of making travel across the city quicker and more efficient for everyone.



## Serve people with dedication, integrity: J&K CM urges RAS beneficiaries

**Jammu:** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Monday urged the beneficiaries of Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (RAS) to serve the people with dedication and integrity.

Encouraging the appointees, the Chief Minister urged them to serve the people with dedication and integrity and noted that many beneficiaries come from remote areas and understand the challenges faced by common people.

"You now have an opportunity to serve the people of Jammu and Kashmir. There may be temptations to take easier paths, but true satisfaction lies in addressing people's difficulties with sincerity," he said while handing over compassionate appointment letters to 124 beneficiaries of Jammu division appointed under RAS, SRO-43, and SRO-94 here at the Convention Centre.

The Chief Minister also called for expediting the process and seeing what further reforms are needed in the Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (RAS) to address existing gaps and ensure the timely completion of the appointment process.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister acknowledged the hardships faced by the beneficiaries and the delays in the process.



He said that the intent behind revising SRO-43 was to expedite appointments, but certain shortcomings have come to light during its implementation.

"We are aware of the difficulties you have gone through and also that the process took longer than it should have. There is a need to make further changes in the scheme so that appointments are completed swiftly and efficiently," he said.

The Chief Minister added that the government is committed to re-

fining the scheme to ensure that such delays are minimized in the future. "It should not happen that appointments meant to be made in previous years are delivered much later. We will identify the gaps and bring necessary improvements," he assured. In an emotional address to the appointees, the Chief Minister said that while government employment is usually a moment of joy, such appointments under RAS come after an irreplaceable personal loss.

"Getting a government job is often the happiest day in one's life, but in your case, it comes after losing a loved one. The trauma you endure is far greater than any examination. In many ways, it is more difficult than clearing even the toughest competitive exams," he said.

He said he chose to personally hand over the appointment letters to convey the government's empathy and solidarity with the affected families.

"We could have sent these orders to your homes, but I wanted to be here to assure you that the government stands with you in this difficult time," he added. Reaffirming government support, he said, "My colleagues and I are always available. If you face any difficulty, do not hesitate to reach out. We will do our best to assist you." Extending his best wishes, the Chief Minister prayed for their success and urged them to work with commitment towards public service. Speaking on the occasion, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani said that while no compensation can replace the loss of a loved one, such appointments aim to provide emotional support and immediate relief to the affected families.

## BJP's journey built on sacrifice and dedication of its founders: Samrat

**Patna:** Extending greetings on the foundation day of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Monday said the party's journey has been shaped by the penance, sacrifice and dedication of its founders. He congratulated party workers, senior leaders, office bearers and supporters, describing the BJP as the world's largest political organisation. He credited its growth to the unwavering commitment and discipline of its cadre base. Choudhary said the BJP has evolved into a strong medium of national service, guided by a clear vision and value system. According to him, the party's ideology continues to resonate with people across the country.

Highlighting the contributions of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he noted that the former Prime Minister's leadership elevated the party to new heights and expanded its national appeal. He added that under the leadership of Narendra Modi, India is progressing rapidly towards becoming a developed and self-reliant nation, in line with the

vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Choudhary emphasised that the guiding principle of "Nation First" and a culture of service among party workers remain the BJP's greatest strengths. He said these values distinguish the party from others.

He described the BJP as more than just a political organisation, calling it a living ideology inspired by leaders like Deendayal Upadhyaya, Syama Prasad Mukherjee and Vajpayee. Referring to the principle of "Antyodaya to Rashtira Uday," he said the party is committed to ensuring that development reaches the last person in society, reflecting its inclusive approach to governance. "The BJP's journey is not about power, but about values and ideology," Choudhary said, reiterating the party's focus on long-term national development rather than short-term political gains. Marking 47 years since the party's formation, he expressed confidence that the organisation will continue to grow stronger in the coming years. He stressed that the BJP has

never compromised on its ideological foundations.

He also recalled the legacy of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, stating that the BJP continues to uphold the principles that guided the organisation in the 1950s.

Referring to a key moment in political history, Choudhary said the Jana Sangh had merged into the Janata Party in the larger national interest, demonstrating its commitment to prioritising the nation above all.

He highlighted the construction of the Ram Temple as a significant milestone, stating that the BJP fulfilled a long-standing aspiration of millions by building a grand temple for Lord Ram. Choudhary described the party's journey as not only political but also one of ideological and cultural resurgence, reflecting deeper societal transformations. Commenting on global developments, he said that at a time when the world is witnessing conflict-like situations, India's foreign policy has emerged as a model, enhancing the country's global standing.

## BJD warns of statewide protests over delay in filling university posts in Odisha

**Bhubaneswar:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Monday expressed serious concern over large-scale vacancies in Odisha's higher education sector and warned of statewide street protests if the posts are not filled by the end of April.

Addressing the media, Chinmay Sahu, President of the Biju Yuva Janata Dal, and Ipsita Sahu, President of the Biju Chhatra Janata Dal, blamed the state government's inefficiency for the deteriorating condition of the Higher Education Department.

Chinmay Sahu stated that the department has become "virtually paralysed," pointing out that 14 out of 17 universities in the state currently do not have permanent Vice-Chancellors. In addition, around 1,400 teaching posts remain vacant, severely affecting academic and administrative functioning.

He further said that both student and youth wings of the BJD have already staged protests and met the Governor of Odisha, urging immediate action. While the Governor had assured that the recruitment process would be completed soon, Sahu expressed disappointment that even nine months after the advertisement was issued, no progress has been made.

Recalling past practices, Sahu noted that during the tenure of Naveen Patnaik, appointments were handled

by the State Public Service Commission and typically completed six months before the retirement of outgoing Vice-Chancellors. He alleged that this system has been discontinued under the current Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government.

He warned that prolonged vacancies have led to administrative paralysis in universities. Citing the example of Odia University, Sahu said all 21 teaching posts, including that of the Vice-Chancellor, are currently vacant.

Alleging politicisation in appointments, Sahu claimed that the present government is prioritising loyalty over merit. He urged the authorities to maintain university autonomy and ensure transparent and timely recruitment.

Echoing similar concerns, Ipsita Sahu accused the state government of failing to strengthen the education system. She alleged that internal disagreements within the ruling party and a politicised approach have stalled the recruitment process.

She warned that continued neglect of the education sector would not be tolerated and announced that the Biju Yuva Janata Dal and Biju Chhatra Janata Dal would launch a statewide agitation if the Vice-Chancellor posts are not filled by the last week of April.

## SP MLA Mehrotra leads protest over civic issues at Municipal Corporation

**Lucknow:** Samajwadi Party MLA Ravidas Mehrotra from the Lucknow Central Assembly constituency, along with his councilors and party leaders, reached the Municipal Corporation headquarters on Monday, where they staged a sit-in protest.

During the protest, the SP leaders raised slogans against the Municipal Corporation administration and expressed their displeasure over the area's civic problems.

Mehrotra alleged that serious problems related to water, roads, and sanitation have persisted in his constituency for a long time, but the Municipal Corporation is not taking any effective action.

He said that people in many areas are not getting drinking water, while water taxes have been increased. Heaps of garbage are piled up everywhere, increasing the risk of disease.

He sarcastically remarked, "Lucknow was promised a smart city, but smart taxes are being imposed here."

SP councilor Lata Jaiswal, who participated in the protest, alleged that the government was adopting a dis-

criminatory approach and that SP councilors were not being allocated adequate budgets. She stated that their areas faced severe water shortages, clogged drains, and malfunctioning submersible pumps.

Councilor Shabnam Khan also stated that development work in SP councilor wards had stalled completely. She claimed that the receipt of councilor funds was limited to paperwork and that no funds were actually provided.

During the protest, the MLA and councilors presented 11-point demands to the Municipal Corporation. These included covering open drains, repairing dilapidated roads, repairing faulty water tanks and tube wells, installing streetlights, addressing sewerage problems, and improving sanitation. They also demanded the development of crematoriums and graveyards and addressing traffic congestion.

SP leaders warned that if the issues were not resolved soon, the agitation would be intensified. They also said that if their party comes to power in the state in 2027, they would provide better facilities to the public.

## Revant Reddy vows inclusive development, announces major projects for Adilabad

**Adilabad:** Telangana Chief Minister A Revant Reddy on Monday asserted that his government is committed to inclusive development, irrespective of political affiliations, and announced a series of major initiatives for the progress of Adilabad district.

Addressing the "Praja Palana - Pragathi Plan" public meeting at Pipri, he said the Congress government is focused on resolving people's issues and ensuring welfare reaches all sections. He stressed that development would not be limited to constituencies represented by ruling party legislators and reaffirmed that governance is being carried out with a people-centric approach.

Highlighting welfare measures, the Chief Minister said the government has provided free bus travel for

women, free electricity up to 200 units, and sanctioned 4.5 lakh Indiramma houses, with thousands of crores already directly transferred to beneficiaries. He also noted the



distribution of fine-quality rice to over three crore people in the State.

Revant Reddy announced that pending irrigation projects would be completed and the

Pranahita-Chevella project would be relaunched to ensure water for Adilabad. He also revealed plans for establishing an airport, a university, and transforming the

Gnana Saraswathi Temple and assured additional funds if required. He added that the government aims to bring visible change in the lives of the poor and would continue to allocate funds regularly for the district's development.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka said the government is working towards building an egalitarian society and highlighted initiatives such as Young India Integrated Residential Schools and the Rajiv Yuva Vikas scheme to empower youth and women.

He said the government is committed to fulfilling all promises and ensuring welfare schemes directly benefit the people, adding that governance should reflect the aspirations of the public.

Ministers, officials, and public representatives attended the meeting.

## Mamata Banerjee alleges 'understanding' between Election Commission and DMK, Congress

**Kolkata:** In a bizarre allegation, Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, on Monday voiced fresh suspicions about the role of the Election Commission of India, questioning whether it has any "understanding" not only with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) but also with opposition allies like the DMK and the Indian National Congress.

Addressing a rally in Nakeshipara in Nadia district, Banerjee directly named M. K. Stalin, the DMK chief, and expressed doubts about a possible "internal understanding" between the Commission, the Congress, and Stalin.

Her remarks mark a significant escalation, as she has so far consistently accused the BJP and the Election Commission of acting in tandem but had not publicly questioned the opposition allies in such terms.

Banerjee has been opposing the large-scale transfer of IAS and IPS officers from West Bengal to other states since the process began. She questioned the intent behind what she described as the indiscriminate removal of officials from the state.

Referring to the transfers, she alleged that officers from West Bengal had been disproportionately sent to Tamil Nadu, suggesting this indicated a deeper arrangement.

"They have sent everyone to Tamil Nadu. There must be some internal understanding with Congress and Stalin," Baner-

jee said, intensifying her criticism of the Commission.

The Trinamool Congress leader also referred to the removal of Kolkata Police Commissioner Supratim Sarkar, criticising the decision on humanitarian grounds and accusing the authorities of acting without sensitivity.

She alleged that nearly all senior officials from West Bengal had been removed while officers linked to the BJP were being deployed in the state.

Banerjee further claimed that out of 510 officials appointed as observers for the ongoing Assembly elections across multiple states, nearly 500 IAS and IPS officers were from West Bengal alone, while only around 10 were drawn from the other states and union territories combined.

Assembly elections are being held in four states and one union territory, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and West Bengal, and the UT of Puducherry.

She questioned why such extensive reshuffling had taken place only in West Bengal, warning that "outsiders" from states like Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh could influence the electoral process in the state. Notably, Banerjee's remarks come despite her previously cordial political relationship with Stalin, with both leaders often supporting each other on national opposition platforms, including the INDIA bloc.

## Ensuring quick and transparent justice in land matters top priority: Sinha

**Patna:** Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and Revenue and Land Reforms Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha on Monday said that ensuring swift and transparent justice in land-related matters remains the government's top priority.

He emphasised that regular reviews of cases such as mutation (dakhil-kharaj), appeals, revenue recovery and land bank initiatives will significantly strengthen administrative efficiency across the state. Sinha noted that the government is placing special focus on fixing accountability of officials and ensuring the speedy disposal of pending cases. He said this approach is aimed at reducing delays and improving public trust in the system.

Addressing recent challenges, he said that disruptions caused by strikes have been taken into account. Newly appointed officers are being trained to ensure that public services continue without interruption. "Efforts are being made to accelerate the pace of work while ensuring



that no task is hindered," Sinha stated, highlighting the administration's proactive approach.

He further stressed that continuous training and monitoring of revenue officials will enhance efficiency and lead to quicker resolution of land disputes across Bihar. Reiterating the state government's commitment, Sinha said the focus remains on making the revenue administration more transparent, effective and citizen-centric. Meanwhile, the Revenue and Land Reforms Department Bihar has convened a state-level review

meeting of all Deputy Collectors Land Reforms (DCLRs) on April 7.

According to an official communication issued by Devesh Kumar, the meeting will assess departmental performance following the conclusion of the financial year 2025-26.

The review will be conducted under the leadership of C K Anil, who will evaluate progress across multiple operational areas.

Key areas of focus will include the disposal of mutation appeals, BLDR cases and measurement-related appeals, which form a critical part of the department's responsibilities.

The meeting will also assess monthly case disposal trends between April 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026, along with performance benchmarks since officers assumed their respective posts.

In addition, officials will review revenue collection, verification of land identified for land banks, and inspection activities carried out at circle and halka levels.

## KTR invited as chief guest for entrepreneur India Idea Awards 2026 in Bengaluru

**Hyderabad:** K T Rama Rao, Working President of the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) and former minister, has been invited as the Chief Guest for the prestigious Entrepreneur India Idea Awards 2026. The event is scheduled to be held on April 16 at the Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield, and is expected to attract significant participation from across India's business ecosystem.

Over 300 leading entre-

preneurs, investors, creators, and business leaders are set to attend the event, making it a major platform for networking, collaboration, and recognition of innovation.

The Entrepreneur India Awards aim to celebrate visionary leaders, emerging startups, and changemakers who are contributing to India's rapidly growing innovation landscape. Organisers acknowledged K T Rama Rao's leadership and his role



in promoting technology, startups, and industrial de-

velopment, particularly during his tenure in Telangana.

