



Aryan Age


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Stock market gains over 1pc, investors get richer by Rs 6 lakh cr PG.8

High Stakes in Islamabad US-Iran talks amid war fallout and global oil fears



Islamabad : Pakistan's capital is on high alert as it prepares to host critical talks between the United States and Iran, the first since a six-week war across the West Asia killed thousands and disrupted global oil markets. Security has been tightened across Islamabad, with roads leading to the Red Zone home to key government buildings. Authorities have imposed a two-day public holiday while heavy military deployments and checkpoints have been put in place and the Serena Hotel, adjacent to the Foreign Ministry, has been sealed off as the venue for the negotiations.

The US delegation, led by Vice President JD Vance alongside special envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, is expected in Islamabad later today. Tehran has not officially confirmed its team, though reports indicate Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will lead the Iranian side.

The talks aim to solidify a fragile ceasefire, address disagreements over Lebanon's inclusion, and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime chokepoint for global oil supplies.

Israel's recent strikes on Hezbollah in Lebanon, which killed at least 303 people, have intensified tensions and complicated the negotiations. White House officials say the goal is to find common ground between the sides' conflicting proposals. Iran has submitted a 10-point plan that includes recognition of its regional influence and nuclear enrichment rights, while the US reportedly has a 15-point counterproposal demanding no nuclear weapons and reopening the Hormuz Strait.

The outcome could determine not only the trajectory of the West Asia conflict but also the stability of global energy markets.

Trump has strategically put JD Vance at the forefront of negotiations. First to convey that the diplomatic effort is serious, giving ample signal to allies, adversaries, and the public that the administration is fully engaged in seeking an end to the conflict than treating talks for the sake of formality.

Secondly, if the discussions fail or a ceasefire collapses, Trump can claim he gave the administration's most cautious senior official the chance to secure a peaceful resolution.

'Lion of Ladakh' falls silent: Col Sonam Wangchuk, Kargil war hero, passes away at 61

New Delhi : The mountains of Ladakh, which once echoed with his courage, fell silent on Friday as Colonel Sonam Wangchuk (Retd.), the legendary 'Lion of Ladakh', passed away following a heart attack, in Leh.

A warrior whose bravery shaped the early victories of the Kargil War, he leaves behind a void as deep as the valleys he so fiercely defended.

Col. Wangchuk, a Maha Vir Chakra awardee and one of the most celebrated heroes of the 1999 Kargil War, was 61. A son of the mountains and a warrior forged in the harshest terrains, he embodied a rare blend of fearlessness and quiet dignity, qualities that earned him a legendary stature both within and outside the armed forces.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed grief at the passing of Maha Vir Chakra awardee. In a post on X, Singh paid glowing tribute to Colonel Wangchuk describing him as a highly decorated officer of the Indian Army, renowned for his gallantry,

resolute leadership and unwavering commitment to duty. "Deeply saddened by the passing of Colonel Sonam Wangchuk. He was a highly decorated officer of the Indian Army, renowned for his gallantry, resolute leadership and unwavering commitment to duty," he said.

The defence minister called Colonel Wangchuk a "proud son of Ladakh" and said, "He exemplified the spirit of the region- resilient, steadfast and deeply rooted in service to the Nation, while standing as a symbol of India's unity in diversity."

"His courageous actions of leading by personal example during Operation Vijay inspired his men under the most demanding conditions in high-altitude. His life remains a testament to courage, sacrifice and national integration and his legacy will continue to inspire coming generations," the defence minister said.

In its post on X, ADGPI wrote, "General Upendra Dwivedi, COAS and All Ranks of the Indian Army



pay heartfelt homage to Colonel Sonam Wangchuk, MVC - a brave soldier, a committed leader and a son of Ladakh whose life embodied courage, service and unity. His legacy will continue to inspire generations. Indian Army offers deepest condolences and stands in solidarity with the bereaved family in this hour of grief."

Born on May 11, 1964, in Sankar village of Leh district, Wangchuk joined the Indian Army in 1987, serving first with the 4 Assam Regiment before moving to The Ladakh Scouts, the famed

'Snow Warriors' of the Himalayas. Over a military career spanning more than three decades, he emerged as one of the most formidable high-altitude commanders produced by India.

It was during the Kargil conflict that Col. Sonam Wangchuk's name became etched into India's military history. Then a Major with the Indus Wing of the Ladakh Scouts, he led one of the earliest and most decisive operations of Operation Vijay in the Batalik sector on 30 May 1999.

Operating at nearly 18,000 feet (over 5,500 metres) in a brutally glaciated zone, he and his column came under sudden enemy ambush while moving to occupy a ridge along the Line of Control, resulting in the loss of one NCO.

Displaying exceptional leadership, Major Wangchuk held his men together and launched a daring counter-ambush, attacking the enemy from the flank. In the close-quarter battle that followed, he personally led the raid, killing two enemy soldiers and recovering

a Heavy Machine Gun, a Universal Machine Gun, ammunition and other stores.

Over the next three days, commanding a team of just 40 soldiers, he spearheaded the eviction of 136 Pakistani intruders from the strategic Chorbat La sector, braving deep snow, thin air and relentless enemy fire.

Executed with precision, audacity and unparalleled endurance, the operation became one of the defining early successes of the Kargil War and cemented Major Wangchuk's legacy as one of India's finest high-altitude commanders.

His gallantry not only earned him the nation's second-highest wartime honour, the Maha Vir Chakra, but also set a benchmark for battlefield leadership.

Col. Wangchuk retired from service in 2018 after more than 30 years in uniform, leaving behind a legacy that continues to shape high-altitude warfare doctrines. Col. Wangchuk is survived by his wife, Padma Angmo.

Big Housing Boost: BSNL-MTNL Land in Borivali Cleared for PM Awas Homes

Mumbai : In a major push for affordable housing, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has approved the use of reserved land owned by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited in Borivali for building homes under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

The decision was taken during a meeting of the Maharashtra Housing Development Authority held at Sahyadri Guest House under the chairmanship of Officer Praveen Pardeshi, Managing Director and CEO Tryambak Kasar, Director (Administration) Praveen Koli, Technical Director Abhijit Londhe, and Assistant Officer Shirtej Rasal.

The land includes plots in Gorai owned by BSNL and in Shimpoli owned by MTNL, with a total reserved area of 28.84 acres. The proposal placed before the meeting suggested acquiring this land

at a ready reckoner value of ₹729 crore and using it for a housing project under the central government scheme, along with development of the remaining reserved land.

Chief Minister Fadnavis approved the proposal. According to Tryambak Kasar, more than 1,000 affordable homes are planned to be built on this land, giving a major boost to housing availability in Mumbai.

'Operation Tiger': Shinde's secret plot on Thackeray camp or mind games?

Mumbai: The political landscape in Maharashtra is currently buzzing with discussions surrounding 'Operation Tiger'.

This has sparked a fresh war of words between the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction (UBT).

Shiv Sena spokesperson and Minister Sanjay Shirsat hinted at a major defection within the Thackeray camp. He stated that "Operation Tiger" will not be announced with fanfare, the world will only know when Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde makes his move.

Shirsat claimed that the results of this operation will be visible within one month, asserting that things are in their final stages.

He predicted a major "explosion" (political fallout) within the UBT faction soon.

Leaders from the Thackeray faction have vehemently denied these reports and hit back at the Shinde group: Expressing his anger, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Arvind Sawant

HC asks police to file reply to plea alleging noise pollution from a mosque

Mumbai : The Bombay High Court on Friday directed Mumbai Police to file a reply to a petition alleging inaction by police against early morning noise pollution from a mosque in Kandivali area of the city suburb, though loudspeaker use remains restricted between 10 pm and 6 am.

The court was hearing a petition filed by advocate Reena Richard, a local resident, who alleged repeated violations by a mosque near her residence in Kandivali (East).

In her plea, she stated that despite multiple complaints filed by her with the Samta Nagar police station on the loudspeaker use during early morning hours, no action has been taken.

According to Richard, the authorities had earlier assured compliance and even apologised before the court for inaction, with criminal cases initiated against violators. However, she alleged that the permission

for the loudspeaker use was granted again in 2024, despite the locality qualifying as a silence zone.

A division bench of Justices Ajay S Gadkari and Kamal R Khata observed that if the petitioner's allegation of "blatant lies" by authorities was found to be true, it would constitute a serious breach of the Noise Pollution Rules, 2000.

During the hearing, the court also came down heavily on police and issued a stern oral warning, stating that failure to enforce court orders would invite contempt proceedings.

Congress slams fund disparity in Mumbai Municipal Corporation

Mumbai: A political controversy has erupted over the allocation of development funds in the Mumbai Municipal Corporation, with senior Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar strongly criticising the ruling dispensation.

Speaking to the media, Wadettiwar alleged a significant disparity in the distribution of funds among corporators. He claimed that corporators belonging to the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray faction) are being allocated as little as rupees 2 lakh,

while those aligned with the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) are receiving substantially higher amounts, practice Maharashtra has followed in the past."

Referring to previous governments, Wadettiwar said that once elections concluded, political differences were set aside to ensure equal development across all regions. However, he alleged that currently, corporators from opposition parties are being denied funds. "Is it right to deprive constituencies of development just because their representatives are in the opposition? The people will ultimately decide," he added.

Vijay Wadettiwar targets Owaisi, says he helps BJP in elections by dividing secular votes

Nagpur: Senior Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar on Friday alleged that AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi plays a supporting role for BJP, divisive politics. The Congress leader further stated that such developments point to attempts to polarise voters and influence electoral outcomes. He also alleged that Owaisi's political actions indirectly benefit the BJP by dividing votes.

His remarks come amid the controversy surrounding an alleged sting video linked to Kabir, which has triggered a political row ahead of the upcoming elections in West Bengal. Following the controversy, Owaisi's party, All India Majlis-e-Muslimeen (AIMIM), announced its decision to withdraw from its alliance with Kabir's party and stated that it would contest the forthcoming West Bengal Assembly elections independently. The development follows a sting video posted on X by the Trinamool Congress (TMC), in which the AJUP chief allegedly claimed that he had struck a deal worth Rs 1,000 crore.

citing the ongoing controversy over a purported sting video involving Humayun Kabir in West Bengal.

Speaking to reporters here, Wadettiwar criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accusing it of adopting extreme measures to retain power. He claimed that the party seeks votes in the name of temples, mosques and Pakistan and alleged that it continues to remain in power by indulging in

Exit in silence, storm unabated: Justice Yashwant Varma steps down as Impeachment heat peaks

New Delhi: In a resignation as terse as it is telling, Justice Yashwant Varma has walked away from the Allahabad High Court, drawing the curtain on a turbulent tenure even as the machinery of impeachment and inquiry continued to gather pace around him.

His departure—communicated in a restrained letter to Droupadi Murmu—reads like a quiet retreat in the face of an escalating storm, marked by what he described as "profound anguish" and an unmistakable refusal to engage with the allegations that have dogged him for over a year.

The April 9 letter, effective immediately, offers no defense, no justification—only distance. "I do not propose to burden your august office with the reasons which have constrained me," Justice Varma wrote, choosing omission over explanation. Yet, even in exit, he struck a note of institutional reverence, calling his time on the bench "a privilege and an honour," as though seeking to separate the office from the controversy that has engulfed it.

That controversy, however, has been anything but contained. It erupted dramatically in March last year with the alleged recovery of partially burnt cash from an

outhouse at his official residence during his stint at the Delhi High Court—an episode that quickly spiralled into a rare convergence of judicial scrutiny and parliamentary action.

What began as a murky incident soon evolved into a full-blown institutional test, probing how far India's systems can go in holding members of the higher judiciary accountable.

Transferred to the Allahabad High Court in April 2025, Justice Varma's repositioning did little to defuse the crisis.

Within months, impeachment notices—backed by a formidable number of MPs across party lines—were moved in both Houses of Parliament, triggering the formal process under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. A three-member panel was set up by the Lok Sabha Speaker, tasked with investigating

whether the allegations rose to the level warranting removal—one of the gravest constitutional actions available.

Justice Varma fought back, but the legal ground beneath him steadily narrowed. His challenge in the Supreme Court—questioning the procedural validity of the inquiry—was turned away by a bench comprising Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma, which ruled he was not entitled to relief. His objections to the judiciary's own in-house probe met a similar fate, with the apex court backing the internal findings that pointed to his "secret or active control" over the allegedly recovered cash, affirming that due process had been followed.

Before the parliamentary panel, Justice Varma held his line. In written submissions, he flatly denied any connection to the cash, insisting he was not present when a fire incident reportedly brought it to light. He went further, disputing the very claim that any money had been recovered from his residence—an assertion that cuts to the heart of the case against him.

Even as these competing narratives played out, the inquiry itself remained unfinished. The panel continues to sift through records, testimonies and rebuttals, its eventual findings poised to have shaped the course of an impeachment motion that had already gathered unusual political traction.

His resignation now interrupts that arc. It closes one chapter but leaves the larger story unresolved—raising as many questions as it answers. While his exit ends his judicial role, it does not dissolve the findings already recorded, nor does it settle the institutional dilemmas exposed by the case.

For the judiciary, the episode is a stark reminder that independence cannot exist in isolation from accountability. For Parliament, it underscores both the gravity and the difficulty of invoking impeachment against a sitting judge. And for Justice Varma, the departure is less an ending than an ellipsis—an exit defined by what remains unsaid.