His efforts in building a robust startup ecosystem and attracting investments have been widely recognised, positioning Telangana as a key hub for innovation in India. The organisers noted that KTR's governance model and forward-looking policies have inspired entrepreneurs across the country. In addition to being the Chief Guest, he has also been invited to address the gathering, where he is expected to

share insights from his experience in governance and industry promotion. His address is likely to focus on innovation-driven growth, policy support for startups, and the importance of public-private collaboration in driving economic progress. The invitation reflects the continued national recognition of Telangana's progressive policies aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and industrial development.

## Massive Jam Chokes Western Express Highway

**Mumbai:** A viral social media post highlighting severe traffic congestion between Santacruz and Bandra has sparked a wave of reactions from frustrated commuters. Visuals shared on X showcased long queues of vehicles and Google Maps data displaying heavy delays along the crucial corridor, particularly affecting those traveling toward the Bandra Kurla Complex.

The Mumbai Traffic Police responded to the online outrage by confirming that the BKC, Sahar, and Vakola divisions had been notified to manage the situation. Despite the official acknowledgement, regular travelers expressed skepticism, noting that such gridlocks have become a daily ordeal rather than an isolated incident. Some users attributed the mess to poor coordination and VIP movements, while others lamented that growing vehicle numbers are making the city's infrastructure increasingly unmanageable.

The Western Express Highway, often considered the lifeline of Mumbai's suburban commute, was transformed into a sprawling parking lot this week, as a massive traffic jam choked the critical stretch between Santacruz and Bandra. The congestion reached such a critical mass that it triggered a digital firestorm, with frustrated commuters taking to social media to document their stationary ordeal. What



began as a typical Monday morning rush quickly spiraled into a systemic failure of movement, leaving thousands of professionals, students, and travelers trapped in a sea of idling engines. The sheer scale of the backup was captured in haunting visuals shared on X, formerly Twitter, which showed that the city's primary north-south corridor had reached its absolute breaking point.

The reaction from the Mumbai Traffic Police was swift in the digital sphere, as they attempted to manage the brewing public relations crisis alongside the physical one. Official accounts confirmed that the relevant divisions—specifically BKC, Sahar, and Vakola—had been notified and instructed to deploy additional personnel to clear the bottlenecks. However, this administrative acknowledgment did

little to soothe the nerves of those currently stuck behind the wheel. The gap between the official promise of "management" and the physical reality of unmoving cars created a palpable sense of frustration between the citizenry and the authorities responsible for their mobility.

Regular travelers, who have become accustomed to the quirks of Mumbai's transit, expressed a profound sense of skepticism regarding the official response. For these commuters, the "massive jam" was not an isolated incident caused by a specific accident or a one-off event, but rather a worsening daily ordeal that has become the new normal. They argued that the infrastructure is no longer failing occasionally; it is perpetually overextended. The skepticism voiced online reflects a deepening

trust deficit, as the public begins to view official traffic updates as reactive rather than proactive, failing to address the root causes of the recurring gridlock.

The theories regarding the cause of the standstill were as diverse as the vehicles trapped in it, with many pointing the finger at the frequent and disruptive VVIP movements in the city. In a metropolis that serves as the home to political leaders, industrial titans, and global celebrities, the temporary closing of roads for security convoys often creates a massive "accordion effect" in traffic. Commuters lamented that a five-minute hold for a dignitary can lead to a sixty-minute recovery period for the surrounding network. This perception of "VIP culture" prioritizing the few over the many has become a significant point of contention for the tax-paying public.

Beyond the specific incidents of the day, the gridlock highlighted the broader, more systemic issue of explosive vehicle growth in Mumbai. The city's infrastructure, designed for a different era and a different population density, is being crushed under the weight of an ever-increasing number of private cars and two-wheelers. Every month, thousands of new vehicles are registered in the city, but the physical space available for roads remains largely stagnant.

## Woman Arrested for Theft at Kandivali Station

**Mumbai:** A 20-year-old woman was apprehended at Kandivali railway station on Monday morning after allegedly stealing a mangalutra valued at ₹2 lakh from a commuter. The incident occurred during the frantic morning rush hour, but the suspect's attempt to escape was foiled when alert citizens and police personnel chased her down within the station premises.

Visuals of the arrest circulated on social media, showing the woman being detained and handcuffed by authorities. The incident has reignited concerns among daily commuters regarding the safety of personal belongings in crowded suburban trains and stations. Local police are conducting a further investigation into the theft to identify if the accused is linked to other similar crimes reported on the network.

The current agricultural landscape in Karnal is being overshadowed by a significant financial standoff that threatens the seamless movement of grain across the region. As the Rabi procurement season begins to gain momentum, a shadow from the previous Kharif cycle looms large over the logistics sector.

Transporters who are essential to the supply chain find themselves in a precarious position, tasked with moving new harvests while still waiting for the compensation promised for their work months ago. This backlog of payments has created an atmosphere of uncertainty in the grain

markets, where the physical labor of moving produce is being hampered by the digital delays of administrative processing.

The scale of the financial crisis is substantial, with estimates suggesting that nearly 30 crore remains trapped in the bureaucratic pipeline. This is not merely a rounding error on a ledger; it represents the working capital of hundreds of small and medium-sized transport businesses that form the backbone of Haryana's agricultural economy. For these operators, the missing funds represent the difference between a sustainable business and one that is teetering on the edge of insolvency. The local economy in Karnal, which relies heavily on the fluid movement of crops, is feeling the secondary effects of this liquidity crunch as transporters struggle to keep their fleets operational.

The timing of this crisis is particularly unfortunate given the high stakes of the current Rabi season. Procurement is a time-sensitive operation where any delay in lifting crops from the mandis can lead to massive congestion and potential damage to the grain if weather conditions shift. Transporters have expressed deep-seated frustrations, noting that they fulfilled their contractual obligations during the paddy lifting cycle with efficiency and speed, yet they are now being forced to beg for the wages they rightfully earned.

The disconnect between the physical completion of work and the financial set-

tlement has led to a breakdown in trust between the private contractors and the state machinery.

Fuel costs, which remain a volatile and significant expense, are at the heart of the transporters' daily struggles. Without the 30 crore in pending dues, many truck owners are finding it impossible to refuel their vehicles for the upcoming journeys required by the new season. The immediate nature of fuel payments contrasts sharply with the sluggish pace of government disbursements, creating a cash flow gap that few independent operators can bridge. This has led to a situation where trucks that should be lining up at the grain markets are instead sitting idle in yards because their owners cannot afford the diesel required to start the engines.

In addition to fuel, the rising costs of vehicle maintenance and spare parts have added another layer of pressure to the already strained transporters. Modern logistics requires constant upkeep to ensure safety and reliability on the road, but maintenance schedules are often the first casualty when payments are delayed. Many operators in Karnal have reported that they are deferring essential repairs, which not only risks the safety of the drivers but also increases the likelihood of breakdowns during critical transport windows. The financial strain is effectively degrading the quality of the regional transport infrastructure one unpaid bill at a time.

## Spiritual Consecration Held at Matunga Mattham

**Mumbai:** Sri Shankara Vijayendra Saraswati, the Sankaracharya of Kanchi, led the sacred Kumbhabhishekam ceremony at the Sri Sankara Mattham in Matunga on Monday morning. This ancient Vedic ritual, traditionally performed every 12 years to renew a temple's spiritual energy, served as the centerpiece of the seer's ten-day visit to the city.

The proceedings followed several days of preparatory rituals, including specialized homams and poojas intended to purify the environment. This event marked the fifth such consecration for the Mattham since its founding in 1939. The Sankaracharya is expected to continue his religious engagements later this week, including a scheduled visit to the historic Marubai Gavdevi Mandir on April 9.

The Matunga Sankara Mattham, a cornerstone of spiritual life in Mumbai since the pre-independence era, witnessed a rare celestial and Vedic convergence this Monday. The Kumbhabhishekam, a grand consecration ceremony, was presided over by His Holiness Sri Shankara Vijayendra Saraswati Swamigal, the 70th Jagadguru Sankaracharya of the Kanchi Ka-

makoti Peetham. This ritual is considered the "spiritual recharge" of a temple's deity and structure, traditionally mandated by the Agamic scriptures to be performed in 12-year cycles. For the Matunga Mattham, which was established in 1939, this event marked only its fifth such sanctification in nearly nine decades, drawing thousands of devotees from across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

The ceremony served as the spiritual apex of the Sankaracharya's ten-day visit to Mumbai, an itinerary carefully curated to bless various pockets of the city's South Indian diaspora and local Marathi communities alike. The Kumbhabhishekam itself is a multi-day process, beginning long before the final pouring of the holy water.

For several days leading up to Monday, the temple premises echoed with the rhythmic chanting of the four Vedas. Specialized Homams (fire rituals) were conducted in the Yagasala, where the divine energy of the idols was symbolically transferred into Kalashas (sacred pots) through intense prayer and meditation.

On the auspicious morning of the main event, the Sankaracharya led a pro-

cession to the temple's Vimana (the tower over the sanctum) and the Gopuram. In a moment of profound silence followed by the thunderous blowing of conch shells and the beat of traditional Nadaswaram instruments, the sanctified water was poured over the golden finials. This act, known as the Abhishekam, is believed to transform the entire temple structure into a living embodiment of the divine. Devotees standing in the surrounding lanes of Matunga were sprayed with the holy water, a gesture signifying the distribution of grace to all present.

The Matunga Mattham holds a unique place in Mumbai's cultural history, having been founded by the local community to preserve the teachings of Adi Shankara. Since 1939, it has evolved from a small prayer hall into a major center for Vedic learning and social service. The 2026 consecration is seen as a revitalization of these core values. The Sankaracharya's presence in Matunga—often referred to as the "Mini South India" of Mumbai—has reinforced the neighborhood's identity as a hub of classical traditions amidst the city's rapidly modernizing skyline.

## Longer Local Trains to Ease Virar Rush

**Virar:** In a major move to expand passenger capacity, Western Railway is preparing to introduce 15-coach local trains on key routes serving Virar. Seventeen existing services will be upgraded from 12-coach configurations, with nine running to Churchgate and eight operating on the Virar-Dahanu sector. This marks the first time such high-capacity trains will serve the Dahanu stretch. The transition was made possible through extensive infrastructure upgrades, including the widening and extension of platforms at Virar station to accommodate the longer rakes. Platforms 3A and 4A saw significant expansion, and a new home platform was constructed to streamline operations. These improvements, completed within a four-month window, are expected to significantly reduce overcrowding during peak hours. The Western Railway's decision to transition to 15-coach rakes for the Virar and Dahanu sectors marks a pivotal moment in the evolution of Mumbai's suburban rail network. For decades, the "Virar Local" has been synonymous with the extreme physical and mental toll of



the city's commute, often operating at 300% of its designed capacity during peak hours. By adding three additional coaches to seventeen key services, the railway administration is effectively increasing the carrying capacity of each train by 25%. This move is not just a logistical adjustment but a necessary humanitarian intervention for the thousands of commuters who risk their lives daily on overcrowded footboards. The technical complexity of this upgrade cannot be understated, as it required a complete overhaul of the existing in-

frastructure at Virar station. A standard 12-coach train measures approximately 240 meters, while a 15-coach rake stretches to 300 meters. This sixty-meter difference necessitated the physical widening and extension of several platforms to ensure passenger safety during boarding and alighting.

The engineering teams focused their efforts on Platforms 3A and 4A, which are the primary conduits for fast-moving suburban traffic. These extensions were completed in a remarkably tight four-month window, demon-

strating a rare level of administrative urgency.

In addition to extending existing structures, Western Railway constructed a brand-new "home platform" at Virar to further streamline the movement of trains. This new platform allows for better turnaround times and reduces the "bottlenecking" that often occurs when multiple trains arrive simultaneously from the Dahanu and Churchgate directions. The home platform acts as a dedicated space for specific services, preventing the chaotic "platform jumping"

that commuters often have to perform when berths are limited. This structural addition is expected to improve the overall punctuality of the Virar-Dahanu sector, which has historically suffered from frequent delays.

For the residents of the Dahanu stretch, the introduction of 15-coach trains is a historic first. Since the extension of the suburban local service to Dahanu Road in 2013, the region has seen an explosion in residential development and a corresponding rise in the commuter population. However, the infrastructure had largely remained stuck in the 12-coach era, leading to dangerous levels of congestion on the few services available. By allocating eight of the newly upgraded services to the Virar-Dahanu sector, the railways are finally acknowledging the growing importance of this extended suburban belt as a vital residential corridor for Mumbai's workforce.

The nine upgraded services running all the way to Churchgate are intended to tackle the "super dense crush load" that defines the morning and evening peaks.

## Police Seek Peace After Malad Clash

**Mumbai:** Authorities have issued an urgent appeal for calm following a violent confrontation between two groups in Malad East's Santosh Nagar Market. The clash, which occurred late Sunday night, resulted in one individual sustaining serious injuries. To prevent further escalation, a significant police contingent was deployed to the area to disperse gathering crowds and maintain order.

Dindoshi Police emphasized that the situation is currently under control and urged residents to cooperate with ongoing investigations. DCP Mahesh Chimte stated that strict action would be taken against the perpetrators once the victim's statement is recorded. While some local political figures raised allegations regarding the use of force during the crowd dispersal, the police focused on maintaining a heavy presence to ensure the peace is not dis-



rupted further.

The quiet of a Sunday night in Malad East was shattered by a violent confrontation that erupted in the heart of Santosh Nagar Market, leaving the local community in a state of shock and apprehension. What began as a localized dispute between two groups quickly escalated into a full-scale clash, drawing a large number of onlookers

and participants into the fray. The intensity of the conflict was such that one individual sustained serious injuries, requiring immediate medical attention and sparking fears of a retaliatory cycle of violence. As news of the bloodied encounter spread through the narrow lanes of the market, the atmosphere turned thick with tension, prompting an immediate and massive mobi-

lization by the Mumbai Police to prevent the situation from spiraling further out of control. Upon receiving distress calls from terrified shopkeepers and residents, a significant contingent of the Dindoshi Police was rushed to the scene to establish a perimeter. The authorities arrived to find a volatile situation where crowds had begun to swell, fueled by rumors and the raw emotion of the night's events. The primary objective for the officers on the ground was to disperse the gathering masses and ensure that the injured party was safely evacuated to a nearby medical facility. The presence of high-ranking officials and specialized units signaled to the locals that the state was taking the breach of peace with the utmost seriousness, yet the initial chaos proved difficult to manage as groups continued to shout slogans and demand immediate retribution.

## Media Experts Discuss AI Impact at Mumbai Meet

**Mumbai:** The IIMC Alumni Association's Maharashtra chapter recently organized its annual "Connections Meet" at the Royal Bombay Yacht Club to explore the evolving role of Artificial Intelligence in journalism. Media professionals gathered to discuss how AI is streamlining news production while simultaneously raising red flags regarding deepfakes, misinformation, and the erosion of editorial credibility.

The event featured insights from various industry veterans who stressed the necessity for journalists to upskill and maintain high ethical standards in a tech-driven era. During the gathering, filmmaker Manoj

Maurya was honored with a silver jubilee felicitation for his contributions. The meet is part of a nationwide series of alumni events that began in Delhi and has traveled through multiple major Indian cities. The annual "Connections Meet" of the IIMC Alumni Association (IIMCAA) Maharashtra Chapter recently transformed the historic Royal Bombay Yacht Club into a hub of intellectual discourse, focusing on the double-edged sword of Artificial Intelligence in modern journalism. As media landscapes shift toward automation, the gathering served as a critical platform for alumni to dissect how AI is reshaping newsrooms—

from increasing the speed of content production to the more insidious threats of deepfakes and the potential for a "truth crisis" in public information. Industry veterans at the meet were unanimous in their assessment: while AI can be a powerful assistant, it lacks the human judgment necessary for ethical reporting. The discussions highlighted that the erosion of editorial credibility is perhaps the greatest risk, as automated systems may inadvertently amplify misinformation without human oversight. The consensus among the attendees was that journalists must not only upskill in technical proficiency but also double down on the foundational

ethics of verification and transparency that define the profession.

Amidst the heavy discussions on technology, the evening also celebrated personal milestones and human achievement. Filmmaker Manoj Maurya, a notable alumnus, was honored with a silver jubilee felicitation, marking 25 years of his significant contributions to the media and film industry. This recognition highlighted the diverse paths IIMC graduates have taken, spanning from hard-hitting journalism to creative storytelling and filmmaking.

The Mumbai event is part of a larger, vibrant tapestry of reunions organized by IIMCAA.

## Editorial

### The Battleground of Democracy and Blazing Politics

The bugle call for the greatest festival of Indian democracy—the elections—has now sounded across five states: Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. In all five of these regions, political parties have staked their entire might in an effort to forge the equations necessary to secure power. The voting process in Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry is scheduled to take place in a single phase on April 9, 2026, while in Tamil Nadu, the public mandate will be recorded in a single phase on April 23. However, compared to all these states, the electoral process in West Bengal has emerged as the most controversial and widely discussed subject. Voting in Bengal is set to be conducted in two phases—on April 23 and April 29; and considering the state's history and present circumstances, the election here is no longer merely a political contest, but has evolved into a battle for survival. West Bengal is inherently recognized as an extremely sensitive state; it is an unfortunate reality—one that cannot be denied—that here, an election signifies not merely the act of voting, but rather the unfolding of a new chapter of violence and terror. In Indian elections, the deployment of 'money power' (\*Dhan-shakti\*) and 'muscle power' (\*Snayu-shakti\*) is an open secret; however, in West Bengal, alongside these two forces, 'violence' has become an inseparable component of the electoral process. Until 2011, the state was under the prolonged rule of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—CPI(M). During that era, the administration faced severe criticism for presiding over a regime characterized by hooliganism and political terror. A wave of change swept through the state, bringing the Trinamool Congress—under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee—to power; yet, while the face of the ruling authority changed, the brutal nature of the system itself remained unaltered. The prevailing scenario suggests that the state of law and order today remains exactly as it was during the era of CPI(M) rule. In Bengal, instead of winning over voters and persuading them to cast their ballots in one's favor, a dangerous tradition has taken root: compelling them to vote through intimidation and threats. The politics of Mamata Banerjee—who has been in power for the past 15 years—is characterized by its aggressive nature. The very soil and water of Bengal seem imbued with a rebellious aggression, where political conflicts can swiftly escalate into personal attacks. True to the adage "Might is Right"—or \*Jisaki lathi, usaki bhains\*—it is the most violent and aggressive party that ultimately dominates the streets and alleys of this region. The most significant feature of the current Bengal elections is the Election Commission's firm stance. The Commission has demonstrated the boldness to conduct the election—which typically spans five to seven phases—in just two phases this time around. These changes have not come about because the state's law-and-order situation has improved; rather, they were made possible by the Election Commission's strict and uncompromising approach. During this same period, the issue of 'Systematic Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls' (SIR) has emerged as an explosive topic in national politics. In a democracy, the right to elect one's representative belongs exclusively to the legitimate citizens of that country and state. The inclusion of foreign nationals or infiltrators in the electoral rolls constitutes an affront to democracy. Acting on court directives, the Election Commission launched a nationwide campaign to remove the names of foreign nationals from the rolls; as part of this initiative, hundreds of thousands of suspicious names were struck off the lists in West Bengal as well. This entire process is strictly constitutional and transparent. Although the Election Commission is an autonomous body that operates independently of the Central Government, opposition parties have nevertheless ratcheted up political tensions by holding the Modi government responsible for this campaign. It is essential to understand the reasons behind the opposition to this campaign voiced by Mamata Banerjee and the Trinamool Congress. The hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi infiltrators—whose names were removed from the rolls because they could not produce any proof of citizenship—are, in reality, regarded as Mamata Didi's core 'vote bank.' This campaign has dealt a severe blow to the designs of those seeking to retain power through illicit means, and the violent repercussions of this development have now begun to surface. In the Malda district, this revision campaign was challenged; when Election Commission officials arrived to conduct verifications, they were surrounded by an unruly mob. Despite the presence of female officials within the group, an attempt was made to hold them hostage. Shockingly, instead of fulfilling its constitutional duty to provide security to these officials, the Mamata Banerjee government displayed criminal negligence. The incident in Malda was not merely a law-and-order issue; it constituted a direct challenge to the authority of the judiciary. It was patently evident that Trinamool Congress workers and goons had deliberately instigated this chaos. Taking cognizance of this entire episode, the Supreme Court has severely reprimanded the West Bengal government. The displeasure expressed by Justice Surya Kant bears witness to the political degeneration currently plaguing Bengal. According to the Justice, "Everyone in this state speaks the language of politics, and this state has witnessed the highest degree of political polarization in the country." Had the Election Commission and the Supreme Court not remained vigilant, the lives of the judicial officers in Malda would have been in grave peril. Acting on the Court's directive, an investigation into this incident is now being conducted by the NIA. A Chief Minister is expected to prioritize constitutional duties over partisan interests; however, in the Malda incident, Mamata Banerjee's conduct appeared less like that of a Chief Minister and more like that of a party leader. Attempts to retain power—by resorting to such violence and holding constitutional institutions hostage on the eve of elections—are nothing new to the people of Bengal. However, thanks to the intervention of the Supreme Court and the promptness of the Election Commission, these attempts appear to be failing this time around. 'Didi'—who has violated the solemn pledge she took while swearing the oath of office as Chief Minister—will now have to pay a political price for these actions. It is palpable that Didi has cast aside all decorum and restraint precisely because she senses that the time for her to step down from power is drawing near. Had there been more than just a few days remaining until the voting, she would undoubtedly have been compelled to resign in the wake of such misconduct. Now, in the truest sense, the power to deliver a fitting response to this anarchy lies solely in the hands of the people of Bengal. The central theme of this election ought to be the principle that there is no place for violence or infiltration in a democracy. The incident that occurred in the Malda district of West Bengal stands as a dark chapter—an event unlike any other witnessed in any other state across the country. This episode has cast a significant shadow of doubt upon the accountability of state governments within the Indian federal structure. The primary reasons behind Mamata Banerjee's outburst of fury are her dwindling vote bank and the blow dealt by a transparent electoral process. However, there is hope that the discerning populace of Bengal will deliver a resounding reply to all such violent tendencies and anti-democratic activities through the power of their vote. The verdict of Bengal in this election will prove to be absolutely decisive in upholding the rule of law and preserving democratic values.

# Indian Navy's latest stealth frigate 'INS Taragiri' commissioned in Visakhapatnam

INS Taragiri, the fourth potent platform of the Project 17A class, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh on April 03, 2026. A masterclass in modern naval shipbuilding, this latest stealth frigate, with a displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes, has been designed by the Warship Design Bureau and built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, with the support of MSMEs, for multi-role operations. It utilises advanced stealth technology to achieve a significantly reduced radar signature, providing a lethal edge in contested environments.

With over 75% indigenous content and built in significantly reduced timelines, INS Taragiri exemplifies India's shipbuilding prowess and strong public-private collaboration. Raksha Mantri, in his address, described INS Taragiri as not merely a warship but a symbol of India's growing technological prowess, self-reliance, and formidable naval power.

"This ship is capable of high-speed transit and can remain deployed at sea for extended periods.



It is equipped with systems designed to monitor enemy movements, ensure its own security, and if necessary, deliver an immediate response. It features modern radar, sonar, and missile systems, such as BrahMos and surface-to-air missiles, which further augment its operational prowess. From high-intensity combat to maritime security, anti-piracy operations, coastal surveillance, and humanitarian missions, it fits perfectly into every role, making it a unique naval platform," said Shri Rajnath Singh.

Raksha Mantri asserted that India, with a coastline stretching over 11,000 kilometers, is surrounded by the sea on three sides, and it cannot view its development in isolation from the ocean. He added that approximately 95 percent of the country's trade is conducted via maritime routes, and energy security is dependent on the sea, which makes building a strong and capable Navy not merely an option, but an absolute necessity.

Highlighting the immense significance of the maritime domain in the evolving security landscape, Shri Rajnath Singh stated that the Indian Navy maintains a round-the-clock presence across the Indian Ocean region amidst the global uncertainties. "The vast expanse of



the ocean contains numerous sensitive points, where our Navy has consistently maintained an active presence to ensure the smooth flow of goods. Whenever tensions flare,

ed out that whenever a crisis arises, be it evacuation operations or humanitarian assistance, the Indian Navy invariably stands at the forefront, serving as a symbol of India's core values and unwavering commitment. "INS Taragiri will further augment the strength, values, and commitment of our Navy," he said.

Reiterating the Government's commitment to make the Indian Navy one of the world's strongest in the times to come, backed by an indigenous industry, Raksha Mantri stated that defence manufacturing in the country is marching ahead as a national mission under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's leadership. "Today, we're no longer confined to fulfilling our own requirements; we're actively securing our place within the global supply chain. India's participation is integral at every stage - from design and development to final deployment. It gives us confidence that we possess the capability to design not only our own security but also our future. INS Taragiri stands as an embodiment of this very vision," he said.

Highlighting the transformation witnessed by the country in the last decade, Shri Rajnath Singh stated that the Government has created an ecosystem for the youth and the industry that consistently fosters innovation, manufacturing, and exports. He stressed that India has no alternative but to pursue self-reliance in defence to stay ready in the present uncertain times. He added that the security efforts must not confine solely to the domains of land, sea & air, but extend to space, cyberspace, and economic spheres. He pointed out that guided by that very vision, the Government has taken several major policy decisions, the results of which are now visible.

Raksha Mantri commended Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited and other Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) for their consistent positive contributions towards bolstering India's security

Shri Rajnath Singh also point-

apparatus. He termed the 16 DP-SUs as the hubs of Aatmanirbharta in defence. Raksha Mantri appreciated the efforts of DPSUs and the private sector in taking defence ex-



ports to an all-time high of Rs 38,424 crore in Financial Year 2025-26. "13-14 years ago, we used to export defence items worth Rs 1,200 crore. Today, it has reached almost Rs 39,000 crore. This is proof that India's self-reliance is growing steadily, signifying that we are standing on our own feet," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi highlighted INS Taragiri's rich legacy, recalling the erstwhile Leander-class frigate commissioned in 1980, which played a pioneering role in advancing India's anti-submarine warfare capabilities and operational innovation. Reflecting on the evolving maritime security environment, he underscored the growing complexities of the Indian Ocean Region, shaped by dynamic geopolitics, emerging technologies, and non-traditional threats. The CNS emphasised the Navy's commitment to remaining a combat-ready, credible, cohesive, and future-ready force to safeguard national maritime interests, anytime, anywhere, anyhow.

The momentous event was marked by the ceremonial breaking of the Commissioning Pennant and the maiden hoisting of the National Flag on the ship. Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan; Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command Vice Admiral Sanjay Balla; CMD, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited Captain Jagmohan (Retd) were among those present during the commissioning.

This Frigate represents a generational leap over earlier designs, offering a sleeker form and a significantly reduced Radar Cross-Section that allows it to operate with lethal stealth. With indigenous content exceeding 75 percent, the ship highlights the maturity of a domestic industrial ecosystem that now spans over 200 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), contributing to the Government's Aatmanirbharta initiative, supporting thousands of Indian jobs.

Beneath its sleek, modular exterior lies a powerhouse driven by a Combined Diesel or Gas propulsion engine and managed by a state-of-the-art Integrated Platform Management System. This

technological sophistication ensures the vessel remains a versatile asset, capable of carrying out any mission assigned to the ship, anywhere and at any time.

The ship's combat punch is world class, featuring a lethal array of supersonic Surface-to-Surface missiles, Medium Range Surface-to-Air missiles, and an advanced indigenous Anti-Submarine suite. In an evolving Indo-Pacific security landscape, this commissioning sends an important geopolitical signal: India is now a premier builder of complex warships, capable of maintaining a credible posture to deter potential adversaries and contribute to collective regional stability under the vision of MAHASAGAR.