In the final analysis, his letter lingers not for its words but for its silences. By stepping aside without explanation, Justice Varma has ceded the narrative to the very processes he contested—leaving institutions, rather than the individual, to deliver the last word on a controversy that is far from over.

Delhi Police busts major ISI-linked spy network, 11 arrested

New Delhi: In a major breakthrough, Delhi Police Special Cell has exposed a large espionage network allegedly operated by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, and arrested 11 individuals connected to the module. The sources told UNI that the accused were installing CCTV cameras across multiple locations to monitor sensitive areas, including Army-linked establishments, from Kathua to other parts of North India. "11 individuals have been arrested, with cameras found installed at 9 locations nationwide. Notably, a similar network was busted earlier in Ghaziabad," said the source. The source said that the module was operating in a pattern similar to a terror network, raising serious security concerns.

Those seeking Nobel Prize for Pakistan are unfortunate: Farooq Abdullah

Srinagar : Veteran politician and National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Friday expressed hope that the recent ceasefire in the Middle East would lead to lasting peace, while also taking a swipe at calls to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Pakistan's leadership.

Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, Abdullah welcomed the halt in hostilities and said it was a positive development for global stability. He emphasised that peace must not only be achieved but also sustained over time.

"Thank God the war has stopped. I hope it remains stopped in the future as well, peace prevails in the world, and we all benefit from it," Abdullah said, reflecting a sense of cautious optimism over the situation.

The remarks come in the backdrop of heightened tensions in the Middle East, where recent diplomatic efforts have led to a temporary ceasefire. Abdullah underlined the importance of ensuring that such pauses in conflict translate into long-term peace initiatives.

When asked about demands from certain sections in Pakistan to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his alleged mediatory role between



Tehran and Washington, Abdullah dismissed such calls as inappropriate.

He termed the demands "unfortunate," asserting that humanitarian efforts should not be driven by aspirations for global recognition or awards. According to him, true leadership lies in working selflessly for peace rather than seeking accolades. "One does not work for the No-

bel Prize, one works for humanity. Those who demand a Nobel Prize—it is unfortunate. There is a better prize, which is the cause of humanity," Abdullah remarked firmly.

The former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir stressed that the focus should remain on alleviating human suffering caused by conflicts rather than engaging in symbolic debates over awards.

He highlighted that wars and conflicts disproportionately impact civilians, leading to loss of life, displacement, and long-term instability in affected regions.

Abdullah reiterated that global leaders must prioritise humanitarian concerns and work collectively to prevent further escalation of violence. He called for sustained diplomatic engagement to ensure peace efforts are not derailed.

He also pointed out that peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, stability, and co-operation among nations.

The NC leader's comments reflect a broader sentiment that global recognition should follow genuine efforts toward peace rather than precede them.

He urged the international community to focus on building trust and fostering dialogue among conflicting parties to create durable solutions. Abdullah concluded by stressing that humanity must remain at the centre of all diplomatic and political efforts, especially during times of global conflict. "It is humanity that is suffering, and it is humanity that must be saved," he said, reinforcing his call for compassion and collective responsibility in addressing global crises.

Three killed in Shivamogga soil collapse, CM expresses grief

Bengaluru: In a tragic incident, three workers lost their lives after a sudden soil collapse during road barrier construction at Hulikal Ghat in Hosanagara taluk of Shivamogga district on Friday. The mishap has once again highlighted the dangers associated with construction work in fragile hilly terrains.

According to initial reports, the accident occurred while workers were engaged in excavation work at a curve along the ghat section. A portion of loose soil unexpectedly gave way, burying the workers under heavy debris.

The collapse happened without warning, leaving little time for the workers to react or escape. The suddenness of the incident contributed to the severity of the tragedy.

Local labourers and emergency response teams rushed to the site immediately after the incident. Rescue operations were carried out on a war footing in an attempt to save those trapped.

Despite swift efforts, all three workers were declared dead on the spot. The incident has left the local com-

munity in shock and mourning.

Hulikal Ghat, located in Hosanagara taluk, is known for its steep terrain and landslide-prone conditions. Construction activities in such areas often carry significant risks, particularly during excavation and earth-cutting work.

The tragedy has raised serious concerns about the implementation of safety protocols at construction sites in vulnerable regions. Experts have often stressed the need for strict monitoring and preventive measures in such zones. Preliminary accounts indicate that the area requires heightened caution due to unstable soil conditions. Such terrains demand proper assessment and reinforcement before undertaking any structural work.

Authorities are expected to investigate whether adequate safety measures, including protective barriers and soil stabilization techniques, were in place at the time of the incident. Reacting to the tragedy, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah expressed deep sor-

row over the loss of lives. He said he was "deeply saddened" by the incident.

The Chief Minister extended his condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the departed souls. He acknowledged the emotional and financial hardship faced by the victims' families.

Siddaramaiah also stated that he had spoken with District In-charge Minister Madhu Bangarappa to gather detailed information about the incident.

Describing the victims as earning members of economically weaker families, he termed their deaths a heartbreaking loss that would deeply affect their dependents. On humanitarian grounds, the Chief Minister announced an ex gratia compensation of ₹5 lakh each for the families of the deceased workers. Officials are now expected to conduct a detailed inquiry into the circumstances leading to the soil collapse. The probe will examine whether established safety norms were followed during the construction work.

UP govt's 'Yaksh App' giving edge to smart policing

Lucknow: The Yaksh App of Uttar Pradesh Police is playing a crucial role in putting criminals behind bars. Within just 90 days, the Yaksh App has helped solve more than a dozen criminal incidents, giving a new dimension to smart policing and strengthening crime control.

Through this app, serious crimes such as kidnapping, murder, robbery and theft have been solved. With the help of the Yaksh App, police are not only reaching suspects quickly but have also significantly reduced the time taken to crack cases.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the Yaksh App during the "Police Manthan" programme to give a new direction to smart policing in Uttar Pradesh.

UP DGP Rajeev Krishna said here on Friday that, "The Yaksh App was launched under the concept of smart policing in line with the vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath." The Yaksh App provides features such as a digital database of criminals in the state, location-based mapping of CCTV cameras,

and analytical tools.

Earlier, investigators had to rely on traditional registers like the "Village Crime Notebook," but now the entire criminal history can be accessed within minutes. DGP Rajeev Krishna further said, "In a kidnapping case registered in Hardoi, the Yaksh App revealed a shocking truth during the investigation. It was found that the person who was allegedly kidnapped had actually been in jail for the past two and a half years. Similarly, the robbery of a public service center operator in Jaunpur on March 11, 2026, was solved within hours. Police analyzed footage from 42-43 CCTV cameras through the Yaksh App, which helped identify suspects and track their location. Following this, three accused were arrested in an encounter, and about Rs 1.30 lakh in cash was recovered."

In addition, two robbery incidents that occurred within an hour in the Kakori area of Lucknow were solved within 48 hours. By analyzing the suspects' identities, mobile locations, and activities through the Yaksh App, police arrested both criminals. Furthermore, in

Raebareilly, the app helped expose an eight-member interstate vehicle theft gang. Through the app's database and geo-tagging, police obtained the criminal history of the accused and arrested them through a planned operation. The Yaksh App also played a key role in arresting an accused involved in the murder of his mother-in-law and brother-in-law in Bareilly. As soon as the suspect's photo and record were obtained from the app, the police arrested him. In Agra, the app helped save an elderly man from false molestation allegations. Through CCTV footage and facial recognition, the real accused were identified and arrested. In districts such as Meerut, Hathras, Farrukhabad, Kanpur and Gonda, several theft and pickpocketing gangs have been exposed with the help of the Yaksh App. In Meerut, four members of a pickpocket gang were arrested; in Hathras, a jewelry theft accused was traced; in Kanpur, a gang involved in stealing from a jewelry shop was busted; and in Gonda, thefts taking place in schools were uncovered through the app.

Odisha's hidden marine fossil treasure calls for global recognition: INTACH

Bhubaneswar: The Mayurbhanj chapter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has urged the Government of Odisha to establish a Fossil Park along the Budha Balang River near Baripada, highlighting the site's immense scientific and heritage value.

According to Anil Dhir, Convener of INTACH's Bhubaneswar Chapter, the fossil site reveals extraordinary insights into the evolution of life in the region over tens of millions of years.

He emphasized that preserving this natural heritage is not just a scientific duty but also a visionary opportunity to position Odisha as a global geo-tourism destination.

Dhir pointed out that while India has sixteen fossil parks—four managed by the Geological Survey of

India—none are dedicated to marine fossils. If the Baripada fossil site receives a Geo-Heritage tag, it would become the country's first Marine Fossil Park, marking a significant milestone in India's paleontological landscape.

Despite repeated reports over the past decades about this groundbreaking discovery, the site has largely remained neglected. Yet, it stands as a treasure trove of well-preserved prehistoric marine life, petrified and buried beneath the sands of the riverbed. The fossils studied so far reveal a diverse ecosystem that once thrived millions of years ago. Known as the "Baripada Fossil Beds," the region stretches across villages like Satpautia, Usurudih, Itamundia, and Mukudamatia. These fossil deposits date back approximately 12-15 million years

to the Miocene epoch, a time when the area was part of a shallow marine environment connected to the open sea.

The fossil assemblage includes shark teeth, rays, fish remains, molluscs, and microfauna, offering crucial insights into ancient climatic conditions, marine transgressions, and the paleo-environmental evolution of eastern India. Local communities, however, refer to the site as "Asura Hada" or "Demon Bones," often avoiding the area due to longstanding myths.

During a recent field visit, the INTACH team discovered numerous fossilized remains, including those of crocodiles, turtles, partial skulls, and other marine creatures—further underscoring the site's richness and scientific importance. Maharashtra's Rashmi Rajya Laxmi Bhanj

Deo, Convener of INTACH's Mayurbhanj Chapter, has formally appealed to authorities to declare the site a State Geo-Heritage Site, ensuring its legal protection and conservation.

INTACH has proposed the development of a Fossil Park along with an Interpretation Centre and a curated museum to showcase the region's fossil diversity. Such initiatives would not only promote research and education but also enable sustainable tourism.

Dhir also stressed the need to fence the area and strictly prohibit sand mining to preserve the integrity of the fossil beds.

As a 12-million-year-old natural archive of Earth's history, the Baripada Fossil Beds hold immense potential—waiting to be protected, studied, and shared with the world, he stated.

SIR process completed in Uttar Pradesh, over 20 million names removed

Lucknow: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2026 process has been successfully completed in Uttar Pradesh. During this extensive exercise, the names of over 20.5 million voters in the state have been deleted from the list.

Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that the Election Commission released the final list of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Uttar Pradesh on Friday. The number of voters in Uttar Pradesh has decreased by 13 per cent to 133.9 million as 20.5 million names have been deleted from the final list. However, 8.4 million new names have been added during the process.

Before the SIR, in October 2025, there were a total of 154.4 million voters in Uttar Pradesh. After the first draft list was released, this figure dropped to 125.5 million. While 28.9 million people were removed from the list, 8.4 million names have been added to the list, including those removed from the first draft list.

Addressing a press conference here, CEO Rinwa said, "The final list can be viewed at voters.eci.gov.in and ceouttarpradesh.nic.in. If your name is not on the list, you can register by filling out Form 6. Online applications can be made at https://voters.eci.gov.in using your mobile number. The application form can also be downloaded." He said that the enumeration phase in the state ran from November 4, 2025, to December 26, 2025, while the time for claims and objections was given from January 6, 2026, to March 6, 2026. Subsequently, all claims and objections were resolved by March 27.

Rinwa informed that this

campaign received widespread support from representatives of all political parties, booth-level agents and the general public.

He informed that District Election Officers of all 75 districts of the state, 403 Electoral Registration Officers, 12,758 Assistant Officers, 18,026 BLO Supervisors, and 1,77,516 BLOs played an active role in making this 166-day campaign a success. Apart from this, 5,82,877 booth-level agents of different political parties also contributed.

Rinwa informed that as per the final voter list, the total number of voters is 133,98,47,292, of which 7,30,71,061 are male voters (54.54 per cent) and 6,09,09,525 are female voters (45.46 per cent). There are 4,206 third gender voters, and the number of voters in the age group of 18-19 was 17,63,360, while the gender ratio was recorded at 834.

He said that the draft list published on January 6, 2026, had a total of 12,55,56,025 voters, of which 6,88,43,159 were male (54.83 pc), 5,67,08,747 were female (45.17 pc) and 4,119 were third gender voters. The number of voters in the age group of 18-19 was 3,33,981, while the gender ratio was recorded at 824.

He said Prayagraj, Lucknow, Bareilly, Ghaziabad and Jaunpur districts were ahead in terms of voter increase. Whereas the highest increase in the number of voters was recorded in Sahibabad, Jaunpur, Lucknow West and Firozabad assembly constituencies. The CEO said 10.4 million voters were given notices for non-mapping of their votes, while 22.2 million were given notices for discrepancies.

Karnataka HC warns ED of ₹1 lakh cost over Winzo founder bail appeal

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court on Friday cautioned the Enforcement Directorate (ED) that it may impose costs of ₹1 lakh if it finds the agency's appeal against the bail granted to Winzo co-founder Paavan Nanda to be frivolous or unnecessary.

Justice S. Rachaiah, hearing the matter, observed that the ED must demonstrate either violation of bail conditions or evidence that the accused was attempting to suppress facts. "Without these two, if I find this is an unnecessary challenge I will impose ₹1 lakh cost," the judge warned.

The court was hearing the ED's challenge to the bail granted by a Bengaluru sessions court in February this year in a money-laundering case linked to allegations against Nanda.



The ED has alleged that Winzo's gaming platform involved algorithmic manipulation and use of bots, resulting in wrongful gains of about ₹177 crore. It has also claimed that funds were diverted to overseas entities and laundered through cloud infrastructure hosted on Amazon Web Services (AWS), with suspected illegal transactions of around USD 55 million.

The agency further alleged identity misuse of users and cross-border fund flows.

Nanda has denied the allegations, maintained that he has cooperated with the investigation, and challenged the legality of the searches and seizures conducted by the agency.

The next hearing in the case is scheduled for April 23.

CPI slams NDA ovt govt over worsening law & order in Bihar

Patna: Launching a sharp political attack on the ruling dispensation, the Communist Party of India (CPI) on Friday alleged that the law and order situation in Bihar has "completely collapsed," holding the NDA government responsible for the rise in crime.

CPI state secretary Ram Naresh Pandey said that increasing incidents of murder and crime have created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity across the state. He alleged that criminals are operating with impunity, with cases of daylight killings becoming frequent.

Citing a recent incident in Forbesganj, Pandey said the murder of a truck driver in broad daylight, followed by mob violence against the accused, reflects a serious breakdown of law enforcement. Such incidents show

that public confidence in the legal system is eroding, he said.

Targeting the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the CPI leader alleged that the government has failed to control the deteriorating situation. He claimed that Bihar is witnessing a steady rise in crime, with people from all sections, businessmen, political workers, lawyers, teachers and common citizens falling victim to criminal activities.

Referring to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Pandey claimed that Bihar ranks among the top five states in terms of murder and overall crime and stands second in crime rate nationally. He also alleged a significant increase in crime cases over the past decade.

According to figures he cited from the State Crime Records Bureau, over 1,300 murder cases were reported in the state by mid-2025, indicating a high monthly average. He further claimed that cases of crimes against women, including rape, have also seen a substantial rise over the years.

Pandey also pointed out that Patna has emerged as the leading district in the state in terms of cases registered under the Arms Act, underscoring the growing availability of illegal weapons.

Accusing the NDA government of administrative failure, the CPI leader said it has proved "incapable" of maintaining law and order. He demanded immediate and effective measures to control crime and restore public confidence in the governance system.

Kavitha alleges large-scale corruption in GHMC, warns of ED complaint

Hyderabad: Telangana Jagruthi President Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Friday alleged large-scale corruption in the GHMC and HMDA, accusing the Congress government led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of awarding contracts worth over Rs 1,100 crore through the nomination method without tenders. Addressing a press conference in her office, Banjara Hills in Hyderabad, she claimed that the practice violates financial norms, which mandate tenders for works exceeding Rs 5 lakh, and demanded immediate cancellation of such contracts.

She insisted that all works be

executed strictly through a transparent tendering process.

Kavitha alleged that since the Congress government assumed office, contracts worth around Rs 1,148 crore had been awarded through nomination, significantly higher than similar allocations during the previous regime.

She termed this a "clear case of large-scale corruption" and questioned the government's intent in bypassing established procedures.

She further alleged irregularities in wage payments to workers, stating that while over 23,000 workers are entitled to salaries, only about 13,000 are currently be-



ing paid. She also flagged alleged corruption in plantation activities, including the cultivation, procurement, and distribution of saplings.

Raising serious concerns over urban development, Kavitha claimed that lands worth nearly Rs

35,000 crore within HMDA limits had been sold without corresponding investment in city development. She accused the government of harassing real estate developers under certain initiatives and illegally collecting money from them.

Warning of legal action, she said her party possesses evidence of the alleged irregularities and would approach the Enforcement Directorate (ED) if corrective measures are not taken immediately. She also questioned the status of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe linked to the Outer Ring Road project, alleging that it had been sidelined. Criticising the decision to hand over the project to a private entity while continuing maintenance, she termed it "highly questionable." On irrigation, Kavitha said while repairs to the Kaleshwaram project are welcome, they should not be driven by "commission-based motives." She accused the government of neglecting irrigation needs, resulting in large tracts of land going dry, and urged that benefits reach farmers effectively. On national politics, she alleged that the BJP's stance on the Women's Reservation Bill is unjust, demanding its implementation only after the 2027 census along with a sub-quota for OBC women.

MSRTC to Run 419 Special Buses for Summer Travel from Thane

Thane : To help people traveling for summer vacations and weddings, the MSRTC has announced 419 special bus services from the Thane district. These extra trips will run between April 15 and June 15, covering popular routes like Konkan, Kolhapur, Satara, and Shirdi.

While the extra buses are a relief, passengers will have to pay 10% more for their tickets due to a seasonal fare hike.

Additionally, travelers at the Khopat bus stand have faced long delays due to a computer server failure. This glitch has made it difficult for senior citizens and persons with disabilities to register for their usual travel discounts.

The Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) has unveiled an extensive summer travel plan for residents of Thane, aiming to accommodate the massive surge in commuters during the upcoming vacation and wedding season. Recognizing the increased demand for reliable trans-



port during the months of April, May, and June, the corporation has allocated 419 special bus services to operate exclusively from the Thane district.

This initiative is designed to ensure that the seasonal rush does not leave travelers stranded, providing a much-needed boost to the region's public transportation capacity during one of the busiest times of the year.

The special services are

scheduled to commence on April 15 and will remain operational until June 15, covering the peak of the summer heat and the primary holiday period for students and families.

These buses will primarily ply on high-demand routes that connect Thane to popular destinations across Maharashtra, including the scenic Konkan coast, the religious hub of Shirdi, and the culturally significant cities of Kolhapur and

Satara. By targeting these specific corridors, the MSRTC hopes to streamline the exodus from the city and provide direct, efficient travel options for those visiting hometowns or planning family pilgrimages. However, the convenience of these extra trips comes with a financial trade-off for passengers. In line with its standard operating procedure for peak periods, the MSRTC has implemented a 10% seasonal fare hike.

New Registration Portal Launched for Jiyo Parsi Scheme

Mumbai : The Union government has introduced a universal registration portal to help members of the Parsi community access the "Jiyo Parsi" scheme. This initiative is designed to help stabilize and grow the community's declining population by providing financial and medical assistance to families.

The scheme offers help with fertility treatments and provides monthly financial support for children until they turn 18. It even includes a monthly payment for couples who live with elderly family members to encourage them to help care for grandchildren. A recent workshop in Charni Road saw over 500 participants, showing high interest in these new digital benefits.

The Union government's launch of a universal registration portal for the "Jiyo Parsi" scheme represents a significant technological leap in the effort to preserve one of India's most iconic yet demographically vulnerable communities. For years, the Parsi Zoroas-

trian population has faced a steady decline, a trend that this scheme aims to reverse through a sophisticated mix of medical intervention, financial incentives, and social engineering.

By moving the registration process to a centralized digital platform, the government is making it easier for eligible families in Mumbai and across India to navigate the various benefits available, ensuring that administrative hurdles do not stand in the way of community growth.

The "Jiyo Parsi" scheme is notably holistic in its approach, recognizing that the decision to expand a family is influenced by both biological and economic factors. At its core, the program provides substantial financial assistance for advanced fertility treatments, including IVF and other medical interventions, making these often-expensive procedures accessible to all community members regardless of their current income levels. This medical component is crucial, as the community has

historically faced challenges related to late marriages and age-related fertility issues, and the new portal will streamline the application process for these life-changing treatments.

Beyond the initial stage of conception and birth, the scheme offers a long-term financial safety net designed to ease the burden of child-rearing in expensive urban centers like Mumbai. Families can receive monthly financial support for each child until they reach the age of 18, helping to cover the rising costs of education, nutrition, and healthcare.

This sustained investment is a clear signal from the government that it is committed not just to the birth of Parsi children, but to their successful upbringing and integration into the future workforce, ensuring the community remains a vibrant contributor to the nation's social and economic fabric.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the "Jiyo Parsi" initiative is its focus on the "sandwich generation"—

couples who find themselves caring for both young children and elderly parents simultaneously.

The scheme provides a monthly payment to couples who live with and care for elderly family members, explicitly encouraging a multi-generational household structure.

This policy recognizes the invaluable role that grandparents play in the development of children and aims to foster a supportive environment where the wisdom of the elders is utilized to help raise the next generation, all while easing the financial strain on the primary breadwinners.

The high level of interest in these new digital tools was palpable during a recent workshop held in Charni Road, where over 500 members of the Parsi community gathered to learn about the registration portal.

This turnout reflects a community that is eager to embrace modern solutions to its demographic challenges and is proactive about securing its future.

Major LPG Seizure in Dongri

Mumbai : Officials from the Rationing Department carried out a successful raid in the Dongri area, seizing 451 illegal LPG cylinders. The operation took place near the Wadi Bunder Bridge after authorities received a secret tip about illegal hoarding. Eight vehicles were stopped and searched during the crackdown.

The total value of the seized gas cylinders and vehicles is estimated to be over ₹40.61 lakh. Chandrakant Dange, the Controller of Rationing, stated that the government has zero tolerance for black marketing of essential goods.

He warned that more surprise checks and enforcement drives will follow to ensure safety and legal compliance.

The recent crackdown by Mumbai's Rationing Department in the Dongri neighborhood represents a significant strike against the black market for essential utilities. Acting on a precise undercover tip, authorities converged on the Wadi Bunder Bridge area to intercept a massive stockpile of illegally hoarded LPG cylinders. This operation highlights the persistent issue of resource diversion in densely populated urban centers, where the illegal trade of subsidized gas not only drains the economy but poses a severe physical threat to the surrounding residential communities.

The scale of the seizure was particularly impressive, with officials confiscating 451 cylinders that were being transported or stored without the necessary legal permits. During the tacti-



cal operation, eight different vehicles were intercepted as they attempted to move the contraband through the city's narrow transit corridors. This suggests a well-organized logistical network designed to bypass the official distribution system, highlighting the complexity of the task facing rationing officials in one of the world's most crowded cities.

Financial estimates of the bust place the total value of the confiscated goods and the involved vehicles at more than ₹40.61 lakh. This significant monetary loss for the perpetrators serves as a powerful deterrent to other syndicates involved in the illegal gas trade. By seizing the transport vehicles alongside the fuel, the department is effectively dismantling the operational ca-

capacity of these groups, making it much harder for them to resume their illicit activities in the short term.

Chandrakant Dange, the Controller of Rationing, has taken a firm public stance following the raid, reinforcing the government's "zero tolerance" policy regarding the black marketing of essential goods. He emphasized that LPG is a highly regulated and sensitive commodity, and its illegal hoarding creates artificial shortages for honest consumers while bypassing vital safety standards. His office has made it clear that the focus is not just on the recovery of the cylinders, but on upholding the rule of law in the distribution of state-subsidized resources.

The safety implications of

from the "saved" gas. The Dongri raid is a direct response to such consumer exploitation, ensuring that the supply chain remains transparent and that the benefits of government-priced fuel reach the intended households rather than unscrupulous middlemen.

Following the success of the Wadi Bunder Bridge operation, the department has signaled that this is only the beginning of a broader enforcement phase. Dange has warned that surprise checks and aggressive enforcement drives will become a regular feature of Mumbai's urban management.

This proactive approach is intended to keep illegal traders on the defensive, making the risk of hoarding and black marketing far outweigh the potential profits in the eyes of would-be offenders.

The role of "secret tips" from the public has been highlighted as a cornerstone of this successful raid, suggesting a growing cooperation between citizens and the state. As residents become more aware of the dangers of illegal hoarding in their neighborhoods, they are increasingly willing to alert authorities to suspicious activities. This community-led intelligence is often the most effective tool in identifying hidden stockpiles that might otherwise go unnoticed during routine administrative inspections. Logistically, the management of 451 seized cylinders presents its own set of challenges for the department, as they must be safely transported and stored in authorized depots.

Residents and BMC Clash Over Colaba Garden Takeover

Mumbai : A heated dispute has broken out in Colaba after the BMC took control of "CPRA Greens," a garden maintained by local residents for over 50 years. Members of the Cuffe Parade Residents' Association (CPRA) claimed that officials and supporters of a local politician used hammers to break locks and forcibly entered the park, allegedly intimidating staff. The BMC, however, claims the takeover was legal and followed a notice issued in January 2025. Authorities cited violations like private parties, loud music, and unauthorized construction on the land. While residents say they spent their own money to develop the green space, the BMC maintains that the land belongs to the city and must be managed according to civic norms.

The conflict over the CPRA Greens in Cuffe Parade has become a flashpoint in the ongoing debate between Mumbai's civic authorities and local citizen groups over the management of urban open spaces. For over five decades, this 1.5-acre plot was transformed from a barren patch of reclaimed land

into a lush botanical sanctuary by the Cuffe Parade Residents' Association (CPRA). However, the recent physical takeover by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has left the local community in a state of shock, raising significant questions about the "Adoption Policy" that has governed Mumbai's parks for years. The residents' grievance centers on the manner in which the takeover was executed. CPRA members alleged that on a recent morning, officials arrived accompanied by private individuals and supporters of a local political figure. According to witnesses, the group utilized hammers to break the locks on the garden gates and forcibly entered the premises. The association has expressed deep resentment over what they describe as "strong-arm tactics," claiming that their staff were intimidated and that the decades of volunteer work and private funding they poured into the park were disregarded in a single afternoon.