As INS Taragiri joins the Eastern Fleet on the Eastern seaboard, the ship carries forward the proud legacy of her predecessor, honouring a name that has served the nation for decades. The message delivered on the deck today was unmistakable: India's oceans are guarded by ships designed by Indians, built by Indians, and operated by Indians.

## Raksha Mantri lays foundation stone of Large Cavitation Tunnel at NSTL, Visakhapatnam to boost naval research & testing capabilities

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh, on April 03, 2026, laid the foundation stone of the state-of-the-art Large Cavitation Tunnel (LCT) facility at the Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL), a premium laboratory of DRDO in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The facility will significantly enhance India's naval research and testing capabilities, marking a major step towards achieving technological self-reliance.

Addressing scientists, researchers, and personnel at NSTL, Raksha Mantri asserted that India, with this initiative, will be able to design, develop and test its equipment, systems & sub-systems indigenously utilising its own resources, positioning itself as a strong naval power & a leader in defence technology. "Until now, even after successfully developing equipment, systems, and sub-systems, we often had to look abroad for critical testing. This situation will now change. This facility is not merely an infrastructure project, but an enabling system, which will strengthen our capabilities in advancing propulsion systems, enable focused efforts on noise reduction and

further strengthen stealth capabilities. It will serve as a foundational backbone for the design and development of submarines & ships, supporting future advancements in naval engineering and maritime defence systems," he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh described the visit underscored the growing momentum behind India's indigenous defence capabilities, with Rajnath Singh describing the project as a powerful symbol of the success of Narendra Modi's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. He emphasised that self-reliance is no longer an aspiration but a strategic necessity tied closely to national security.

He noted that despite global challenges and technological dependencies, India has made remarkable strides in achieving self-sufficiency across critical sectors. This progress, he said, is the result of coordinated efforts from domestic industry, academia, MSMEs, young innovators, and research institutions.

During the visit, the Raksha Mantri was briefed in detail about key projects and programmes undertaken by the Defence Research and Development Organisa-

tion (DRDO). The briefing was led by Samir V Kamat, who outlined ongoing advancements in naval technologies.

A major highlight of the visit was the tour of the Seakeeping and Manoeuvring

(AUVs), showcasing India's expanding expertise in underwater warfare technologies. The display reflected the country's commitment to strengthening maritime defence capabilities.

Particularly noteworthy



Basin, a sophisticated facility designed for hydrodynamic testing. Here, Rajnath Singh witnessed demonstrations of advanced underwater defence systems developed indigenously.

These included cutting-edge torpedoes, naval mines, decoys, and autonomous underwater vehicles

was a live demonstration of a swarm of man-portable AUVs. This technology represents a significant leap in autonomous maritime operations, enabling coordinated underwater missions with minimal human intervention. The swarm demonstration highlighted India's readiness to embrace next-

generation warfare systems. It also reinforced the strategic importance of artificial intelligence and robotics in shaping the future of naval combat.

Rajnath Singh also inspected several products developed as spin-off technologies by the Naval Systems Materials cluster labs following Operation Sindoor. These innovations demonstrated the practical application of research in real-world defence scenarios.

He commended the Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL) for its pioneering work in areas such as torpedo systems, underwater mines, decoys, and AUV technologies. He stated that these advancements are crucial in positioning India as a formidable naval power.

The Defence Minister also praised the ongoing work in lithium-ion battery development, recognising its importance for powering future defence platforms. He stressed that energy storage technologies will play a decisive role in modern warfare. Encouraging continued innovation, Rajnath Singh urged scientists and researchers to remain dedicated to nation-building. He highlighted that robust and

reliable defence technologies directly enhance the operational effectiveness of armed forces.

"The systems and technologies boost the confidence and morale of sailors deployed at sea," he said, adding that strong technological backing is essential for mission success and strategic dominance.

The event was attended by senior military leadership, including Anil Chauhan and Dinesh K Tripathi, along with other high-ranking officials, reflecting the importance of the initiative.

Conceived as a strategic national asset, the project represents a major step forward in strengthening indigenous capabilities in hydrodynamic research. It is expected to play a key role in the design and development of next-generation naval platforms.

Once operational, the facility will stand out globally for its integrated capabilities, enabling both closed-loop simulations for submarines and free surface simulations for surface ships. This will significantly boost India's shipbuilding ecosystem and support the development of advanced platforms such as destroyers and aircraft carriers.

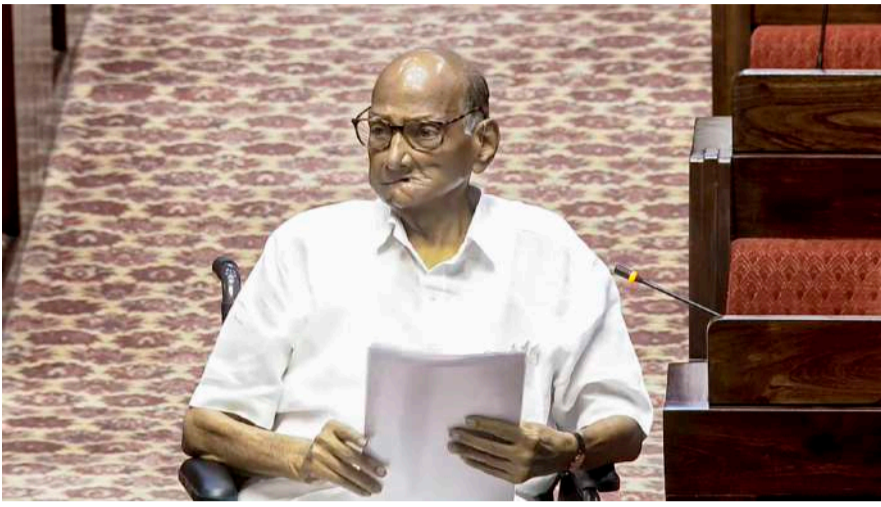
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# Aryan Age | 05

## Sharad Pawar among 5 Maha Rajya Sabha MPs take oath

**Mumbai :** Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President CP Radhakrishnan today administered the oath of office to Sharad Pawar, Jyoti Waghmare, union Minister Ramdas Athawale, Ramrao Wadkute and Maya Inate, who are newly elected Rajya Sabha MPs from Maharashtra. The late Ajit Pawar's son Parth Pawar who has been elected to the Rajya Sabha for the first time will take oath on April 9, while BJP National General Secretary Vinod Tawde is likely to take oath as a Rajya Sabha MP on April 10. A total of seven Rajya Sabha MPs have been elected from Maharashtra. Due to his ill-health, Sharad Pawar sat on his wheelchair while taking his oath as a Rajya Sabha member, while Jyoti Waghmare of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, was dressed up to resemble the social reformer Savitribai Phule.

NCP founder leader Sharad Pawar who took oath as a Rajya Sabha MP today was announced as its Rajya Sabha candidate by the opposition Maha Vikas



Aghadi (MVA). His daughter who is Sharad Pawar-led NCP Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule tweeted on X that Sharad Pawar has become an MP for the ninth time in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Now that he has taken his oath, Sharad Pawar will remain a Rajya Sabha MP till 2032. After Sharad Pawar's nephew's elder son Parth Pawar takes his oath as Rajya Sabha MP, three members from three generations of the Pawar family will be seen in the Parliament.

"Grateful that respected Pawar Saheb took oath as an MP in the Rajya Sabha today. He completed 59 years of parliamentary career this year and has now entered his 60th year. He has previously represented the state in the Legislative Assembly six times, once in the Legislative Council, seven times in the Lok Sabha and twice in the Rajya Sabha. From this year onwards, he will be in the Rajya Sabha for the third consecutive term," Supriya Sule tweeted on X.

"This unbeaten journey which began in 1967 continues to this day. I believe that the country will always benefit from his long political and parliamentary experience. Heartiest congratulations to him and best wishes for his future journey," Ms Sule tweeted.

"Along with this, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the people of Baramati, people from all corners of Maharashtra and people across the country who have stood firmly with him throughout

this journey and loved him deeply. The support and love you have given to Saheb is a priceless treasure for us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart," Ms Sule tweeted in her X post.

Sharad Pawar first won the election as an MLA in 1967. After that, he served as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra four times. He has also served as a minister at the Centre.

Sharad Pawar became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra in 1978. In 1984, he contested the MP election from Baramati. But in 1985, he again entered the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from Baramati till 1990. He became an MLA six times in a row.

After that, he was an MP from Baramati Lok Sabha constituency from 1991 to 2014. He has been a Rajya Sabha MP since 2014. During the last 60 years, Sharad Pawar has been a member of one or the other house from the Legislative Assembly to the Rajya Sabha. The only exceptions were the years 1998 and 1999, when the Lok Sabha was dissolved.

## Sunetra Pawar turns emotional while filing nomination for bypoll, Appeals to Baramati voters for support

**Pune:** Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar faction) leader Sunetra Pawar turned emotional while filing her nomination for the Baramati Assembly by-election, recalling the recent loss of a beloved leader and urging voters to support her in fulfilling his vision.

Addressing a party gathering before filing her nomination, Pawar said she still finds it hard to believe that "Dada" is no longer amidst them. She described his passing as not just a personal loss for her family, but a significant setback for Baramati, Maharashtra, and the country. Baramati was his lifeline, and it is in this very soil that he breathed his last, she said, her voice choked with emotion and eyes filled with tears. Pawar added that despite her per-



sonal grief, she has stepped forward with determination to carry forward his dream of development for Baramati. "I have kept my sorrow aside and gathered the courage to stand before you, and that strength comes from the people of Baramati, she said.

Highlighting the consistent support given by voters over the past 35-36 years, she noted that Ajit Pawar had been elected with record

margins multiple times. Your love and support are my greatest strength, she told the gathering.

Calling the by-election more than just a political contest, Pawar said it is an opportunity for the people of Baramati to pay tribute to the departed leader. She also assured that she would remain accessible to party workers and citizens at all times.

## BJP's last-minute move may sway Prajakt Tanpure in Rahuri bypoll

**Ahilyanagar:** The deadline for filing nominations for the Rahuri Assembly by-election ended on Monday, setting the stage for a closely watched political contest in the constituency.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has fielded Akshay Kardile, son of late MLA Shivajirao Kardile, as its official candidate, banking on both legacy and organisational strength.

In the lead-up to the deadline, there was intense speculation that Prajakt Tanpure, nephew of senior leader Jayant Patil, would contest the bypoll from the faction led by Sharad Pawar.

Tanpure, who has prior administrative experience and served as a Minister of State during the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, was widely viewed as a strong contender capable of mounting a serious challenge to the BJP. His potential entry had raised expectations of a high-stakes electoral battle, given his political background and influence in the region.

However, in a dramatic development on the final day of nominations, senior BJP leaders Ravindra Chavan and Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil held closed-door discussions with Tanpure.

The meeting sparked immediate speculation about a possible shift in the political equation, with indications emerging that Tanpure might reconsider his decision to contest the by-election.

Sources suggest that Devendra Fadnis played a key role behind the scenes in influencing the developments. Currently on a campaign tour in Kerala, Fadnis reportedly spoke directly with Tanpure over the phone during the meeting, adding weight to the discussions.

During the conversation, he is said to have assured full government support for development projects and the resolution of key local issues in the Rahuri constituency. Following this interaction, Tanpure's stance appeared to soften, signalling a possible rethink on his electoral plans.

Speaking to the media, he acknowledged the request made by senior BJP leaders and said he would consult his supporters before arriving at a final decision.

He indicated that if the government demonstrates a genuine willingness to address the issues he intended to raise during his campaign, it could influence his course of action.

Tanpure added that any final decision would be taken in consultation with his colleagues and well-wishers, reflecting a cautious and strategic approach.

These developments have introduced a new layer of intrigue to the Rahuri bypoll, making the contest more unpredictable. Political observers are now closely watching Tanpure's next move, as it could significantly impact the dynamics of the election. The situation underscores the fluid nature of regional politics, where negotiations and last-minute developments often play a decisive role in shaping electoral outcomes.

## Laxman Hake withdraws from Baramati by-election; Move aims at unopposed poll

**Baramati:** In a significant political development ahead of the Baramati Assembly by-election, OBC leader Laxman Hake has announced his withdrawal from the contest, a move that could potentially pave the way for an unopposed election.

Hake, who had arrived in Baramati amid heightened political activity, held key discussions with senior leaders including Dattatray Bharme, Dhananjay Munde, and Kiran Gujar.

During the meeting, the leaders reportedly urged him not to file his nomination papers, emphasising the need for a smooth and uncontested electoral process in the constituency.

Sources indicated that this move was part of a broader political understanding aimed at avoiding a direct contest in the high-profile Baramati seat, which holds significant importance in Maharashtra politics.

Adding weight to these efforts, Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar personally reached out to Hake through a phone call, requesting him to reconsider his decision to contest.

Respecting the appeal made by senior leaders, Hake decided to step back from the race. He stated that his decision was guided by deference to the leadership and the larger political

consensus. His withdrawal is being viewed as a strategic and consensus-driven move, which is likely to shape the overall dynamics of the by-election.

With this development, the possibility of an unopposed election in Baramati has significantly increased. However, the final outcome will depend on the official list of candidates after the nomination process concludes.

The Baramati by-election has been closely watched due to its political sensitivity and symbolic importance within the state's power structure.

Hake's exit from the race marks a key turning point, potentially altering the competitive landscape of the election. The by-election is scheduled to be held on April 23, with the counting of votes set for May 4. The by-poll was necessitated following the tragic death of sitting MLA and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in an air crash on January 28. His passing created a political vacuum in the constituency, prompting the need for a fresh mandate from voters. In the aftermath, Sunetra Pawar, his widow and the current Deputy Chief Minister, has filed her nomination from the seat.

## Prehistoric heritage in Chandrapur under threat from unregulated mining

**Chandrapur:** Prehistoric archaeological sites at Bhatala and Movad in Warora taluka of Chandrapur district are facing a serious threat due to unchecked mining activities, raising alarm among experts and authorities.

Taking cognisance of the issue, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court recently appointed a special committee, which conducted an on-site inspection to assess the extent of damage caused by ongoing mining operations.