From the BMC's perspective, the move was a necessary enforcement of land-use regulations.

Bhiwandi Starts Training for India's First Digital Census

Bhiwandi : The Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation (BNMC) has begun preparing for Census 2027, which will be the first-ever fully digital census in India. Instead of using paper forms, officials will collect data using mobile apps and a dedicated online portal.

Training for field trainers has already started, and they will eventually teach 1,650 enumerators how to use the new digital tools. A new "self-enumeration" feature will also allow citizens to log in and submit their own family details between May 1 and May 15, 2026, before officials begin their door-to-door visits.

The transition to a fully digital census marks a historic shift in India's administrative history, and the Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation (BNMC) is now positioning itself at the forefront of this technological evolution. As preparations for Census 2027 begin in earnest, the traditional image of a government worker carrying heavy stacks of paper forms is being replaced by a modern, streamlined vision of data collection powered by mobile applications and cloud-based portals.

This move toward a "paperless" census is designed to eliminate the lag time between data gathering and analysis, ensuring that the government has access to real-time demographic insights to shape future urban policies. The BNMC has already initiated the first phase of this massive logistical undertaking by launching specialized training sessions for its field trainers. These trainers serve as the backbone of the operation, acting as technical

leads who will eventually cascade their knowledge down to a force of 1,650 enumerators. The training curriculum is focused heavily on digital literacy, teaching staff how to navigate the dedicated census mobile app, troubleshoot connectivity issues in the field, and ensure that data is encrypted and synced securely with the central government servers.

This proactive training ensures that the personnel on the ground are as high-tech as the tools they are using.

A groundbreaking feature of the 2027 Census is the introduction of "self-enumeration," which aims to empower citizens and reduce the burden on government workers.

For a specific window between May 1 and May 15, 2026, residents of Bhiwandi will have the opportunity to log into a secure online portal and submit their family details independently.

This "DIY" approach allows families to fill out their information at their own pace and from the comfort of their homes, ensuring greater accuracy and privacy. It represents a significant step toward a more participatory form of governance, where the public plays a direct role in the data collection process.

The data gathered through this digital census will be instrumental for the BNMC in managing one of the most industrially active and densely populated regions in Maharashtra. Accurate, real-time population counts will allow the corporation to better plan for water supply, sewage systems, and healthcare facilities that can actually keep up with the city's growth.

Editorial

The Mask of the Superpower Slips Away

Following the United States' direct intervention in the Iran-Israel conflict, the landscape of global politics has undergone a complete transformation. The diplomatic maneuvers initiated under the pretext of halting the war have, ironically, served to expose the limitations of the superpower. Despite possessing immense military might, the U.S. has failed to achieve its desired objectives and now appears to have shifted into a defensive posture; this conflict has, in turn, brought a new set of power dynamics to the world's attention.

On the global geopolitical map, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Iran—which has been simmering for several months—has now reached an extremely sensitive and complex juncture. It was the collective hope of the entire world that this war—waged against Iran by a united front comprising Israel and the United States—would come to an end. The stakes involved are not limited merely to the loss of human life or property damage; rather, this conflict has placed the invaluable reserves of crude oil and natural gas in the Gulf region at grave risk. Crude oil is not merely a source of revenue for the Gulf nations; it serves as the very fuel that powers the global economy. As long as this conflict remained confined to Israel and its immediate neighbors, its intensity was restricted to a specific geographical zone. However, the moment the United States directly plunged into the fray, the very nature of the war shifted, and issues concerning global security were thrust to the forefront of the international agenda. As soon as Israel began receiving direct military support from the United States, it proceeded to target Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, along with key figures within his cabinet and the nation's top military strategists. While this strike undoubtedly shook Iran, the nation—rather than capitulating—responded by mounting a full-scale resistance with every ounce of its strength. Indeed, Israel has been locked in a perpetual conflict with the Gulf nations ever since its very inception. By supplying weaponry to the Hamas organization in the Gaza Strip and to the Houthis rebels, Iran has woven a web of 'proxy warfare' against Israel. This scenario mirrors precisely the manner in which Pakistan wages a proxy war against India through the medium of terrorist organizations. Iran seeks not merely to oppose Israel, but to establish its dominance as the 'Big Brother' across the entire Gulf region. Driven by this very ambition, it is also pursuing efforts to develop nuclear weapons—a pursuit that has emerged as a major headache for the United States. Following the horrific attack launched by Hamas against Israel, the armed offensive subsequently initiated by Israel within the Gaza Strip resulted in a blatant disregard for human rights. This conflict claimed the lives of innocent women and children, triggering a global wave of outrage. The United States' policy is unequivocal: under no circumstances will it permit Iran to become a nuclear-armed state. Much like Iraq—which defied U.S. authority during the era of Saddam Hussein—Iran today has adopted a somewhat similar stance. The United States appears intent on replicating in Iran the same strategy it employed against Iraq—namely, orchestrating its destruction and sending its leader, Saddam Hussein, to the gallows. However, in the case of Iran, the sympathies of numerous nations across the globe appear to be tilted in its favor. The manner in which the United States intervened in the affairs of Venezuela has not sat well with many sovereign nations. Many countries now harbor a deep-seated fear: that while it is Iran facing this predicament today, tomorrow it could very well be their turn. Undoubtedly, the United States serves as the economic engine of the world. The headquarters of major multinational corporations with a global footprint are situated within the United States. Furthermore, the United States enjoys an international reputation as a nation that offers opportunities to people from every corner of the globe. That is precisely why people attempt to gain entry there—whether through legal channels or via illicit routes such as the 'Donkey Route.' However, this allure surrounding America does not stem from the capricious conduct of its President. In particular, Donald Trump's propensity to meddle in every affair is proving detrimental to global peace. Driven by the fear that Russia or China might usurp its position, many decisions taken by Trump have turned out to be self-defeating. While Trump did indeed plunge into this conflict with the aim of subduing Iran, the resistance Iran has mounted over the past 40 days came as an unexpected shock to the United States. It is evident that Russia and China have been providing behind-the-scenes support to fuel this resistance. The United States had anticipated that Iran would capitulate within two or three days; instead, it is America itself that has become ensnared in this conflict.

When a situation arose where halting the war would have amounted to a loss of face for a superpower, the United States put Pakistan forward to salvage its reputation. Pakistan acts as a puppet on a string for the U.S., surviving solely on its financial aid. The United States has historically supplied Pakistan with logistical support to wage war against India. To repay this debt of gratitude, Pakistan assumed the role of a mediator between Iran and the U.S. Leveraging their shared Islamic faith, Pakistan engaged in dialogue with Iran and ultimately brokered a fifteen-day ceasefire. Under the pretext of this ceasefire, the United States has, for the time being, extricated itself from this conflict. The American public, as well as allies like France, are now voicing their opposition to these belligerent U.S. policies. Consequently, an ironic situation has emerged—aptly captured by the adage, "When in a bind, Trump grasps at Pakistan's feet." Amidst all these developments, India's stance has remained remarkably restrained and strategic. Although Prime Minister Narendra Modi has maintained silence on this issue, there is a solid rationale behind it. India requires the cooperation of both Iran and the United States. History cannot be forgotten; when India executed 'Operation Sindoor,' all Muslim nations stood firmly behind Pakistan, whereas at that critical juncture, only Israel extended unwavering support to India. Therefore, taking a stance against an old ally—namely Israel—is not something that would sit well with Modi. Today, Donald Trump is holding peace talks in the very nation—Pakistan—that the United States once labeled a "hub of terrorism." The question of how the fruits of peace can possibly grow in the very soil from which terrorism is sown casts a significant shadow of doubt upon the efficacy of Trump's diplomacy. The ultimate conclusion to be drawn from this conflict is that no nation can be permanently subdued through military might alone. Iran has projected an image suggesting that the United States' authority as a superpower is now waning. This conflict has once again divided the world into two distinct poles. Although this ceasefire has temporarily silenced the guns, it will take a considerable amount of time to extinguish the raging wildfire of mistrust among the Gulf nations. Only time will tell whether this peace initiative proves to be merely a temporary compromise or a permanent resolution.

For the moment, however, the superpower's facade has crumbled, and new equations are taking shape in the realm of international politics. This conflict has made one thing abundantly clear: global dominance cannot be achieved solely through the exercise of brute force. As the image of the United States falters, Iran has, through its resistance, signaled the emergence of a new power. It is certain that, in the times to come, global politics will become increasingly multipolar.

Road safety awareness is a national movement

Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways and Corporate Affairs Shri Harsh Malhotra emphasized that road safety awareness initiatives are not merely isolated events but integral components of a larger national movement aimed at fostering a culture of responsible road usage across the country. The Minister reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to strengthening road safety and promoting responsible driving behaviour as he flagged off the 3rd Edition of the Uttarakhand Adventure Ride organised by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

Shri Malhotra noted that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the guidance of Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari, India has made remarkable strides in expanding and modernizing its road infrastructure. However, he stated that ensuring safety ultimately rests on the collective responsibility and conduct of citizens.

Highlighting the significance of the initiative, the Minister commended PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) for successfully organizing the Uttarakhand Adventure Ride and bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders. He observed that the initiative effectively blends adventure tourism with public awareness, thereby amplifying the critical message of road safety among varied sections of society.

Underscoring the scale of the challenge, Shri Malhotra pointed



out that road accidents continue to pose a major public safety concern in India, with nearly 1.8 lakh fatalities reported annually. He further highlighted that approximately 45% of these fatalities involve two-wheelers, underlining the urgent need for riders to adopt safe and responsible practices. He urged citizens, particularly the youth, to act as ambassadors of road safety and lead by example.

Reiterating the Government's proactive and comprehensive approach, Shri Harsh Malhotra elaborated on the Ministry's 4E Strategy—Engineering, Enforcement,

Education, and Emergency Care—which serves as the cornerstone of India's road safety framework. He highlighted significant progress in improving road engineering, rectifying accident-prone black spots, strengthening enforcement through legislative measures such as the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, and enhancing emergency response mechanisms nationwide.

The Minister further stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, several citizen-centric initiatives—such as the PM RAHAT Scheme and the Rah-Veer Scheme—have been in-

troduced to encourage timely assistance to accident victims. He emphasized that building a responsive and compassionate society is essential to reducing fatalities and strengthening post-accident care systems. Applauding the strong emphasis on youth engagement, Shri Malhotra stated that youth are being sensitized through interactive sessions and awareness programmes. He stressed that inculcating responsible driving habits at an early stage is critical for nurturing a long-term culture of road discipline in the country.

He urged all road users to strict-

ly adhere to traffic rules and refrain from risky behaviours such as riding without helmets, speeding, using mobile phones while driving, and underage driving.

Reinforcing the importance of safety, Shri Malhotra remarked: "Helmet is not a choice, it is protection." "Speed is not power, it is risk." "Life is important—no call is more urgent than safety."

Highlighting the growing role of technology, Shri Malhotra referred to the use of AI-based traffic monitoring systems, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), automated enforcement mechanisms, and FASTag-enabled seamless mobility in improving road safety outcomes. However, he emphasized that technological advancements must be complemented by responsible human behaviour to achieve meaningful and lasting results.

The event witnessed the participation of 40 riders representing the Armed Forces, government ministries, corporates, and the motorcycling community. Shri Malhotra lauded their dedication and noted that such multi-stakeholder engagement reflects a unified national effort towards achieving safer roads.

Concluding his address, the Minister called upon all citizens to take a collective pledge to follow traffic rules, practice responsible driving, and actively spread awareness within their communities. He reiterated that road safety is a shared responsibility, requiring sustained and collaborative efforts from the government, institutions, and citizens alike.

India's innovation ecosystem

Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Dr Jitendra Singh today called upon the private sector to accelerate its participation in Research & Development (R&D) activities, emphasising that industry engagement is essential to strengthening India's innovation ecosystem.

The Minister said the government has taken a series of enabling steps - including opening up sectors such as space and nuclear energy to private players and creating dedicated mechanisms like the RDI fund—and stressed that industry must now respond by investing more actively in R&D and partnering in the country's scientific and technological advancement.

Speaking at the release of two NITI Aayog reports on easing research and development processes, Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasised that the focus must shift from how systems are designed to how they are actually experienced by researchers on the ground. He said evidence-based documentation of these lived challenges strengthens the case for reform and helps

carry concerns beyond the scientific community to policymakers.

"There is no denying that research can flourish only when there are no impediments, no slowdowns and no avoidable interruptions," Dr. Jitendra Singh said, adding that even when external disruptions are unavoidable, "the ponderables must be addressed" to prevent compounding delays.

The Minister pointed to a growing mismatch between India's expanding scientific capabilities and the systems that support them, noting that while the country has "no dearth of human resources" and its scientific talent is increasingly recognised globally, institutional and procedural frictions continue to constrain outcomes.

Highlighting the changing nature of research, Dr. Jitendra Singh said scientific work is now deeply interconnected with industry, finance and global collaboration, making it essential for systems to facilitate interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral engagement. He noted that the government has taken steps to open sectors such

as space and nuclear energy to private participation, signalling a broader shift in the research and innovation landscape.

At the same time, he flagged the limited participation of private industry in research funding and execution, arguing that government support alone cannot sustain long-term innovation. Referring to the recently introduced Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) funding approach, Dr. Jitendra Singh described it as an unusual intervention aimed at incentivising private sector engagement, even as he acknowledged that industry readiness remains uneven.

He also drew attention to gaps in corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending for research, noting that even existing allocations are not being fully utilised for R&D purposes, and called for a stronger culture of philanthropy and institutional support for scientific work.

The Minister cited initiatives such as "One Nation, One Subscription" for research journals as examples of enabling measures that improve access to

knowledge, while stressing that incremental improvements in routine processes—such as approvals, funding flows and administrative clearances—can collectively have a significant impact on research productivity.

Suman Bery, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, said the initiative on easing R&D processes is rooted in longstanding calls from the scientific community to reduce administrative burdens and improve system efficiency. He emphasised that as India's research ecosystem expands, the focus must shift towards ensuring coherence across the entire research lifecycle—from approvals and funding to execution and application—so that avoidable delays do not disrupt outcomes. Highlighting findings from extensive consultations, Bery noted that inefficiencies often arise at the intersections of systems rather than within individual processes, calling for a more coordinated, system-wide approach to reform. He added that clearer processes, institutional support for collaboration, and alignment with global practices would

be key to enabling research continuity and translating knowledge into real-world applications.

V. K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog, said India's research ecosystem is at a "point of transition", with systemic inefficiencies such as funding delays and administrative bottlenecks continuing to affect both the pace and quality of research. He called for greater institutional autonomy, reduced compliance burden on researchers, and stronger linkages between research, innovation and industry, alongside coordinated, top-down reforms in funding and policy frameworks.

The Principal Scientific Adviser Prof. A.K. Sood said improving ease of doing R&D must remain a continuous effort, noting that despite recent progress, key gaps persist. He flagged low funding success rates, unresolved issues such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA) framework, and constraints in hiring and infrastructure, urging stronger coordination and follow-through to translate recommendations into action.

The reports released by

NITI Aayog draw on consultations with researchers across institutions and highlight the need for greater flexibility, transparency and predictability in research systems. They emphasise that efficiency is not only about reducing timelines but also about providing clarity, enabling scientists to plan work with continuity and confidence.

Dr. Jitendra Singh concluded that strengthening India's research ecosystem requires sustained, system-wide engagement beyond government, involving institutions, industry and society at large. "Science today is too serious a subject to be left to scientists alone," he said, calling for broader stakeholder participation to ensure that research translates into scalable technologies, products and solutions.

The focus on easing research processes comes as India seeks to expand its innovation capacity and align its scientific ecosystem with broader economic and strategic goals, including increased global collaboration and the transition from research outputs to real-world applications.

Government Approves ₹132.51 Crore for Critical Port Connectivity Project at Kandla

In a significant boost to India's port-led infrastructure development, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal has approved the construction of a Road Over Bridge (ROB) at LC-235 at Deendayal Port Authority. The project, estimated at ₹132.51 crore, is expected to play a crucial role in easing transportation challenges and enhancing logistics efficiency at one of the country's key ports.

The proposed ROB project is a part of the Government of India's ambitious Sagarmala Programme, which focuses on modernising ports and improving connectivity to drive economic growth. The initiative seeks to integrate ports with industrial clusters, thereby boosting trade and reducing logistics costs.

Additionally, the project aligns with the objectives of the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, a transformative initiative aimed at enhancing multi-modal connectivity across the country. The master plan is designed to bring together various ministries and infrastructure projects under a unified digital platform for better coordination.

The construction work for the ROB is being carried out by Western Railway on a deposit basis. This collaboration highlights the integrated approach being adopted by different government agencies to streamline infra-



structure development.

Speaking about the project, Sarbananda Sonowal emphasized that the initiative reflects the government's commitment to modern and efficient infrastructure development. He noted that the project is being implement-

ed under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sonowal further stated that the ROB will help eliminate critical bottlenecks that currently hamper cargo movement at the port. By ensuring seamless connectivity, the project is

expected to significantly improve operational efficiency and reduce delays.

He highlighted that the project would not only enhance cargo handling capacity but also strengthen India's logistics ecosystem. Improved connectivity will lead to faster movement of goods, benefiting both exporters and importers.

The Union Minister also underlined that the initiative is part of a broader effort to develop world-class port infrastructure in India. Such projects are crucial for positioning the country as a global maritime hub.

The proposal for the ROB was recently reviewed by the Delegated Investment Board (DIB), which operates under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. The meeting was chaired by the Secretary of the ministry and involved a detailed evaluation of the project. During the appraisal, the revised project cost was carefully examined to ensure compliance with modern safety standards and technical specifications. This step underscores the government's focus on safety and quality in infrastructure projects. The ROB is expected to address longstanding logistical challenges at the Deendayal Port. Currently, rail crossings often create delays and congestion, affecting the smooth movement of cargo.

Sanjay Raut calls defection rumors 'absurd'

Mumbai: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Friday has strongly dismissed reports suggesting that eight Shiv Sena MPs are planning to join the Eknath Shinde-led faction, describing such news as "ridiculous and laughable."

Raut mocked the alleged list of defecting MPs and said he "found it rather amusing."

He criticized the "source of the report, stating that it only made a mockery of itself."

He said, "Tomorrow, they might even include my name or that of Aaditya Thackeray next in such lists," he added, accusing certain media sections of spreading baseless stories to create political hype and mislead the public.

Raut further alleged that such stories in media are deliberately



planted to heat up the political atmosphere and mislead the public, calling it "completely wrong jour-

nalism." He reiterated that all nine Shiv Sena MPs in the Lok Sabha remain

united despite challenges.

Highlighting concerns over discrimination, Raut claimed that opposition MPs are being denied development funds.

"This is a social injustice. While ruling party MPs receive massive funds, those elected by lakhs of people are being deprived," he said angrily.

Taking a swipe at Devendra Fadnavis, Raut said that if Fadnavis aspires to grow as a national leader, he must shed his narrow approach. "He should adopt a democratic stance and ensure equal treatment for opposition MLAs and MPs," Raut stated. He added that without such a change, Fadnavis' political relevance in Maharashtra would remain limited to the tenure of Narendra Modi at the Centre.

Shinde denies reports of meeting with Thackeray camp MPs, calls it baseless rumour

Satara: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has firmly denied reports suggesting that he held a meeting with Members of Parliament from the Shiv Sena faction led by Uddhav Thackeray.

Dismissing the claims, Shinde described the reports as "completely baseless, mischievous, and misleading," asserting that no such meeting had taken place.

He clarified that rumours about MPs from the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) defecting to his camp have been circulating for over a year, but maintained that there is "no truth whatsoever" in such speculation. The Deputy Chief Minister's statement is being seen as an effort to quell ongoing political chatter and bring clarity to the situation.

Earlier, several media reports had claimed that



Shinde held a secret meeting with MPs from the Thackeray faction on Wednesday night. According to those reports, as many as eight out of nine MPs from the faction were said to have been involved in the alleged discussions. It was further claimed that the MPs had assured their support for switching sides, sparking speculation

of a possible political shift within the party. Reports also suggested that the meeting took place at a confidential location in Thane, adding to the intrigue surrounding the claims. Some accounts even alleged that while six MPs were physically present at the meeting, two others had joined via video conferencing.

Violence in Maharashtra's Buldhana over prayers outside Masjid, Eight injured

Buldhana (Maharashtra): A clash broke out between two groups over offering prayers (Namaz) outside a mosque in Maharashtra's Buldhana district, leaving at least eight people injured, officials said on Friday.

The incident took place near Jama Masjid in the Iqbal Chowk area at around 10 AM, triggering tension in the locality.

According to initial reports, a verbal argument between members of the two groups escalated rapidly into violence.

The situation soon turned volatile, with incidents of stone pelting reported from the scene, leading to multiple injuries.

At least eight people sustained injuries in the

clash, with reports indicating that the condition of three individuals is critical.

The injured were immediately rushed to a nearby hospital, where they are currently undergoing treatment.

Police teams reached the spot promptly after receiving information about the incident and worked to bring the situation under control.

Authorities have since deployed additional security personnel in the area to prevent any further escalation and maintain law and order.

Senior officials are closely monitoring the situation to ensure that peace is restored and maintained in the locality.

An investigation has been initiated to determine the exact cause of the clash

and identify those responsible for the violence.

Police are also examining whether any external factors or prior tensions contributed to the incident.

Officials have urged residents to remain calm and cooperate with authorities during the investigation.

They have also appealed to the public not to believe or spread rumours, especially on social media, which could worsen the situation.

Local administration is keeping a close watch on the area, with preventive measures in place to avoid any recurrence of such incidents.

The situation is currently reported to be under control, with efforts ongoing to ensure communal harmony and peace in the district.

Minor fire reported at Mumbai airport, no casualties, triggers brief panic

Mumbai: A fire broke out on Thursday evening at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, briefly triggering panic at one of the country's busiest aviation hubs and prompting swift emergency action.

The incident occurred near the runway area close to Terminal 1.

Where thick plumes of smoke were seen rising into the sky, causing concern among passengers and airport staff.

According to preliminary information, sparks were first noticed in the runway vicinity, which quickly escalated into a fire, leading authorities to activate emer-

gency protocols.

Initial indications suggest that the blaze may have been caused by a short circuit, although officials have not yet confirmed the exact cause.

Given the high-security nature of the airport, authorities immediately tightened security measures, temporarily closing entry gates and placing the entire facility on high alert.

Emergency response teams, including the airport's in-house fire services and the Mumbai Fire Brigade, rushed to the spot within minutes of the alert.

Firefighters acted swiftly and efficiently, managing

to contain the fire in a short span and preventing it from spreading to other critical areas.

The prompt response helped avert what could have potentially become a major incident, considering the sensitivity and scale of airport operations.

However, the situation did lead to temporary disruption near Terminal 1, with some flight operations briefly affected.

Passengers experienced delays and longer waiting times due to enhanced security checks and restricted access to certain sections of the airport.

Long queues were re-

ported at entry points as authorities ensured that all safety protocols were strictly followed before allowing passengers inside.

A spokesperson for the airport confirmed that the fire broke out around 8:10 pm and was brought under control quickly by emergency teams.

The official also reassured that no casualties were reported and that overall airport operations remained largely unaffected despite the brief disruption.

Authorities have now ordered a detailed investigation to determine the exact cause of the fire and whether it was due to a

technical fault or human negligence.

The incident has also prompted renewed focus on fire safety audits and technical inspections at the airport to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Although no injuries were reported, some minor property damage is suspected.

And assessments are currently underway.

The episode has raised concerns about safety preparedness even at highly monitored international facilities, prompting officials to emphasise stricter preventive measures going forward.

Maha court rejects bail plea of prime accused in New India Bank fraud case

Mumbai: A sessions court in Mumbai has rejected the bail application of Hitesh Mehta, the former general manager and head of accounts at New India Cooperative Bank, in connection with a ₹122 crore fraud case.

Mehta was arrested in February last year by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Mumbai Police after a complaint was filed by the bank's chief executive officer Devarshi Shishir Kumar Ghosh.

In his bail plea, Mehta denied all allegations against him and argued that his prolonged incarceration warranted relief from the court.

However, rejecting the plea, Sessions Judge Vikram R Jagdale observed that

long custody alone cannot be a valid ground for granting bail in serious economic offences.

"Incarceration for a long duration cannot be the ground to grant bail because one cannot lose sight of the fact that in cases of economic offences, it takes time to commence and conclude the trial," the court noted in its order.

The judge further highlighted that such cases typically involve multiple accused and numerous witnesses, which naturally prolongs the judicial process.

The court also underscored that Mehta is the prime accused in the case, which further weighed against granting him bail at this stage.

According to the prose-

cution, Mehta, 57, allegedly siphoned off funds from the bank by withdrawing cash from its Prabhadevi and Goregaon branches.

Investigators claim that the fraudulent activities had been ongoing since the Covid-19 pandemic, indicating a sustained pattern of financial misconduct.

During police interrogation, Mehta is reported to have confessed to his involvement in the crime, strengthening the prosecution's case.

The fraud came to light last year when an audit conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) uncovered discrepancies and loopholes in the bank's accounting processes. The findings of the audit prompted further investigation, eventually

leading to the registration of the case and Mehta's arrest.

Authorities believe the case highlights serious lapses in internal controls and financial oversight within the bank.

The investigation is ongoing, with officials working to trace the siphoned funds and identify any additional individuals involved in the fraud.

The court's decision reflects the judiciary's cautious approach in dealing with large-scale financial crimes, where the impact extends beyond individuals to institutions and public trust.

With the bail plea rejected, Mehta will remain in custody as the trial in the high-value fraud case proceeds.

NCP MP Sule blames Ajit Pawar faction for Baramati bypoll not being unopposed

Solapur: Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) MP Supriya Sule on Friday indirectly held leaders of the rival NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) responsible for the Baramati assembly by-election not being uncontested.

Speaking to the media during her visit to Pandharpur, Sule said that questions regarding why the bypoll could not be unopposed should be directed to leaders of the Ajit Pawar-led faction rather than to her.

During her visit, she offered prayers at the revered Vitthal Temple and said she prayed for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of farmers across Maharashtra.

Addressing the by-election, Sule confirmed that she would travel to Baramati to cast her vote as a voter.