The committee closely examined how excavation and industrial activities have impacted these historically significant locations, which are considered vital for understanding prehistoric human life.

Bhatala and Movad are recognised as important prehistoric sites that preserve crucial evidence of early human existence. Their archaeological value lies in the richness and diversity of artefacts found in the region.

Researchers have uncovered a large number of stone tools from the Acheulian era, including hand axes, scrapers, and choppers, indicating the presence of early human technological activity.

These findings make the area particularly significant for the study of human evolution and the development of early tool-making techniques.

However, intensified mining in recent years has begun to severely disrupt the natural stratigraphy of the soil, which is essential for preserving archaeological context.

Experts warn that such disturbances can permanently damage the integrity of the sites, as the original positioning of artefacts provides critical information about historical timelines and human behaviour.

Once disturbed, this contextual information is often impossible to recover, leading to an irreversible loss of scientific data. Archaeologists have

expressed concern that continued mining could result in the destruction of invaluable heritage that has remained preserved for thousands of years.

Recognising the seriousness of the situation, the High Court initiated suo motu intervention, underlining the importance of protecting these sites from further damage.

The appointed committee has documented its findings during the inspection and is expected to submit a detailed report to the court in the coming days.

The report is likely to outline the extent of damage already caused and recommend measures to prevent further degradation.

Based on the committee's findings, the court is expected to take a call on imposing restrictions or regulations on mining activities in the area.

Such measures could play a crucial role in balancing industrial development with heritage conservation.

## Congress offers not to contest from Baramati if FIR registered in Ajit Pawar air crash case

**Mumbai:** The political contest in Baramati has taken a dramatic turn, with Congress candidate Akash More offering to withdraw his nomination under a specific condition linked to the controversial air crash case of Ajit Pawar.

Advocate More, who is set to contest the by-election against Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, said he would consider stepping out of the race if the state government registers an FIR and initiates a proper investigation into the air crash.

The demand has brought renewed focus on the incident, which has already been a subject of political debate and public concern in Maharashtra.

It may be recalled that Rohit Pawar, a legislator aligned with Sharad Pawar, had previously attempted to get an FIR registered in the case on two separate occasions. His efforts at Marine Lines police station and lat-

er at Baramati police station were unsuccessful, as authorities declined to register a case both times.

Speaking to the media, More said the Congress is contesting the election not just for political gain but to uphold democratic values and challenge the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

He further stated that the air crash should not be treated as a mere coincidence and that the truth behind the incident must be uncovered through a thorough investigation.

"If the government registers an FIR and investigates the matter seriously, I will think about withdrawing my nomination," More said, linking his electoral decision directly to the demand for accountability.

Senior Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe backed More's stance, questioning why no FIR had been filed in Maharashtra despite repeat-

ed demands.

Londhe pointed out that even members of Ajit Pawar's family, including Sunetra Pawar herself, had



earlier called for a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Meanwhile, the Congress decision to contest the bypoll has drawn a sharp response from the BJP leadership.

Senior BJP leader and Maharashtra Revenue Minister Chandrashekar Bawankule warned that the Congress should reconsider its decision to enter the fray in Baramati.

He stated that if the Congress goes ahead with the contest, the BJP would ensure a decisive defeat, urging the party instead to support Sunetra Pawar.

Amid the intensifying political exchanges, Sunetra Pawar filed her nomination papers earlier in the day and delivered an emotional address.

Breaking down during her speech, she spoke about the personal and political void left by the passing of her husband, Ajit Pawar.

She described his death as not only a personal loss but also a significant loss for Baramati and the state, highlighting his deep connection with the constituency.

"Baramati was like a mother to Ajit Dada, and every citizen here was like Lord Panduranga to him," she said, underlining his emotional bond with the people. She added that she has set aside her grief to carry forward his vision and

fulfil his dreams for the development of Baramati.

Emphasising continuity, Sunetra Pawar assured voters that the constituency's progress would not be affected and that she would uphold Ajit Pawar's legacy.

She also expressed confidence that the people of Baramati would extend their support to her, just as they had consistently supported her husband.

Highlighting her political lineage, she noted her association with a family deeply rooted in Maharashtra politics, including Sharad Pawar.

She concluded by stating that the election is not just about her candidature but a collective effort to honour Ajit Pawar's legacy and continue his work for the people. With multiple political narratives unfolding simultaneously, the Baramati by-election is shaping up to be one of the most closely watched contests in the state.

## Pune Police arrest absconding accused in multiple serious offences

**Pune:** In a significant breakthrough, Pune Police have apprehended an absconding criminal wanted in multiple serious offences, including cases under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

According to an official press note, the accused had been on the run for nearly a year and was wanted in connection with cases registered at Shivajinagar Police Station and other jurisdictions.

Despite repeated efforts by law enforcement, the accused had managed to evade arrest by frequently changing locations and avoiding his known residence in Beed

district. Acting on specific intelligence inputs, police officials traced the accused to a relative's residence in Dhatur tehsil.

A special team was immediately dispatched to the location, and a carefully coordinated operation was planned to ensure the suspect could be apprehended without alert. The operation was executed successfully, and the accused was taken into custody without incident, marking a major success for the police. Following the arrest, the accused was brought to Pune and handed over to the concerned investigating unit for further

legal proceedings. In a related development, Unit 2 of the Crime Branch arrested another accused in connection with separate cases registered at Swargate Police Station and Kondhwa Police Station.

This second accused had also been absconding and was tracked down through a combination of technical surveillance and confidential intelligence inputs.

Officials stated that both arrests are part of an intensified crackdown on organised crime and repeat offenders in the city. The operations highlight the increasing use of intelligence-led policing and

coordination between multiple units to tackle criminal networks.

Authorities emphasised that such efforts are crucial in maintaining law and order and ensuring that habitual offenders are brought to justice. Senior Police Inspector Vishwajit Kaingade said the operation was carried out under the guidance of senior officers with coordinated efforts from the Crime Branch and local police teams. He added that the arrests demonstrate the department's commitment to pursuing absconding criminals and dismantling organised crime structures.

## Woman ends life in Nagpur, leaves emotional note for husband

**Nagpur:** A tragic incident was reported from Nagpur, where a married woman allegedly died by suicide, leaving behind an emotional note addressed to her husband, police said on Monday.

The incident took place on Sunday in the Mahadula area under the jurisdiction of Koradi Police Station. The deceased has been identified as Mayuri Mendhe.

According to police sources, the woman had been facing marital discord for some time and was reportedly under significant mental stress.

Due to ongoing disputes with her husband, she had been staying at her parental home for nearly a month prior to the incident.

On the day of the incident, she allegedly attempted to contact her husband multiple times, but he did not re-

spond to her calls.

Police believe that the lack of communication further distressed her, contributing to her emotional state.

When no other family members were present at home, she allegedly took the extreme step.

Later in the evening, when her family returned, they found the door locked from inside, raising suspicion.

Upon breaking open the door, they discovered her hanging and immediately rushed her to a nearby hospital.

However, doctors declared her brought dead, confirming that she had already passed away. During the investigation, police recovered a suicide note from the scene, which has been taken into custody as key evidence. In the note, the woman reportedly expressed her emotional distress and mentioned

her husband, indicating the pain she had been experiencing. Authorities stated that the contents of the note are being examined carefully as part of the probe. Meanwhile, the deceased's family has alleged that she was subjected to mental harassment by her husband.

Based on a complaint filed by her brother, police have registered a case of accidental death and initiated further investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Officials said they are looking into all angles, including the allegations made by the family, before taking further legal action. The case highlights the serious impact of unresolved personal conflicts and emotional distress, with police urging individuals facing similar situations to seek timely support and assistance.

## Trailer of Akshay Kumar and Priyadarshan's 'Bhooth Bangla' unleashed

**Mumbai:** The trailer of Bhooth Bangla, starring Akshay Kumar and directed by Priyadarshan, has finally been released, generating excitement among fans.

After building anticipation with chartbuster songs, intriguing posters, and a promising teaser, the makers have now unveiled the full trailer, offering a glimpse into the film's quirky horror-comedy world.

The film reunites the much-loved comic trio of Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal and Rajpal Yadav, with veteran actor Asrani adding his signature humour to the mix.

The trailer introduces Kumar's character, who inherits an old bungalow with a mysterious and eerie past. The property comes with a haunted forest located just behind it, ominously named



Pisaach Van.

Despite repeated warnings about the dangers surrounding the house, Kumar's character refuses to back out of the deal, driven by his determination and comic stubbornness.

Paresh Rawal's character is seen cautioning Mithila Palkar's character about the risks involved, but his concerns largely go unheeded.

As the story unfolds, strange and supernatural occurrences begin to surface,

blending elements of horror with light-hearted comedy.

The trailer builds up to a dramatic moment where Kumar's character inadvertently awakens a mysterious entity named Vadhusur, setting the stage for chaos and comic

misadventures.

Bhooth Bangla is among the most awaited films of 2026, particularly because it marks the reunion of Akshay Kumar and Priyadarshan after a gap of 14 years.

The film is backed by Balaji Motion Pictures, a division of Balaji Telefilms Limited, in association with Cape of Good Films.

The ensemble cast also includes Wamiqa Gabbi, Tabu, and Jisshu Sengupta in key roles.

The project is produced by Akshay Kumar along with Shobha Kapoor and Ekta Kapoor, promising a grand cinematic experience.

Adding to the excitement, the makers have announced special advance paid previews of the film in cinemas starting from 9 p.m. on April 16, 2026, ahead of its wider release.

## Shubhangi Atre on ZEE5 premiere of Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hain, "This film is like a visual treat"

**Mumbai:** Actor Shubhangi Atre has brought back her much-loved character Angoori in the film version of Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hain! Fun On The Run, which is currently streaming on ZEE5. In an exclusive quote with Bollywood Hungama, the actress shared her thoughts on the film. Recalling her first thoughts when the film was announced, Shubhangi said, "I was already a part of the show when the film was announced, so for me, it was pure excitement. I was honestly thrilled and very happy to be a part of it. It has been such a wonderful journey with the show, and I have always loved the audience's response. That connection is what really makes you want to continue being a part of the franchise." Talking about the loyal fan base the show has built over the years, Shubhangi added, "I feel the audience of Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hain is extremely loyal. They



have stayed with us for over ten years, so for them, this film is like a visual treat. This time, we have stepped out of Modern Colony and shot in real locations, so visually it feels fresh and exciting. It truly is fun on the run. I would not say there was added responsibility as such because we have been playing these characters for so many years, it comes very naturally to us. The only difference is that for the big screen, you have to be

a little more subtle in your performance." Opening up about whether she felt she should take the character a notch above for the big screen, Shubhangi explained, "I do not think there was a need to change or elevate Angoori in any drastic way. The audience already loves her the way she is. I think her innocence, her simplicity, and that carefree, fun-loving nature are what people connect with the most."

## Sreeleela: "It is a journey where you are constantly learning, unlearning, and relearning"

**Mumbai:** Sreeleela is rapidly emerging as one of the most talked-about young stars across social media and the silver screen. With her infectious energy and compelling performances, she has been capturing the attention of audiences and industry insiders alike. From her striking screen presence to her evolving acting skills, Sreeleela's rise in the film industry has been both swift and widely noticed. Yet, despite the growing spotlight, she views her journey through a grounded and introspective lens. In a recent interview with Harper's Bazaar India, the actress described her ascent not as a dramatic breakthrough, but as a gradual and organic process shaped by consistent effort. "It felt a lot less like a rise and more like a series of small, quiet steps that suddenly became visible," she said, reflecting on her career trajectory. She emphasised that her journey has been one of continuous learning. According to her, growth comes from constantly evolving—learning, unlearning, and relearning at every stage. Sreeleela also highlighted the importance of staying centred amid

growing fame. She believes maintaining a sense of normalcy is essential to navigating the pressures of the entertainment industry. For her, remembering the reason she began acting in the first place serves as a grounding force. This perspective allows her to stay focused on her craft rather than getting carried away by external attention. Her reflections reveal a sense of humility that stands out in an industry often driven by instant recognition and glamour. Instead of chasing hype, she prioritises personal and professional growth.

The actress also spoke about what draws her to the world of cinema. At the heart of it, she said, is a deep curiosity

and a desire to explore different lives and perspectives.



## Pulkit Samrat drops new Glory poster ahead of teaser release; earns nod from India's boxing community

**Mumbai:** Pulkit Samrat has sparked significant buzz with the release of the first poster of his upcoming series Glory, which is set to stream on Netflix. The reveal has already generated strong interest among fans and industry circles. Unveiled on April 6, the poster offers a striking glimpse into the gritty and intense world of boxing that the series explores. It presents Pulkit in a completely transformed avatar, highlighting his dedication to the role. Set inside a boxing ring, the visual captures the actor in a battle-ready stance, exuding intensity and focus. The imagery hints at a narrative built around discipline, struggle, and resilience. The rugged tone and styling of the poster have immediately caught attention, especially as it marks a departure from Pulkit Samrat's earlier on-screen personas, where he was often seen in lighter roles. Interestingly, the poster has resonated strongly beyond film audiences, drawing reactions from India's professional boxing and fitness community.