She also indicated her willingness to campaign if approached by leaders of the Ajit Pawar faction, remarking that "relationships also matter," hinting at the complex political and familial ties within the party. Sule emphasised that power and money are temporary, while



relationships and people stand by individuals during difficult times, underlining her broader political message.

She reiterated her support for Sunetra Pawar, who is contesting the Baramati by-election.

The bypoll was necessitated following the demise of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, leading to Sunetra Pawar entering the fray as

the Mahayuti alliance candidate from his faction.

In a show of solidarity, major opposition parties including the NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) chose not to field candidates against her.

Initially, the Indian National Congress had entered the contest by nominating Advocate Akash More.

Jaslok Hospital launches clinical study to enable AI-based prediction of Parkinson's freezing episodes

Mumbai: Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre, one of the country's leading multidisciplinary healthcare institutions, has launched a pioneering artificial intelligence (AI) project aimed at predicting Freezing of Gait (FOG) in patients suffering from Parkinson's disease.

The initiative is being spearheaded by noted neurosurgeon Dr Paresh Doshi, Director of Neurosurgery at Jaslok Hospital, in collaboration with globally recognised expert Dr Carine Karachi from the Brain Research Initiative in Paris, France.

The project is set to be formally introduced on World Parkinson's Day, underlining its significance in advancing research and awareness around the disease.

Addressing a press conference, Dr. Doshi highlighted the growing burden of Parkinson's disease in India and the challenges it poses to an already strained neurological healthcare system.

He pointed out that early motor symptoms often go unnoticed in routine clinical practice, delaying diagnosis

and intervention until the disease has progressed significantly.

According to him, this collaboration represents a crucial step toward improving how early changes in Parkinson's patients are identified and interpreted in real-world settings.

Dr. Doshi emphasised that timely detection can enable clinicians to intervene earlier in the disease course, potentially slowing progression and improving patient outcomes.

Parkinson's disease, the second most common neurodegenerative disorder globally, is witnessing a steady rise in prevalence in India, increasing the demand for advanced diagnostic tools.

In this context, the AI-driven project aims to bridge the gap between neuroscience and technology by developing a scalable, cost-effective digital solution.

FOG often leads to sudden inability to move while walking, significantly affecting mobility and increasing the risk of falls among patients.

Dr. Doshi noted that FOG has long remained one of the most challenging aspects of Parkinson's research, comparable in complexity to critical issues in Alzheimer's disease studies.

He added that the hospital has already contributed to this field through recent research involving novel programming techniques to address FOG-related challenges.

The new AI-based approach is expected to build on these findings and offer more precise, data-driven insights into patient conditions.

Jaslok Hospital's CEO Jitendra Haryan stressed that the initiative is focused on making AI a practical and impactful tool in clinical settings. He stated that the goal is not just to adopt advanced technology, but to ensure it delivers real-world benefits by simplifying complex neurological patterns for early detection.

Headmistress caught red-handed accepting Rs 300 bribe in school office

Ch. Sambhajinagar: In a crackdown on corruption, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday caught a school headmistress red-handed while allegedly accepting a bribe in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

The accused has been identified as Maria Jose Estibero (52), who serves as the headmistress of Holy Cross Marathi High School located in the Cantonment area.

According to officials, she had allegedly demanded money from a former student in exchange for issuing a school leaving certificate, a document required for further academic or personal purposes.

The complainant, a former student, had approached the school seeking a 'school leaving extract' and had already submitted the necessary documents through speed post.

Despite this, the headmistress allegedly demanded ₹500 and made it clear that the document would not be issued without payment.

Unwilling to pay the bribe, the complainant ap-



proached the Anti-Corruption Bureau on April 7 and filed a formal complaint against the accused.

Following this, the ACB conducted a verification process on April 8, during which the accused reportedly agreed to accept a reduced amount of ₹300 instead of the initially demanded ₹500.

Acting on the complaint, the ACB team laid a trap at the headmistress's office on Thursday afternoon to catch her in the act. As soon as Maria Jose Estibero accepted the ₹300 bribe, officials apprehended her on the spot, confirming the allegations.

During the operation, the bribe amount was recovered, and a mobile phone valued at approximately ₹15,000 was also seized as part of the evidence. Authorities stated that a search operation at her residence is currently underway to uncover any additional evidence or irregularities.

Officials further confirmed that the process of registering a formal case at the Cantonment Police Station is in progress. The operation was conducted under the guidance of ACB Superintendent of Police Madhuri Kedar Kangane.

Eknath Shinde Holds Secret Meeting with Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs

Thane: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has reportedly established direct contact with several Members of Parliament from the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), fuelling speculation of a potential political rebellion in the state.

According to sources from the Shinde camp, a closed-door meeting was held at a secret location in Thane on Thursday night, where key developments are believed to have taken place.

It is claimed that eight out of nine MPs from the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction were in contact with Shinde, indicating possible shifts in political alignment.

Sources said that six MPs attended the meeting in person, while two others joined the discussions via video conferencing. Among those reportedly involved in the meeting were MPs such as Arvind Sawant, Sanjay Dina Patil, Sanjay Deshmukh, Nagesh Patil Ashtikar, Rajaram Wakchaure, Omraje Nimbalkar,

Rajabhau Waje, and Sanjay Jadhav.

Insiders indicated that the MPs were allegedly assured of significant roles at the central level, a move that could strengthen the Shinde faction's position nationally.

The development comes nearly four years after Shinde's dramatic rebellion involving around 40 MLAs, which had reshaped Maharashtra's political landscape at the time.

If the current developments materialise, it could signal another major realignment within the state's politics, particularly within the Shiv Sena factions.

However, senior leader Sanjay Raut from the Uddhav Thackeray camp has dismissed the reports outright, calling them "rubbish." Raut's denial reflects the official stance of the UBT faction, which has sought to downplay the speculation surrounding any internal dissent. Following the reported meeting, Shinde travelled to his native village Dare in Satara district on Thursday.

‘Mera Jee Nahi Bhara’ from ‘Matrubhoomi May War Rest In Peace’ released

Mumbai: The makers of the upcoming film *Matrubhoomi: May War Rest In Peace* have unveiled their latest track, “Mera Jee Nahi Bhara,” offering audiences a glimpse into the emotional core of the story. The song stands out as a poignant romantic number set against the backdrop of war, blending love and conflict in a visually striking narrative.

Featuring Zain Shaw and Abhishree Sen, the track beautifully captures the blossoming of romance amid chaos.

Their on-screen chemistry adds depth to the storyline, highlighting moments of tenderness in the midst of turmoil.

Sharing the song on social media, the makers described it as a “sweet romantic song” that introduces a fresh emotional layer to the film. They emphasised how the visuals, combined with scenic backdrops, enhance the storytelling and immerse



viewers in the film’s world.

The song brings together the melodious voices of Shreya Ghoshal and Vishal Mishra, whose soulful rendition elevates the emotional impact of the track.

Musically, the composition is helmed by Shamir Tandon and Kumar Gaurav Singh, while the lyrics, penned by Vishwadeep

Zeest, add poetic depth to the narrative.

The choreography by Shabina Khan further enhances the song’s visual appeal, bringing elegance and grace to the romantic sequences.

Zain Shaw, known for his performances in films like *Farrey* and OTT series such as *Class* and *Strange City*,

showcases his versatility in this role, stepping into a character shaped by intense emotional circumstances.

Meanwhile, Abhishree Sen makes a promising debut with *Matrubhoomi*, and her performance in the song hints at a strong screen presence and emotional range.

The track not only adds a romantic dimension to the

film but also reinforces its broader theme—finding love, hope, and humanity even in the harshest conditions.

Produced by Salman Khan under the banner of Salman Khan Films, the film carries the backing of one of Bollywood’s most influential names.

Directed by Apoorva Lakhia, the project promises a compelling narrative rooted in a true story of bravery, sacrifice, and courage.

The film also features Chitragada Singh in a pivotal role, adding further depth to the ensemble cast.

With “Mera Jee Nahi Bhara,” the makers have successfully created an emotional bridge between the audience and the film, setting the stage for a story that intertwines war and romance.

As anticipation builds, the song serves as a reminder that even in the darkest times, love remains a powerful and enduring force.

Vijay’s swansong movie “Jana Nayagan”, locked by Censor Board, leaked online ahead of TN polls, TVK condemns

Mumbai: Rattling the film industry and setting off alarm bells in poll-bound Tamil Nadu, actor and (TVK) Founder-President Vijay’s swansong movie “Jana Nayagan”, held up by the Censor Board for months together over certification row, has been leaked online, which the party termed it a politically motivated conspiracy. This leak has come at a time when the TVK is making its electoral debut, projecting Vijay as the Chief Ministerial face in this April 23 Assembly polls. When he launched the TVK in February 2024, he stayed away from the parliamentary elections, preferring to enter the fray in 2026. Then, he had announced that “Jananayagan” would be his last venture in films after which he would focus on his political journey. According to some reports, the full HD print of the movie had been leaked, some maintain that only a 5-minute clip was released by piracy sites. The movie’s director H Vinoh has urged the public not to download it from such sites and said that the film crew

and the production house are taking steps to address the issue. Vinoh took to Instagram requesting audiences not to share the film. “Every scene carries the dreams and hard work of many people. I request everyone to support the team,” he said. South Indian movie mogul Chiranjeevi, actors Siva Karthikeyan and Sibi Sathyaraj and others from the film industry have expressed shock at the leak. TVK General Secretary, Election Campaign Management, Aadhav Arjuna, who is contesting the polls from the Villivakkam in the constituency, blamed union Minister of State for I and B and Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, a popular actor who also manages a Film production house, for the illegal online leak and terming it a politically motivated joint conspiracy. Calling the leak a direct threat to Vijay, he alleged that the BJP and the ruling DMK had acted in collusion. “This is not an isolated incident. It is a politically motivated joint conspiracy. Mr Murugan, who holds the Information and

Broadcasting portfolio, is behind this, with the support of Udhayanidhi Stalin”. Talking to reporters here, Arjuna claimed that Mr Murugan and Udhayanidhi have worked in tandem to target Vijay and restrict his political growth,” while asserting that such moves would not deter the TVK leader. Originally scheduled for release on January nine coinciding with the Pongal festival and expected to boost the TVK ahead of the elections, it remains caught with the Censor Board. When the CBFC initially rescinded its decision to issue the film certification, the Congress had slammed the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of throttling creative freedom. Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi even termed it as an assault on Tamil culture. When the production house approached the High Court, a Single Judge directed the CBFC to issue the film certificate, but with a Division Bench overturning it, the makers of the movie withdrew the case and acceded to the CFBC re-examining it.

Ranabaali demanded a lot of research: Rahul Sankrityan

Mumbai: Director Rahul Sankrityan has revealed that his upcoming film *Ranabaali* is rooted in real events and backed by extensive historical research, adding depth and authenticity to the narrative. The film has already generated significant buzz as it reunites the popular on-screen pair Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna, whose chemistry has previously been widely appreciated by audiences. Speaking about the preparation behind the project, Sankrityan shared that he undertook detailed research, engaging with historians, poets, and archival material to ensure accuracy. He emphasised that history is not confined to written records alone but also lives through oral traditions and cultural practices. “History exists in many forms, not just in books, but also in the stories that have reached us through villages and customs,” the director explained, highlighting his approach to storytelling. He further elaborated on the historical backdrop, pointing to the era of the Madras Presidency, which once encompassed present-day Chennai, parts of the Telugu-speaking regions, and Bengaluru. According to him, this region holds many untold stories of struggle and resilience that remain largely unexplored in mainstream cinema. Sankrityan revealed that some of the



film’s most impactful moments were inspired by experiences in remote villages and lesser-known archives. One particularly significant moment came from a visit to his father’s village, where he witnessed the revival of an old custom that ultimately shaped the film’s climax. The filmmaker, who is just 28, said that *Ranabaali* draws heavily from real incidents in 19th-century Rayalaseema, forming the foundation of the film’s narrative. Set in 19th-century South India, the film explores the lives of people navigating resistance, tradition, and the challenges posed by colonial rule, especially in the Rayalaseema region. Sankrityan noted that modern audiences are increasingly interested in historical narratives, as they spark curiosity about real events and forgotten stories from the past. He believes that this growing interest makes such films more relevant, offering both entertainment and a deeper understanding of history. Talking

about the lead character, the director revealed that Vijay Deverakonda will be seen portraying a fearless rebel, marked by natural dominance and authority. He explained that recreating history on screen demands a transformative effort from actors, requiring them to fully immerse themselves in the mindset, emotions, and realities of the era they portray. The film also features international actor Arnold Vosloo, adding a global dimension to the cast and further elevating the scale of the project.

Kritika Kamra returns to work after marriage, busy with back-to-back projects

Mumbai: Actress Kritika Kamra has swiftly returned to work following her wedding, demonstrating a strong commitment to her professional responsibilities without taking an extended break.

Soon after tying the knot with Gaurav Kapoor, Kritika chose to balance personal celebrations with her career, stepping back into her busy schedule almost immediately.

The couple took a brief three-to-four-day getaway in Goa to mark the occasion, enjoying some quiet time together before resuming their respective professional commitments.

However, the short break quickly came to an end as both Kritika and Gaurav returned to their work routines, reflecting their dedication to their careers.

While Gaurav Kapoor got back to

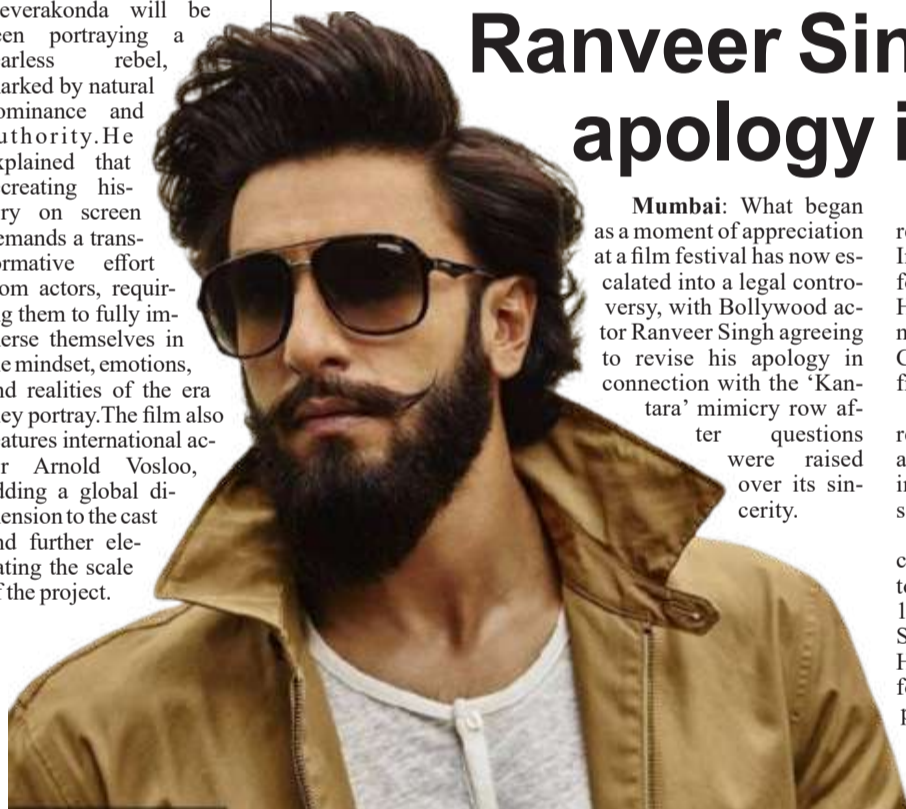
his responsibilities related to the Indian Premier League, Kritika wasted no time in diving into her own projects.

The actress has been actively juggling promotional activities for her upcoming project *Matka King* along with the shooting schedule of her film. Sources close to Kritika reveal that she has been managing her time efficiently, striking a balance between multiple professional commitments

without compromising on quality.

Her disciplined approach highlights her work ethic and passion for acting, especially at a time when many would prefer to take a longer break after a major personal milestone. Speaking about her decision, Kritika shared that the wedding was a beautiful and special phase in her life, but she had already planned not to pause her work for too long.

Ranveer Singh agrees to revise apology in Kantara mimicry row



Mumbai: What began as a moment of appreciation at a film festival has now escalated into a legal controversy, with Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh agreeing to revise his apology in connection with the ‘Kantara’ mimicry row after questions were raised over its sincerity.

The controversy traces back to Singh’s remarks at the International Film Festival of India, where he praised actor Rishab Shetty for his performance in the film *Kantara*. However, during his speech, Singh also mimicked a depiction associated with the Chamundi deity, which sparked backlash from certain groups.

The mimicry was perceived by some as religiously insensitive, leading to strong reactions and calls for accountability. What initially seemed like an unintended remark soon snowballed into a legal matter.

Following the controversy, a private complaint was filed, prompting a magistrate to order an investigation under Section 175(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). Acting on the directive, the High Grounds Police registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Singh under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, citing allegations related to promoting religious enmity, causing insult, and public mischief. As the case reached the Karna-

taka High Court, the focus shifted from the legality of Singh’s remarks to the nature and sincerity of his apology. During the hearing, Singh’s counsel informed Justice M Nagaprasanna that the actor had already submitted an affidavit expressing regret and clarifying that there was no intention to hurt religious sentiments. However, the complainant objected to the affidavit, arguing that the apology lacked genuine remorse and did not adequately reflect the seriousness of the issue. It was also claimed that Singh had previously been advised against making such remarks.

In response to these concerns, Singh’s legal team agreed to revisit the wording of the affidavit and submit a revised version before the court, aiming to address doubts about its authenticity. Taking note of this submission, the Karnataka High Court adjourned the matter to April 23, indicating that the next hearing will assess whether the revised apology satisfies both the complainant and the court.

Sonu Sood and Mika Singh come on board as NCL GT20 team co-owners

Mumbai: The National Cricket League (NCL) has announced a major boost to its global ambitions, with actor-philanthropist Sonu Sood and singer-performer Mika Singh joining its NCL GT20 competition as team co-owners.

The move is being seen as a strategic step by the National Cricket League to expand its footprint across North America, particularly in emerging cricket markets like the United States and Canada.

League organisers believe that the inclusion of high-profile personalities like Sonu Sood and Mika Singh will significantly boost the league’s visibility and appeal among global audiences. Their involvement is expected to bridge traditional cricket-loving regions with newer fan bases.

The NCL GT20 tournament, which is part of the league’s broader expansion strategy, aims to establish a strong T20 cricket ecosystem in North America, tapping into the region’s growing interest in the sport.

Sonu Sood, known not only for his film career but also for his philanthropic work, highlighted cricket’s ability to unite people across

cultures. He noted that the league’s initiative represents a timely effort to introduce the game to new audiences.

“Cricket has always had the power to unite people across cultures. What the National Cricket League is building in North America is an important step in taking the game to new audiences,” Sood said.

He also pointed out that with cricket’s inclusion in upcoming global sporting events like the Olympics, the timing is ideal to invest in the sport’s growth in non-traditional regions.

Echoing similar sentiments, Mika Singh emphasised the natural synergy between cricket and entertainment. He described North America as a dynamic and diverse market with immense potential for both industries.

“Cricket and entertainment naturally come together, and North America offers a unique platform for both. The diversity and energy here make it an exciting market,” Singh said. The involvement of entertainment figures is expected to add glamour and wider cultural appeal to the league, helping attract younger audiences and non-traditional cricket fans.

Sharvari Wagh to Cardi B give polka-dot trend a high-fashion twist

Mumbai: Bollywood’s rising star Sharvari Wagh and global rap sensation Cardi B have reignited the spotlight on the timeless polka-dot trend, each presenting a strikingly different interpretation of the retro-inspired style.

Their appearances come at a time when fashion is increasingly embracing nostalgia, with classic prints and silhouettes being reinvented for contemporary audiences. The polka-dot pattern, once associated with vintage charm, has now re-emerged as a powerful style statement on global fashion platforms.

Sharvari Wagh recently made a sophisticated fashion statement in a chocolate-brown polka dot polo dress from Rowen Rose, capturing attention for her refined and polished aesthetic.

Her outfit featured a fitted, high-waisted midi skirt paired seamlessly with a structured collared shirt, creating a silhouette that was both elegant and modern. The ensemble highlighted her ability to carry classic styles with a youthful sensibility.

The addition of sharp white detailing brought a crisp contrast to the earthy tones of the outfit, enhancing its retro appeal while maintaining a contemporary edge.

Elevating the look further, Sharvari layered a ruched ivory bralette underneath, subtly disrupting the traditional structure of the ensemble. This styling choice added a relaxed, modern twist to an otherwise structured outfit.

Her overall appearance reflected a careful balance between vintage inspiration and present-day fashion trends, making the look accessible yet aspirational for fashion enthusiasts who appreciate

timeless elegance with a modern twist.

On the other hand, Cardi B brought her signature boldness to the same outfit when she was spotted wearing it in New York City, once again proving her ability to transform any look into a headline-making fashion moment.

Known for her fearless and maximalist fashion choices, Cardi B elevated the ensemble into a high-impact statement by pairing it with dramatic outerwear and striking accessories that demanded attention.

Her interpretation leaned heavily into theatrical styling, amplifying the visual impact of the polka-dot pattern and turning it into a powerful expression of individuality and confidence.

In contrast, Sharvari Wagh opted for a more refined and polished aesthetic, allowing the structure and detailing of the outfit to shine through subtle styling choices.

This contrast between Sharvari’s understated elegance and Cardi B’s flamboyant approach highlights the remarkable versatility of the polka-dot trend, demonstrating how it can be adapted to suit vastly different personalities and fashion sensibilities.

The dual endorsement by two influential figures from different corners of the entertainment world has further cemented polka dots as one of the defining trends of the current fashion season.

Fashion experts believe that this resurgence is part of a broader movement within the industry, where nostalgic elements are being revived and reinterpreted for contemporary audiences.

Designers across global fashion

capitals are experimenting with polka dots in innovative ways, incorporating them into a variety of silhouettes, fabrics, and colour palettes to cater to evolving tastes.

From structured dresses and tailored suits to flowing gowns and casual separates, the pattern is being reimagined to suit a wide spectrum of occasions and style preferences.

The adaptability of polka dots allows them to seamlessly transition from everyday wear to high-fashion ensembles, making them a versatile staple in modern wardrobes.

Both Sharvari Wagh and Cardi B have played a pivotal role in amplifying this trend, bridging Indian and international fashion narratives through their distinct yet equally impactful interpretations.

Their influence underscores how celebrity style continues to shape global fashion conversations, inspiring designers and audiences alike.



Confident Punjab Kings take on unsettled Sunrisers in weekend's first double-header

Chandigarh: Punjab Kings will head into their upcoming Indian Premier League 2026 clash with quiet confidence, backing their collective strength against a star-studded but inconsistent Sunrisers Hyderabad side at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh PCA Stadium in Mullanpur on Saturday, in the first match of the day's double-header.

Despite a strong start to the season, PBKS were left slightly frustrated after their previous match against Kolkata Knight Riders was washed out due to rain, forcing them to share points when they appeared well on course for another win. Even so, the overall mood in the camp remains positive, with the team showing signs of a well-rounded and cohesive unit.

Under Shreyas Iyer, Punjab have built a reputation for adaptability and resilience. Whether it was chasing down a daunting 200-plus total against Chennai Super Kings in their own backyard or overcoming Gujarat Titans on a challenging Mullanpur pitch, PBKS have demonstrated the ability to handle varied match situations with composure.

Their clash against KKR



at Eden Gardens also showed promise, with Australian pacer Xavier Bartlett making early inroads before the weather intervened. The performance further underlined the team's growing confidence across departments. A key aspect of Punjab's campaign has been their team-first approach. As opener-keeper Prabhshir Singh, who is coming off a breakthrough 500-plus run season, pointed out, the focus remains on collective success rather than individual milestones like the Orange or Purple Cap. That philosophy has already reflected in performances, with Cooper Connolly play-

ing a crucial unbeaten 72 against Gujarat Titans and Vijaykumar Vyshak steadily making an impact with the ball. In contrast, Sunrisers Hyderabad are still searching for consistency. Despite possessing a formidable batting line-up capable of posting big totals, their campaign has been hampered by repeated top-order collapses. Matches against Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Lucknow Super Giants highlighted these concerns, with the otherwise dangerous opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma failing to provide solid starts. SRH have also struggled to find consistent con-

tributions from their bowling unit. Experienced names like Harshal Patel and Jaydev Unadkat are yet to make a significant impact, leaving the team searching for answers in key moments.

There have, however, been a few positives. Nitish Kumar Reddy and Heinrich Klaassen have shown intent with the bat, while young spinner Harsh Dube has impressed with his control during the powerplay overs.

Unadkat, in particular, will be keen to bounce back after a tough outing in the previous match, where he conceded 50 runs in just 23 balls. Tasked with defending nine runs in the final over

against LSG, the left-arm pacer was unable to hold his nerve, something he will look to correct in the upcoming fixture.

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

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Ishan Kishan (c & wk), Abhishek Sharma, Amit Kumar, Salil Arora, Brydon Carse, Pat Cummins, Harsh Dube, Krains Fuletra, Travis Head, Praful Hinge, Heinrich Klaassen, Liam Livingstone, Eshan Malin-ga, Kamindu Mendis, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshal Patel, David Payne, Sakib Hus-sain, Shivam Mavi, Shivang Kumar, Ravichandran Sma-ran, Onkar Tarmale, Jaydev Unadkat, Aniket Verma, Zeeshan Ansari.

India Caps campaign with 5 Golds as Vishvanath scripts pinnacle finish

Ulaanbaatar: India capped off a memorable campaign at the Asian Boxing Championships 2026 with Vishvanath Suresh clinching gold in the men's 50 kg category, defeating Japan's Daichi Iwai by a dominant 5:0 margin in the final.

The victory marked a defining moment for Vishvanath Suresh, who delivered a composed and commanding performance to secure the top podium finish. His tactical superiority and sharp execution ensured a clean sweep on the judges' score-cards.

India's medal tally received another boost as Sachin bagged a hard-fought silver in the 60 kg category. His performance added valuable points to India's overall standings, highlighting the strength of the men's contingent. Overall, India finished second in the medal standings, just one gold short of Kazakhstan. However, the Indian team emerged as the most consistent side, claiming the highest total medal count of 16 across categories.

A major highlight of the campaign was the historic performance by the Indian women's team, which topped the medal charts with an impressive haul of 10 medals. This included four gold, two silver, and four bronze medals, making it



one of their finest outings at the continental level.