This cross-over appeal has

added credibility to the project. Several sportspersons took to social media to share the poster, appreciating the authenticity of the look and the effort behind Pulkit's physical transformation. International boxer Monika Negi congratulated the actor, noting that his hard work, discipline, and passion were clearly visible in the frame. Professional boxer Dharmendra Singh Yadav described the look as "amazing," while fellow boxer Rohit Tokas reacted with enthusiasm, signalling anticipation within the sporting community. Adding a personal touch, Pulkit's wife Kriti Kharbanda shared her excitement and support for the project, further amplifying its reach among fans. Filmmaker Abhishek Dogra also reacted positively, calling the poster impressive and adding to the growing appreciation. Sharing the poster on Instagram, Pulkit captioned it, "Blood. Sweat. Glory. Kal milte hai ring mein... Glory teaser, out tomorrow, only on Netflix," building anticipation for the teaser release. The actor has been actively resharing reactions and messages on his social media, engaging with fans and amplifying the buzz around the series. Glory marks a defining moment in the career of Pulkit Samrat, as he takes on the role of a boxer for the first time. The project signals a clear shift in his career trajectory, highlighting his readiness to embrace physically demanding and performance-driven roles. Known for his versatility across genres, Pulkit appears to have undergone intensive physical training to convincingly por-

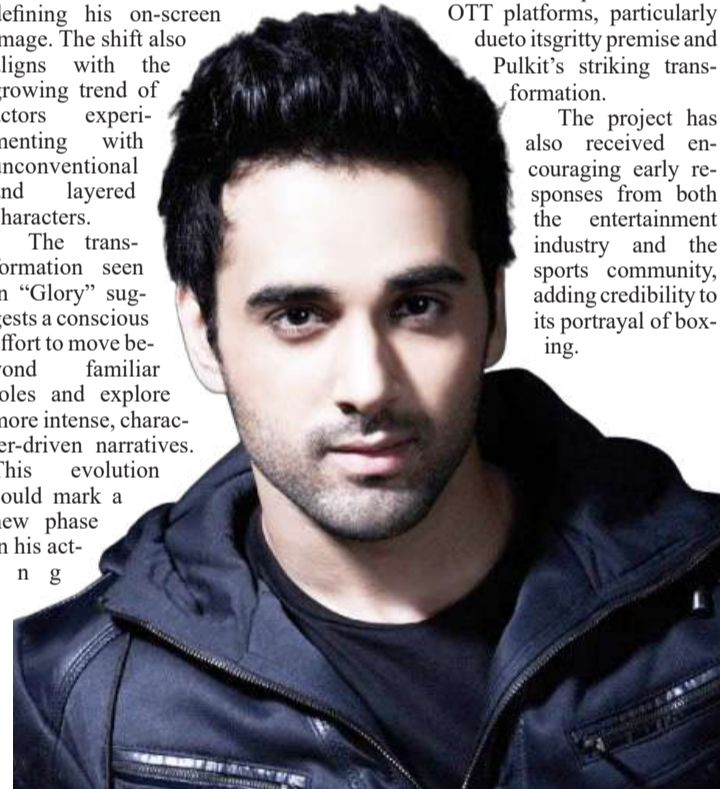
tray a professional fighter. His transformation reflects not just physical effort but also a deeper immersion into the character.

The preparation involved in stepping into the boxing world indicates a strong commitment to authenticity. This level of dedication is increasingly becoming a defining feature of actors working in high-quality streaming content. By choosing such a challenging role, Pulkit is expanding his creative boundaries and redefining his on-screen image. The shift also aligns with the growing trend of actors experimenting with unconventional and layered characters.

The transformation seen in "Glory" suggests a conscious effort to move beyond familiar roles and explore more intense, character-driven narratives. This evolution could mark a new phase in his acting.

The series itself appears to be rooted in themes of discipline, struggle, and resilience—qualities that are central to both boxing and compelling storytelling. These elements are likely to resonate strongly with audiences. With the teaser set to release soon, anticipation around the series continues to build steadily. Early glimpses and promotional material have already generated significant curiosity. "Glory" is quickly emerging as one of the most anticipated titles on OTT platforms, particularly due to its gritty premise and Pulkit's striking transformation.

The project has also received encouraging early responses from both the entertainment industry and the sports community, adding credibility to its portrayal of boxing.



## Salman Khan to begin shooting for 'SVC63' in Mumbai from April 18

**Mumbai:** Bollywood superstar Salman Khan is gearing up for his next big cinematic outing, as he prepares to begin filming for an upcoming project backed by Dil Raju. The film is currently being referred to by its working title "SVC63."

The project will be directed by noted Telugu filmmaker Vamshi Paidipally, marking an exciting collaboration between Bollywood and South Indian cinema.

Filming for the movie is scheduled to commence on April 18 in Mumbai, with preparations already underway for a large-scale production.

The first shooting schedule will take place at the SRPF Ground in Goregaon, where the makers have constructed an elaborate set replicating a dense urban landscape.

This specially designed set will serve as the backdrop for a high-octane action sequence featuring Salman Khan, setting the tone for the film's larger-than-life narrative.

Sources suggest that the action sequences are being designed to match international standards, reflecting the makers' ambition to deliver a visually spectacular experience.

The production team has planned an extensive three-month shooting schedule, covering multiple locations across India in addition to Mumbai.

The makers are aiming to

wrap up principal photography by August or September 2026, ensuring ample time for post-production work ahead of release.

Although the official release date has not yet been announced, the upcoming film starring Salman Khan is being strategically positioned for a grand theatrical release during the Eid 2027 window. This festive period has historically been associated with some of the actor's biggest box-office successes.

The yet-untitled project, currently referred to as "SVC63," is designed as a pan-India entertainer, bringing together talent from multiple film industries to maximise its nationwide appeal.

In a major casting highlight, Nayanthara has been roped in as the female lead opposite Salman Khan. The collaboration marks the first time the two stars will share screen space, generating considerable excitement among fans.

The film also features veteran actor Anil Kapoor in a key role, adding gravitas and experience to the narrative.

Acclaimed actor Arvind Swamy has also been cast in a significant part, further strengthening the ensemble and raising expectations around the film's performances.

The project is being helmed by Vamshi Paidipally, who has a proven track record of delivering commercially successful films across

languages.

Paidipally is known for directing popular hits such as "Yevadu," "Oopiri," "Maharshi," and "Varisu," which have established him as a dependable filmmaker in mainstream cinema.

Meanwhile, Salman Khan is set to begin work on this ambitious project even before the release of his upcoming war drama Maatrubhumi. Directed by Apoorva Lakhia, "Maatrubhumi" was initially slated for release on April 17 but has been indefinitely postponed due to the sensitive nature of its subject matter.

Despite the delay, the makers of "Maatrubhumi" have already released multiple songs and behind-the-scenes visuals to generate buzz around the film.

However, the promotional material has received a relatively lukewarm response from audiences so far, raising questions about the film's eventual reception. This response has increased the stakes for Salman Khan's next project, making "SVC63" a crucial film in terms of re-establishing strong box-office momentum.



## Suchitra Sen: The eternal enigma of ravishing beauty, mesmerising eyes, and peerless acting brilliance

**Mumbai:** April 6 is not just another date—it is a quiet reminder of a cinematic force whose brilliance refuses to fade. The birth anniversary of Suchitra Sen rekindles the aura of an artist who redefined stardom with grace, restraint, and an almost mystical screen presence. More than a decade after her passing in 2014, her legacy continues to shimmer with rare intensity, untouched by time.

Suchitra Sen was never merely an actress; she was an experience. In an era dominated by towering male stars, she carved out a space so commanding that her presence often eclipsed her contemporaries. Her performances carried a quiet power—an interplay of silence and emotion so precise that every role she inhabited felt deeply personal and profoundly real. She didn't just share the frame; she owned it.

Nowhere was this more evident than in 'Devdas', where her portrayal of Paro became the emotional heartbeat of the film. Opposite Dilip Kumar—widely regarded as one of Indian cinema's finest actors—Sen delivered a performance so compelling that stories persist of scenes being reworked to match her intensity. Whether apocryphal or not, the anecdote endures because it reflects a widely accepted truth: she elevated every moment she touched.

The film's legacy also carried a moment of controversy. While Suchitra Sen was awarded Best Actress for her unforgettable Paro, Vyjayanthimala declined the Best Supporting Actress award for Chandramukhi, asserting the equal weight of her role. The debate only reinforced what audiences already felt—Sen's Paro was not just central, it was unforgettable.

Yet the greatness of Suchitra Sen extended far beyond awards or critical acclaim. It lived in the spell she cast on audiences—an effortless elegance, a timeless dignity, and eyes that expressed what words often could not. Her presence on screen carried an emotional depth that resonated quietly yet profoundly.

She possessed a rare ability to make viewers feel seen and understood, often through the subtlest of gestures. In moments of silence, she conveyed entire worlds of emotion, redefining the language of performance in Indian cinema.

Perhaps the most defining chapter of her life was her decision to step away from the public eye at the height of her fame. In an industry driven by constant visibility, her withdrawal was both unexpected and deeply symbolic.



By choosing silence over continued

stardom, she preserved an aura of mystery that remains unmatched. It ensured that her work—not her personal life—remained the central focus of her legacy.

Born in 1931 in Pabna, Suchitra Sen rose to prominence with the film Sharye Chuatter. The film marked the beginning of an iconic journey in Indian cinema.

Her on-screen pairing with Uttam Kumar soon became legendary, defining what is often referred to as the golden era of Bengali cinema. Together, they delivered a series of timeless classics that continue to captivate audiences.

Their collaborations were not merely popular—they became cultural landmarks, shaping cinematic storytelling and audience expectations for decades.

Suchitra Sen's artistry also earned her international recognition. She became the first Indian actress to win an award at the Moscow International Film Festival for her performance in Saat Pake Bandha.

Her work in Hindi cinema further showcased her remarkable range. In films like Devdas and Aandhi, she brought together emotional depth and nuanced performances.

Each role she portrayed carried a sense of authenticity, blending vulnerability with quiet strength in a way that few actors could achieve.

After her final film, Pronoy Pasha, she withdrew completely from public life. For over three decades, she lived in seclusion, away from the industry that had once celebrated her. In a rare and striking decision, she even declined the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, choosing instead a life of introspection and spiritual pursuit. She spent her later years in quiet association with the Ramakrishna Mission, embracing a path far removed from fame and recognition.

Her performances remain immortal, defined by expressive stillness and emotional precision. She had the unique ability to make silence speak louder than dialogue.

By choosing silence over continued

## ICC Player of Month nominees for March revealed

**Dubai:** India opener Sanju Samson, fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah and South Africa batter Connor Esterhuizen have been shortlisted for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for March 2026, while New Zealand captain Amelia Kerr, Australia batter Beth Mooney and South Africa seam bowler Ayabonga Khaka are in contention for the women's honour.

Samson's sizzling form towards the end of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which earned him the Player of the Tournament award, puts him in the fray alongside Jasprit Bumrah, the Player of the Match in the fi-



nal. Rookie Esterhuizen completes the shortlist following an outstanding debut T20I series in New Zealand that saw one of the best statistics after five T20Is by anyone from his country.

Kerr's outstanding efforts in ODIs and T20Is during this period against Zimbabwe and South Africa

make a strong case for her third ICC Player of the Month award while Mooney also had fine performances across the two formats against India and the West Indies.

Khaka was the leading wicket-taker in their T20I series in New Zealand that was followed with an outstanding effort in their first ODI.

## MacIntyre misses out as Spaun wins Texas Open

**Texas:** Scotland's Robert MacIntyre missed out on a chance to win a third PGA Tour title as he was overtaken by American JJ Spaun at the weather-hit Texas Open.

MacIntyre led by one shot on 14 under par when the third round belatedly ended on Sunday, after storms drastically curtailed Saturday's play. The world number 11 then shot a two-under 70 in his fourth round, helped significantly by an eagle at the par-four 17.

But he was unable to match the final-day surge from US Open champion Spaun and had to settle for a share of second place before Masters week at Augusta. Spaun's closing 67 took him to 17 under for a one-shot win, with MacIntyre - who had to play 30 holes on Sunday - unable to make the birdie he needed at 18 to force a play-off, according to Xinhua.

The victory was 35-year-old Spaun's second at the San Antonio event, the setting for his maiden PGA Tour title in 2022.

England's Matt Wallace also finished on 16 under as he followed up a third-round 64 with a 68 that gave him the clubhouse lead for a long time, while American Michael Kim made it a three-way tie in second.

"This game is so crazy," Spaun told Sky Sports. "I've not been at the form I wanted to be based off last season. It means a lot to come back and win here at a place that's been so good to me."

"There's so much that comes with winning such big events like the US Open or any other major."

I put a lot of pressure on myself this year, complete opposite of the mantra from last year that

really helped me, so I tried to get back to that.

"I put less pressure on myself. It's been trying, but sticking to that mantra has really helped me."

MacIntyre's second-round lead had been reduced from four shots to two by Swedish playing partner Ludvig Aberg through six holes when storms caused the third round to be suspended on Saturday.

The 29-year-old Scot was faced with a heavy Sunday schedule but still looked set to carry a two-shot lead into the final round, only to bogey the 18th for a 72, a frustrating note on which to end his third round.

MacIntyre then twice made birdie before immediately dropping a shot in his final round, and Spaun sprinted to the clubhouse lead with three birdies on the back nine plus an eagle on the driveable 17th.

MacIntyre impressively matched that eagle to rally his hopes of victory, but he hit a wayward second shot on 18 and could not get close enough to the pin with his third. His putt from 30 feet away ran wide, ensuring Spaun won a third PGA Tour title of his career.

There will be little time to celebrate victory for Spaun, or dwell on what might have been for MacIntyre, who began the tournament with rounds of 66 and 64, as the Masters, the first major of the year, begins on Thursday.

# RR chase third win as MI eye turnaround

**Guwahati:** This is not one of those genteel cricketing affairs that drifts along unnoticed. It arrives with narrative, with expectation, and with the quiet tension that often precedes a contest of consequence. This encounter between Rajasthan Royals and Mumbai Indians on Tuesday carries with it the sense that something meaningful may well unfold under the Guwahati lights.

Rajasthan come into this match buoyed by recent victories, a side that appears to be growing in belief with each outing. Wins early in a tournament tend to settle a dressing room, lending clarity to roles and confidence to execution. Under Rryan Parag's leadership, there is a visible sense of composure about the group, a youthful side playing without the burden of excessive history, yet increasingly aware of its own potential.

Their batting has shown encouraging signs, and the contributions have been both timely and spread across the unit. Yashasvi Jaiswal has provided fluent starts at the top, combining intent with consistency. The presence of Vaibhav Suryavanshi has added a spark of fearless strokeplay, offering momentum in the powerplay.

In the middle order, Dhruv Jurel has anchored innings with maturity, while Shimron Hetmyer has supplied the finishing thrust with his ability to clear the ropes under pressure.

Parag himself has contributed with both bat and leadership, ensuring stability in the core batting structure. The all-round capabilities of Ravindra Jadeja have further strengthened the lower order, providing both quick runs and balance. However, the bowling unit remains an area of concern. Jofra Archer has led the attack with pace and strike ability, while Nandre Burger has supported with new-ball movement.

In the middle overs, Ravi Bishnoi has shown wicket-taking ability with his variations, complemented by the discipline of Sandeep Sharma and Tushar Deshpande. Despite these individual efforts, maintaining sustained control across phases remains a challenge that could be tested under pressure.

On the other side stands, Mum-



bai Indians, a team that carries with it the weight of expectation that comes from sustained success over the years. Led by Hardik Pandya, they are not so much searching for identity as they are for consistency. Recent results may have been uneven, but sides of this calibre are rarely defined by short-term fluctuations.

The batting lineup blends experience with flair. Rohit Sharma brings a measured assurance at the top, providing a platform built on timing and placement. Suryakumar Yadav adds an inventive dimension in the middle order, capable of shifting gears seamlessly and unsettling bowlers with his range of strokes. Tilak Varma has offered composure and continuity, while Ryan Rickelton has contributed as a steady presence at the top.

Supporting roles from Sherfane Rutherford and Mitchell Santner have added depth and flexibility, while Pandya himself remains a crucial finisher capable of accelerating in the final overs. Shardul Thakur has also provided lower-order contributions, ensuring resilience in the batting unit.

Mumbai's bowling remains one

of their key strengths. Jasprit Bumrah continues to be the fulcrum of their attack, delivering control at the death and breakthroughs at critical junctures. Trent Boult offers early movement with the new ball, forming a potent combination with Deepak Chahar, who adds swing and accuracy in the powerplay.

In the middle overs, Mitchell Santner provides control with his left-arm spin, while Mayank Markande contributes wrist-spin variations. The all-round presence of Pandya and the supporting role of Thakur further enhance the bowling depth, giving Mumbai multiple options across phases.

The venue at Barsapara Cricket Stadium adds its own layer to the contest. The surface has generally favoured bowlers early on, with seamers finding assistance before conditions ease under lights. Batting requires patience and application, as the pitch tends to reward those who build their innings rather than attempt to force the pace prematurely. Chasing has often been the preferred option, given the gradual improvement in conditions as the match pro-

gresses. What emerges is a contest defined by contrast. Rajasthan represent momentum, youthful energy, and a side in the process of establishing itself. Mumbai represent experience, depth, and the familiarity of having navigated high-pressure situations over time.

For Rajasthan, the challenge lies in ensuring that the contributions of their batsmen are complemented by greater control from their bowlers, particularly in containing a batting unit of Mumbai's calibre. For Mumbai, the task is to translate the collective contributions of their experienced core into a cohesive performance, where each segment of the team complements the other.

Encounters of this nature often unfold gradually, shaped by partnerships, key spells, and moments of individual brilliance. As the innings progress and pressure builds, the balance may shift subtly.

Whether the match tilts towards the rising confidence of Rajasthan or the established stability of Mumbai will depend on which side better aligns its individual contributions into a sustained team effort when the contest reaches its defining stages.

Teams:

Mumbai Indians: Naman Dhir, Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Danish Malewar, Sherfane Rutherford, Hardik Pandya, Raj Bawa, Will Jacks, Mayank Rawat, Corbin Bosch, Mitchell Santner, Shardul Thakur, Atharva Ankoekar, Robin Minz, Ryan Rickelton, Quinton de Kock, Trent Boult, Ashwani Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah, Deepak Chahar, Mayank Markande, AM Ghazanfar, Raghu Sharma, Mohammed Salahuddin Izhar

Rajasthan Royal: Shubham Dubey, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Aman Rao Perala, Rryan Parag, Dausun Shanaka, Ravindra Jadeja, Dhruv Jurel, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Donovan Ferreira, Ravi Singh, Jofra Archer, Nandre Burger, Tushar Deshpande, Kwena Maphaka, Sandeep Sharma, Yudhvir Singh Charak, Vignesh Puthur, Yash Raj Punja, Vanshant Mishra, Ravi Bishnoi, Brijesh Sharma, Adam Milne, Kuldeep Sen.

## Critchley stars as Essex wrap up big win at Hants in County Championship

**London:** All-rounder Matt Critchley led Essex to a three-day innings victory over

to give new Hampshire head coach Russell Domingo a bad start in the County Championship.

Stand-in captain Sam Cook had picked up three first-innings scalps as Hampshire were rolled for 156. And after being asked to follow-on, the hosts could only manage 168 to lose by an innings and 137 runs, with Critchley picking up 5-9 after scoring a century earlier in the match.

Essex, who only won three times in a disappointing 2025, became the first team to win in 2026 as they claimed 22 points, with Hampshire securing just two. No one had fewer batting points than Hampshire

in the 2025 County Championship, which almost led to them getting relegated.

Adi Birrell had departed after the season and was replaced by former South Africa chief Domingo. And if he didn't know the depth of his challenge, he does now, according to BBC sport.

The challenge of Porter, Cook and Snater was too much for them in the day two gloom as they slipped to 48-3 in less than 15 overs - after Essex had been able to breeze to 461-7 declared.

The morning continued in the same vein, albeit under far bluer skies, as Hampshire lost four wickets for 17 runs.

Jake Lehmann only faced seven more deliveries, and added only a swished boundary to his overnight 30, before he attempted to cut a ball to close to him to

give Porter his first wicket of the season.

Ben Brown left a straight ball from Cook, before Liam Dawson edged Porter behind when grappling with a delivery outside the off stump.

Teenage debutant Ben Mayes struck a pair of eye-catching boundaries before Snater pinned him in front, and Codi Yusuf followed after fellow South African Wiaan Mulder snuck a ball into middle stump.

The tail vaguely waggled with top-scorer Kyle Abbott and Eddie Jack reach 30s in a 48-run partnership for the ninth wicket. But the spinners ended things either side of lunch. Simon

Harmer and Critchley had Abbott and Sonny Baker, respectively, leg before to end a dismal batting performance.

The follow-on was enforced with a lead of 305.

Hampshire were careering towards a three-day defeat when Joe Weatherley edged the fourth ball of the second dig behind. But Gubbins and Prest provided some respite from the wickets with an 81-run stand, which was amassed serenely as Essex's new ball didn't zip around. Prest was positive - as he shook off his poor 2025 - with 10 confident boundaries to collect a half-century.

But there was the looming presence of Harmer, on a pitch which was moving for subtle spin to dangerous turn. The South African, in his 10th season at Essex, had been introduced in the ninth over but it wasn't until after tea in the 24th that he began to become a major threat.

Prest fell for 55 as he was

lbw to the off-spinner when shuffling across his stumps. Cook paused the Harmer domination when Lehmann was strangled down the leg-side, before Brown was undone by floaty delivery and chopped on.

Mayes was bowled through the gate and while Harmer was switching ends after 21 overs, Critchley's drag-down was dragged on Dawson.

Critchley, who scored 173 with the bat, then had Yusuf lbw. Gubbins had soaked up 161-balls of pressure over almost two hours before turning Critchley to short leg with four overs left in the day.

Critchley rounded things off on a successful trip from Chelmsford when Jack was bowled and Baker skied to mid-on.

## Jessica Pegula retains Charleston Open title

**Charleston (South Carolina):** Top seed Jessica Pegula successfully defended her title at the Charleston Open with a dominant victory over first-time finalist Yuliia Starodubtseva. The American delivered a composed and clinical performance to retain her crown.

Pegula defeated her unseeded opponent 6-2, 6-2 in straight sets, underlining her consistency and control throughout the final. The win marked another milestone in what has been a highly successful season for the American star.

This triumph was Pegula's second title of the year, following her earlier success at the Dubai Tennis Championships in February. Her ability to maintain form across tournaments has made her one of the most re-

liable performers on the tour. The 32-year-old had a challenging route to the final, winning four consecutive three-set matches. Despite the physical demands of those encounters, she showed resilience and composure when it mattered most.

In the final, Pegula had to fend off resistance from Starodubtseva, particularly during crucial moments. She saved seven of the eight break points she faced, demonstrating her mental toughness under pressure.

Her defensive solidity and ability to capitalize on key opportunities ultimately proved decisive. Pegula controlled the tempo of the match and prevented her opponent from building any sustained momentum.

With this victory, Pegula

registered her 24th win of the season, highlighting her consistency at the highest level. The result also propelled her to the top of the WTA wins leaderboard for the year.

She moved ahead of world number one Aryna Sabalenka in terms of match wins in 2026, further underlining her strong campaign on the tour.

Speaking after the match, Pegula expressed gratitude to the fans for their unwavering support throughout the tournament. She acknowledged the role they played in helping her navigate a demanding week.

"Thank you to the fans who supported me throughout the whole week," she said. "There were many three-set matches, and it's been such a long week for me."

## Lijnders hints at Man City departure for Bernardo Silva

**London:** Manchester City assistant manager Pep Lijnders has hinted midfielder Bernardo Silva's nine-year spell at the club will end this summer, saying "every good story comes to an end".

The 31-year-old's contract expires at the end of the season. He has not yet signed an extension and has been linked with La Liga leaders Barcelona, Serie A side Juventus and clubs in America.

Lijnders was on media duty after Saturday's 4-0 FA Cup quarter-final win over Liverpool with manager Pep Guardiola serving a touchline ban, and reflected on the importance of the Portuguese international to City, according to BBC sport.

"You never replace a player with the same kind of player because they don't exist," he said.

"Bernardo Silva is unique. The way he controls games, the way he moves, the way he receives, the way he leads, the way he sees the solutions. All these things.

"But it will be hard because, as I

said, in the game, when he is not playing you will see how he is missed - and that's one game. Imagine a season.



"But every good story comes to an end, and I hope he enjoys the last months - there are only six weeks - and has a good farewell. "He deserves all that attention as well."

Silva, who came to the club from Monaco in 2017, made his 450th appearance for the club in Saturday's win while the recent Carabao Cup success

was his 18th piece of silverware at City. Guardiola is a long-time admirer of Silva, who is his most selected player over his managerial career, and made him captain after the departure of Kevin de Bruyne at the end of last season.

City have been linked with a move for Nottingham Forest midfielder Elliot Anderson in the summer but Lijnders also stressed the importance of the City Academy.

"You never search for a replacement of one type of player," he added. "You search for what is needed to grow with the team and somebody who can fit in the first 11."

"And then you hope, with our academy, with the young players we already bought that they can make that step as well in the midfield positions. "If you see our young boys in the academy, then they have to make that step and to grow. "But the most important is that the seniors who stay for a long time, that they stay, that they are always there and, around that, you can move."

## Olympic gymnastic champion Petrounias wins as Cairo World Cup finals opens

**Cairo:** Olympic champion Eleftherios Petrounias bagged a rings gold on the opening day of Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup finals here, with five gold medals decided across men's and women's events. Olympic champion Eleftherios Petrounias showcased his experience on the rings to secure gold on Sunday, followed by Armenia's Artur Avetisyan, who earned silver, while China's young gymnast Liu Yang took the bronze. Petrounias said he had overcome a last-minute muscle cramp to compete in Cairo, adding that he was satisfied with his performance but aiming for higher scores in the future, according to Xinhua. "For me, this championship means, first of all, points for the qualification to the World Championships in Rotter-

dam in October. And second of all, I'd like to compete in different countries and tournaments to be able to adapt



anytime anywhere very fast," the Greek said. He added that his long-term goal remains the Olympic stage. "My dream is to reach the LA Olympics and leave with one more medal," he added. The first day of finals featured five apparatus

nov and Arsenii Dukhno took the gold and silver respectively, while the Philippines' Karl Jahrel Eldrew Yulo secured the bronze medal. Meanwhile, Armenia's Hamlet Manukyan topped the standings in the men's pommel horse final to

claim gold, while Kazakhstan's Zeinolla Idrisov and Nariman Kurbanov finished level on points to take silver and bronze. On the women's side, Spain's Laia Font took gold in the vault final, finishing ahead of Panama's Hillary Heron, while China's Yu Linmin secured the bronze. Font said she hadn't expected her victory but was proud of her performance, noting that the result would boost her confidence for upcoming competitions in the Olympic cycle. "We've already had some competitions preparing for these vaults, so I came with a bit of practice -- a little, but not much," she said. In the uneven bars final, Algeria's Kaylia Nemour, one of the discipline's leading performers, edged China's Jiang Shuting to win, while Slovenia's Lucija Hribar came third.

BSE Sensex		Nifty 50		Nifty 500		Nifty Next 50		Nifty 100		Nifty Bank		Nifty Midcap 100	
Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change
74,106.85	1.07%	22,968.25	1.12%	21,194.05	1.22%	62,858.95	1.45%	23,579.45	1.18%	52,609.10	2.06%	54,492.65	1.52%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
73,319.55	73,477.53	22,713.10	22,780.30	20,938.35	20,990.85	61,957.60	62,198.05	23,304.20	23,376.90	51,548.75	51,747.60	53,677.05	53,757.95
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
74,207.46	72,728.66	22,998.35	22,542.95	21,217.95	20,789.45	62,932.35	61,586.80	23,609.25	23,159.75	52,704.55	51,111.10	54,554.45	53,068.55

## Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Trent	3,833.60	7.97
Shriram Finance	928.00	4.08
Axis Bank	1,245.30	3.96
Adani Enterpris	1,902.20	3.71
Titan Company	4,246.10	3.63

## Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Reliance	1,304.70	-3.39
ONGC	281.85	-1.86
Max Healthcare	931.60	-1.38
Eicher Motors	6,596.00	-0.80
JSW Steel	1,133.60	-0.67

## Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	150,464.00	784.00 0.52
Silver May 05	233,950.00	1,455.00 0.63
Crudeoil Apr 20	10,468.00	60.00 0.58
Naturalgas Apr 27	269.10	5.10 1.93

## Cost of vegetarian thali remained stable Y-o-Y in March : Crisil Report

**New Delhi:** In March, the cost of home-cooked vegetarian thali was flat on-year, while that of a non-vegetarian thali fell by 1 per cent, said Crisil's Roti Rice Rate (RRR) report released here on Monday.

The report noted that despite lower onion, potato, and pulse prices, the cost of a veg thali remained stable due to higher tomato, vegetable oil, and fuel prices.

Price of Tomato rose 33 pc on-year to Rs 28 per kg in March 2026 from Rs 25 per kg in the corresponding period last year.

The price hike is due to transplantation in key producing regions like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, which have adversely affected crop development, yield, and timely arrivals.

Pushan Sharma, Director of Crisil Intelligence, said, "The cost of vegetarian thali remained stable year-on-year in March as lower prices of onions, potatoes, and pulses offset the increase in tomato, edible oil, and fuel costs."

He pointed towards delayed transplantation in key regions behind the price rise in onions.

"The West Asia conflict has

driven up crude oil prices, which have, in turn, lifted edible oil prices amid increasing demand from the biofuel segment.

Global prices of palm and sunflower oil increased during the month, transmitting to domestic markets as well. At the same time, importers have turned cautious due to high prices, reducing their procurement and weighing on ending stocks," said Sharma on current geopolitical turbulence in West Asia.

He predicted that these geopolitical uncertainties are expected to keep vegetable oil prices high.

Onion prices are expected to remain under pressure in the near term due to high arrivals and sluggish export demand.

However, with an estimated decline of 10 pc in production and reported damage to the summer crop, onion prices are expected to gradually recover in the coming months.

"A resurgence in exports or support from the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (NAFED) could further support prices," he added.

## Sensex jumps 787 points; Nifty nears 23k level on softening crude oil prices

**Mumbai:** Benchmark equity indices extended their gains for the third consecutive session on Monday, supported by a strong late recovery and improving investor sentiment. Markets rebounded sharply after a weak start, aided by optimism surrounding a possible easing of geopolitical tensions.

The BSE Sensex surged 787.30 points, or 1.07 per cent, to close at 74,106.85. Meanwhile, the Nifty 50 climbed 255.15 points, or 1.12 per cent, to settle at 22,968.25.

The rebound in markets was largely attributed to improving global cues, particularly optimism over a potential ceasefire between the United States and Iran. This helped ease investor concerns and triggered buying across sectors.

Sectorally, banking, financials, consumer durables, and realty stocks led



the rally, each registering gains of over 2 per cent. The strong performance in these sectors reflected renewed investor confidence in domestic growth themes.

Other sectors such as metals, auto, and FMCG also ended higher, posting gains of around 1 per cent. Broad-based buying was visible across the market, indicating a healthy recovery.

Information technology stocks recorded moderate

gains, contributing to the positive momentum. However, the media sector remained largely flat, showing limited participation in the rally.

Oil and gas stocks, on the other hand, underperformed the broader market. The sector declined by 1.37 per cent, as firm crude oil prices continued to weigh on sentiment, according to commentary by Bajaj Broking.

From a technical perspective, the Nifty formed a bullish candlestick pattern on the daily chart. This included a higher high and a higher low, indicating a continuation of the pullback from previously oversold levels.

Notably, the index moved above its previous week's high of 22,941 for the first time in the last eight weeks. This breakout is seen as a positive signal for near-term market direction.

However, analysts caution that volatility is likely to remain elevated in the near term. Ongoing geopolitical tensions and firm crude oil prices could continue to influence market sentiment.

Looking ahead, a sustained move above the 23,000 mark could trigger further upside. If this level is convincingly breached, the index may head towards the 23,450 zone in the coming sessions.

## Brent crude surges past USD 110 per barrel, holds near USD 111 amid conflicting signals from US, Iran

**Washington:** Global oil markets opened the week on a highly volatile and uncertain note, with Brent Crude Oil surging past USD 110 per barrel and hovering close to USD 111 late Sunday. The sharp rise reflects growing anxiety among traders as geopolitical tensions intensify.

The spike comes amid conflicting signals from both United States and Iran regarding the trajectory of the ongoing conflict. Neither side has provided a clear or consistent stance, leaving markets struggling to interpret the situation. On one hand, US President Donald Trump has warned of escalating military action, including potential strikes on Iran's critical infrastructure such as power plants and bridges. These threats are tied to concerns over the possible blockage of the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, Trump has also claimed that Washington is engaged in "deep negotiations" with Tehran, creating a contradictory narrative that has added to market confusion. This dual messaging has made it difficult for investors to assess the likelihood of escalation versus de-escalation.

Iran's position has been equally complex and at times contradictory. While Tehran has declared its readiness for a prolonged conflict if necessary, it has simultaneously indicated openness to negotiations with the US.

However, Iranian officials have publicly rejected US proposals to end the con-



flikt, describing them as "one-sided" and "unfair." This rejection signals that a diplomatic resolution may not be imminent.

Further complicating the situation, Iran has conducted military strikes linked to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations while maintaining that these actions were targeted solely at US installations within those countries. Tehran has continued to describe GCC states as friendly, adding another layer of ambiguity.

This uncertainty has significantly increased volatility in global energy markets, which are already under pressure due to disruptions in one of the world's most critical oil supply routes. The Strait of Hormuz alone accounts for nearly 20 per cent of global crude oil flow.

On the ground, mixed developments have added to the confusion. Iranian officials have suggested that oil shipments from countries such as India, China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iraq may be allowed to pass through the strait. There have even been reports of at least one tanker successfully transiting the

route. However, the lack of clarity around the terms and reliability of such exemptions has left traders cautious about factoring in any sustained reopening.

Meanwhile, the conflict appears to be expanding beyond the strait. Drone strikes have reportedly targeted oil infrastructure in Kuwait and Bahrain, raising concerns about wider regional disruption.

In a separate development, Israeli forces reportedly struck a major petrochemical complex in Mahshahr, a key hub in Iran's energy network. This escalation has further heightened fears of supply shocks.

The ripple effects are already being felt by consumers, particularly in the United States, where average gasoline prices have climbed to around USD 4.11 per gallon, reflecting the surge in crude prices. Earlier in the day, members of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries participating in voluntary production cuts agreed to increase output by 206,000 barrels in May. This move was aimed at stabilising markets.

## India's services sector growth slows to 14-month low in March

**New Delhi:** India's services sector growth moderated in March, hitting a 14-month low even as inflationary pressures intensified, according to data released by HSBC and S&P Global. The latest PMI figures highlight a mixed trend of slowing activity alongside rising costs.

The HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index slipped to 57.5 in March from 58.1 in February. While this marked the weakest expansion in over a year, the index remained comfortably above the long-term average of 54.4, indicating that the sector is still growing.

Similarly, the HSBC India Composite PMI Output

Index fell to 57.0 from 58.9 in the previous month. This points to the slowest pace of expansion in overall private sector output since November 2022.

The data suggests that the moderation in growth was largely driven by softer domestic demand conditions. Businesses reported that local market dynamics weakened during the month, weighing on overall activity.

In contrast, international demand provided some cushion to the sector. Foreign sales continued to expand, helping offset part of the slowdown in domestic business activity. A key concern emerging from the survey is the sharp rise in input

costs. Inflation in input prices climbed to a 45-month high, reflecting mounting pressure on businesses.

Companies cited higher expenses across multiple categories, including fuel, transportation, food items, and labour. These rising costs are adding strain to operating margins across the services sector.

The increase in cost pressures has forced many firms to adjust their pricing strategies. Businesses passed on part of the higher input costs to customers, leading to an uptick in output prices.

Selling price inflation rose to a seven-month high in March, indicating that con-

sumers are beginning to feel the impact of elevated costs in the form of higher service charges.

Despite these challenges, the employment outlook showed improvement. The services sector recorded job growth for the third consecutive month, signalling resilience in hiring activity.

In fact, the pace of job creation was the strongest since mid-2025, suggesting that firms remain confident about future demand and are expanding their workforce accordingly.

Business sentiment also strengthened during the month. Companies expressed their highest level of optimism in nearly 12 years,

reflecting positive expectations about economic conditions.

Firms attributed this confidence to anticipated improvements in demand, better market conditions, and ongoing economic recovery trends.

The divergence between slowing growth and rising optimism highlights a complex economic environment. While current activity has moderated, expectations for the future remain upbeat.

Overall, the data presents a nuanced picture of India's services sector—one that is still expanding but facing headwinds from domestic softness and rising inflationary pressures.

## Government e-Marketplace achieved Rs 18.4 lakh cr GMV in FY 2025-26

**New Delhi:** The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has achieved a cumulative Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of Rs 18.4 lakh crore including Rs 5 lakh crore GMV in the financial year 2025-26, said an official statement released here on Monday.

GeM is continuously evolving as a transparent, efficient, and inclusive digital public procurement system, which is strengthening India's public economy.

Mihir Kumar, Chief Executive

Officer of Government e-Marketplace (GeM), said, "Crossing a cumulative GMV of Rs 18.4 lakh crore reflects the confidence of buyers, sellers, and institutions in a transparent and technology-driven procurement system."

This platform has adopted an inclusive approach to expand access for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), women entrepreneurs, SC/ST enterprises and startups.

During FY 2025-26, 68 per cent of total orders were executed by

MSEs, which accounted for 47.1 per cent of total GMV.

"More than 11 lakh MSEs are registered on the platform and have received over 51 lakh orders worth Rs 2.36 lakh crore during FY 2025-26, reflecting a growth of over 20 per cent compared to the previous financial year. Over 2.1 lakh women-led MSEs are registered on the portal and have received orders exceeding Rs 28,000 crore, registering approximately 28 per cent growth."

"SC/ST MSEs have received or-

ders worth over Rs 6,000 crore, reflecting a growth of around 28 per cent. Startups have also contributed significantly, securing orders worth over Rs 19,000 crore during the same period, marking a growth of over 36 per cent," the Commerce Ministry statement said.

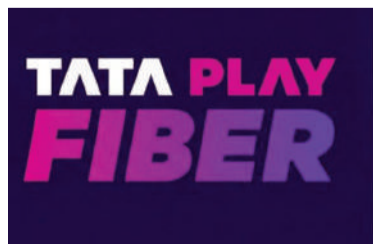
Technology is playing a central role in GeM's operations as now this platform is also leveraging artificial intelligence, machine learning and advanced analytics to ensure transparency.

## Tata Play Fiber partners IBM to build AI-ready data infra

**Bengaluru:** Tata Play Fiber has announced a collaboration with IBM to develop a next-generation, AI-ready enterprise data lakehouse powered by IBM watsonx, aimed at unifying its data ecosystem and strengthening analytics capabilities.

The platform will consolidate 25 disparate data sources into a single, scalable environment, enabling advanced analytics, improved customer retention, and new cross-sell and upsell opportunities, the company said. Tata Play Fiber noted that in a competitive broadband market, its earlier data systems were fragmented across customer records, marketing, finance, call center interactions, and service operations, leading to inconsistencies, lack of standardisation and limited real-time reporting capabilities.

The new architecture is expected to address these challenges by providing a unified and trusted data



foundation.

Built on IBM watsonx, the data lakehouse will support scalable AI workloads while integrating structured and semi-structured data, thereby enabling enterprise-wide analytics and more informed decision-making.

Anand Sahai, CEO, Tata Play Fiber, said building a robust information system is central to the company's digital transformation journey.

He added that the platform will help derive deeper insights into customers and operations, strengthen

retention, unlock new revenue opportunities and deliver improved customer experiences.

Nebu Joy, Vice President, Information Technology, Tata Play Fiber, said unifying multiple data sources into a single architecture will provide real-time visibility across the organisation and empower teams, including call centre agents and field engineers, with contextual insights to enhance responsiveness.

Gaurav Agarwal, Vice President, Technology, IBM India & South Asia, said the collaboration demon-

strates how a hybrid, AI-enabled data architecture can help enterprises modernise their data systems and build a future-ready foundation for artificial intelligence.

The company said the transition will enable a shift from fragmented reporting and manual processes to data-driven decision-making at scale. The evolving architecture will also incorporate network and additional operational datasets to enhance regional demand forecasting and support deeper analytics across business operations in the future.

Tata Play Fiber, founded in 2015 as a subsidiary of Tata India Limited, is building a pan-India fibre-to-the-home broadband network aimed at delivering high-speed and reliable connectivity. IBM is a global provider of hybrid cloud and AI solutions, offering enterprise technologies and consulting services across multiple industries.

## Automobile retail sales record FY26 as best year driven by GST reforms

**New Delhi:** Automobile retail sales in India witnessed their best-ever performance in the financial year 2025-26, with five out of six vehicle categories recording historic highs. The sector came remarkably close to the 30-million mark in overall sales, registering a strong 13 per cent growth compared to the previous financial year.

According to data released by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), this stellar growth was largely driven by the positive impact of GST 2.0, which played a crucial role in boosting demand across segments.

Passenger vehicle sales crossed the 4.7-million mark for the first time in history, reflecting a 13 per cent increase. This milestone highlights sustained consumer demand and improved affordability in the segment.

The two-wheeler category also staged a strong comeback, reclaiming its pre-Covid peak. Retail sales surpassed 21.4 million units, marking a growth of 13.4 per cent, driven by rural demand and improved financing options.

Commercial vehicles achieved a significant milestone as well, crossing the 1-million mark for the first time. The segment recorded a growth of 11.74 per cent, indicating strong economic activity and infrastructure development.

Three-wheelers continued their upward trajectory, setting their third consecutive annual record with an 11.68 per cent growth. The segment benefited from increasing demand for last-mile connectivity and urban mobility solutions. Tractors emerged as the standout performer of the year, crossing

the 1-million retail units milestone for the first time. With a growth rate of 18.95 per cent, the segment reflected robust rural sentiment and agricultural resilience.

Construction equipment, however, was the only segment to witness a decline. Sales fell by 11.70 per cent, primarily due to project-level delays and a high base effect from the previous year.

A detailed analysis by FADA revealed that in the first five months of the fiscal year, growth remained modest, ranging between 2 and 5 per cent on a monthly basis. This indicated a steady but cautious start to the year.

The growth trajectory saw a noticeable uptick following the implementation of GST 2.0 in September 2025. The policy shift acted as a catalyst, accelerating demand across vehicle categories.