Among the standout performers, Minakshi, Preeti, Priya, and Arundhati clinched gold medals in their respective categories, showcasing India's dominance across weight divisions.

The women's team also saw strong contributions from Jaismine and Alfiyan Pathan, who secured silver medals and played a crucial role in boosting the overall tally.

Vishvanath Suresh's gold is particularly significant given his rapid rise in international boxing. Having consistently impressed on the national circuit, he has quickly established himself as a formidable presence on the global stage.

His campaign in Ulaanbaatar stood out for its quality and resilience. Notably, he defeated a world number one opponent en route to the fi-

nal, demonstrating both skill and composure under pressure.

The performance reflects not only individual brilliance but also the growing depth of Indian boxing talent. Young athletes stepping up and delivering on big stages indicate a strong pipeline for the future.

Speaking on the team's success, Ajay Singh praised the collective effort and highlighted the emergence of new talent across categories. He described the campaign as remarkable, particularly applauding the women's team for topping the medal charts and underlining the promise shown by young boxers like Vishvanath. Singh noted that despite changes from the previous world championships, the team displayed tremendous character and adaptability against some of Asia's toughest competitors.

Estevao could be Brazil's World Cup's surprise: Davide Ancelotti

Brazil: Brazil assistant coach Davide Ancelotti has tipped Chelsea's teenage sensation Estevao Willian to emerge as a surprise package at this summer's FIFA World Cup. Ancelotti, who will be part of the Brazil coaching setup alongside his father Carlo Ancelotti, expressed strong confidence in the 18-year-old winger's potential to shine on the global stage.

The upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 is set to take place across the United States, Canada, and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, bringing together the world's top footballing nations.

Speaking to BBC Radio 5 Live's Euro Leagues podcast, Davide Ancelotti hinted that a relatively lesser-known player could make a big impact for Brazil during the tournament.

"The guy that will surprise you is someone that is not so well known," he said, pointing to the depth of attacking talent available in the

Brazilian squad. Among those talents, he singled out Estevao Willian as one of the most exciting prospects. "If I have to give you a name, Estevao is one of the rising talents of Brazil," he added.

The young winger, who joined Chelsea from Palmeiras last summer, has already begun to make his mark in European football.

Since his move, Estevao has scored eight goals and provided four assists in 34 appearances, underlining his attacking prowess and adaptability at a young age.

However, his progress faced a brief setback due to a hamstring injury, which ruled him out of Brazil's recent friendlies against France national football team and Croatia national football team.

He returned to action just before the international break in March, featuring for Chelsea against Everton and gradually regaining match fitness.

The teenager quickly made an impact upon his return, finding the net in Chelsea's emphatic 7-0 victory over Port Vale in the FA Cup quarter-final.

Ancelotti praised Estevao's natural ability, particularly highlighting his finishing skills and composure in front of goal.

"He is a really big talent," Ancelotti said, adding that the youngster has all the attributes required to succeed at the highest level of European football.

Estevao made his debut for the Brazil national football team at just 17 years of age in September 2024, and has already scored five goals in 11 international appearances. His rapid rise through the ranks has positioned him as one of Brazil's brightest young prospects heading into the World Cup. With Brazil boasting a wealth of attacking options, Estevao's emergence adds another dynamic dimension to the squad.

I feel complete backing from owners and fans : Liverpool head coach Slot

London: Liverpool head coach Arne Slot insists he feels "complete support" from the club's hierarchy and fans despite a run of poor on-field performances and growing discontent about his Anfield future.

Slot, who replaced Jurgen Klopp when becoming head coach in June 2024, won the Premier League in his first season on Merseyside but now finds himself fighting to secure European football with just seven points separating Liverpool, in fifth, from 13th-placed Bournemouth.

His side have only picked up one point from their past three league matches, most recently losing to Brighton 2-1. Liverpool were also eliminated from the FA Cup with a 4-0 quarter-final mauling at the hands of Manchester City on Saturday before being handed a 16th defeat of the season in their Champions League

quarter-final first-leg against Paris St-Germain.

Following the 2-0 defeat in Paris, during which Liverpool had just 26 per cent possession and registered only three shots compared to PSG's 18, former defender Stephen Warnock told BBC Sport it "feels like confidence is at an all-time low" while French football journalist Julien

Laurens is "struggling" to see Slot continuing as Liverpool boss next season.

However, Slot, who is under contract until the end of the 2026-27 campaign, has no immediate concerns about his future and praised the fans for continuing to cheer for his side even in defeat.

"I'm repeating myself a lot, but I feel a lot of support. Not only from the owners but from Richard Hughes and Michael Edwards. A lot of support from them but as weird as it might sound, I

also feel the support from the fans," said Slot.

"In Paris when the players went out for the warm-up and after the 4-0 loss against Manchester City the fans immediately started singing 'we love Liverpool'."

"I think it's fair to say we were outplayed for 90 minutes and they were still singing and clapping for us."

"I've said it many times, the club knows the period of time we're in and in the meantime,

I feel complete support."

He added that Wednesday's defeat to PSG would serve as motivation during this "defining" period of the season, which starts with Fulham's visit to Anfield on Saturday.

"We faced the champions of Europe and we experienced that we were not on the level we should have been."

"The good thing is we have four or five days to

show we can be much more competitive. It also tells us we want to keep improving and playing at that level next season."

"I think if you experience that two days ago, you want to be involved next season to show we can do even better. Therefore, we have to perform in the league as well."

Slot paid tribute to departing defender Andy Robertson, who announced on Thursday he will leave the club when his contract expires at the end of the season.

He hailed the Scot's "intensity" and long service to the club while acknowledging the 32-year-old's lack of game time was a contributing factor in his departure.

Robertson has made 373 appearances for Liverpool and won a total of nine trophies while playing at Anfield, including two Premier League titles and the Champions League.

However, he has been restricted to just 19 league appearances this season, including six starts, after falling behind Milos Kerkez in the pecking order.

"He's had many great seasons here not only as a player but as a great person as well. Every team-mate of his will tell you how funny he is, how great he is," Slot said.

"What I remember most about him is the intensity he plays with. I can remember Robbo making a press from the left-back position to the right wing a few years ago and I showed it to my players I was working with back then."

"He's won everything at this club, served his club and really loves this club. It's been a great nine years for him. This season, he didn't play as much as he was used to and as a result of that, he's leaving."

Match officials appointed for FIFA World Cup 2026

Zurich (Switzerland): Following a meticulous and comprehensive selection process spanning over three years, FIFA has released the list of match officials who will oversee games at the FIFA World Cup 2026. The FIFA Team One cohort includes 52 referees, 88 assistant referees and 30 video match officials, who hail from all six confederations and 50 Member Associations, in what is the most comprehensive line-up of match officials in FIFA World Cup history. The appointments were made on the basis of FIFA's long-standing "quality first" principle, while consideration was given to the consistency of the performances delivered by candidates at FIFA tournaments, as well as in international and domestic competitions in recent years. Pierluigi Collina, FIFA's Chief Refereeing Officer and chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee, said, "The selected match officials are the very best in the world. They were part of a wider pool of officials that was identified and monitored over the past three years. They have attended seminars and officiated at FIFA tournaments." "In addition, their performances in domestic and international

matches were regularly assessed. The selected officials have received, and will continue to receive, comprehensive support from our fitness coaches and medical staff, including physiotherapists and a mental specialist. Our goal is to ensure that they're

fact that six women match officials have been selected continues a trend that was started four years ago in Qatar as we aim to further develop women's refereeing." "During the tournament, the match officials will train on a daily basis,

their decision-making. Goal-line technology, an advanced version of semi-automated offside technology and connected ball technology will be used, while for the first time in World Cup history, fans will be able to see things from the referee's on-field perspective thanks to the use of new technologies." Collina concluded. FIFA Director of Refereeing Massimo Busacca said, "The road to the FIFA World Cup 2026

begin immediately after the conclusion of Qatar 2022, with a structured programme involving seminars, workshops and continuous monitoring." "Throughout this period, all candidates were closely evaluated by FIFA instructors, fitness coaches, doctors and physiotherapists, receiving comprehensive support to ensure that they achieve the highest possible standards at the tournament," Busacca said. Team One will be based in Miami, where the selected match officials will meet for a ten-day preparation seminar starting on May 31. Following this event, the video match officials will relocate to Dallas, which will be home to the International Broadcast Centre, while the referees, assistant referees and support staff will remain in Miami.



in optimal physical and mental condition when they arrive in Miami on May 31," Collina said. "This year's FIFA World Cup will be the biggest in history, with a 48-team line-up and 104 matches to be contested across the most extensive geographical footprint in the tournament's history."

Collina continued. "It'll be the largest FIFA Team One ever, with 41 more match officials than at Qatar 2022. Each of them must be ready to be appointed for a match and to contribute actively to ensuring that the refereeing at the World Cup is a success. The

with the sessions to feature the participation of local players. Collina commented: "As has been the case at FIFA tournaments in the past, our match analysts will provide the match officials with all the information they need to prepare properly for their games. We'll leave no stone unturned in ensuring that our match officials are fully prepared, and we're confident that FIFA Team One will meet the challenges that lie ahead at this groundbreaking competition." "As at previous World Cups, technology will play an important role in supporting match officials in

Ayush Shetty stuns Jonatan Christie to storm into semi-finals of Badminton Asia Championships

Ningbo: India's Ayush Shetty stormed into the semi-finals of the Badminton Asia Championships 2026 after pulling off an upset against world No. 4 Jonatan Christie here on Friday.

With a place in the last four, Ayush became the first Indian men's singles badminton player since HS Prannoy in 2018 to secure a medal at the continental meet. It will also be India's first medal at the Badminton Asia Championships since Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy's men's doubles gold in

2023. Ayush, 25th in the men's singles badminton rankings, registered a 23-21, 21-17 win over Olympian and third seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia in the quarter-finals.

The opener was fiercely contested with neither player able to break clear as Jonatan Christie, a former Asian champion, edged into the mid-game interval with a narrow 11-10 lead.

Jonatan Christie appeared poised to take control after stretching his advan-

tage to 18-15 and even earned a game point before Ayush produced a fight-back and forced the contest into a tie-break en route to clinching the opener, according to Olympics.com

The second game was equally hard-fought with Ayush carrying a slender 11-9 advantage into the interval before tightening his grip on the contest and closing it out to book his place in the semi-finals. This was the first win for Ayush against Jonatan Christie in the maiden encounter between the two.

Alcaraz battles past Etcheverry to reach Monte-Carlo Masters quarter-finals

Monaco: Carlos Alcaraz had to battle his way through three sets to advance to the quarter-finals at the 2026 Monte-Carlo Masters.

The defending ATP Masters 1000 champion defeated Argentina's Tomás Martín Etcheverry in the round of 16 on Thursday (9 April), booking his spot in the next round with a 6-1, 4-6, 6-3 result.

What started as plain sailing for the Spanish tennis star ended up in a two-hour, 24-minute battle against the world No. 30.

Alcaraz can breathe a sigh of relief as he booked his place in the last eight and keeps his chances of remaining as world No. 1 intact. Just as Jannik Sinner had done in his round of 16 tie earlier on Thursday, Alcaraz seized the



opening set in just 26 minutes, with a 93 per cent serve percentage that proved insurmountable for Etcheverry, according to Olympics.com. Whether it was complacency from the Spaniard or a resurgence from his Argentinian opponent, Etcheverry

broke down Alcaraz for a crucial break at 2-1 in the second set. With four attempts at

a double break, the unseeded player succeeded and took control of affairs against the shell-shocked defending champion.

A returned break from the top seed was not enough to quell the resurgent Etcheverry, who took the second set by serving to love in defiant fashion. Needing to regain the momentum, Alcaraz broke in a 13-point game at the first time of asking in the final set.

The world No. 1 was still being pushed to the limits with a healthy score margin, even though his service was not as precise as usual as the match unfolded. With 43 winners to 44 unforced errors, the 22-year-old held out to keep his title defence alive.

Next up is a first four-level showdown between Alcaraz and Alexander Bublik, the world No. 11 who debuted in the ATP top 10 at the start of the season.

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	
77,550.25	1.20%		24,050.60	1.16%		22,346.75	1.40%		67,641.25	2.07%		24,809.80	1.32%		55,912.75	1.99%		57,843.95	1.52%	
Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open	
76,631.65	77,121.01		23,775.10	23,880.55		22,037.50	22,151.05		66,268.65	66,677.25		24,486.50	24,602.60		54,821.70	55,182.25		56,978.75	57,315.60	
High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low	
77,622.50	76,851.16		24,074.05	23,856.35		22,364.30	22,133.15		67,708.95	66,623.65		24,831.30	24,579.30		55,978.50	55,145.25		57,885.75	57,168.20	

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Asian Paints	2,360.70	4.01
Eicher Motors	7,424.00	3.87
ICICI Bank	1,321.90	3.17
Shriram Finance	1,027.55	3.14
Bajaj Auto	9,813.50	3.12

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Coal India	434.10	-4.40
Sun Pharma	1,654.90	-3.62
Infosys	1,292.50	-2.94
TCS	2,524.30	-2.50
Tech Mahindra	1,440.20	-1.46

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	152,803.00	-631.00 -0.41
Silver May 05	243,436.00	-332.00 -0.14
Crudeoil Apr 20	9,160.00	227.00 2.54
Naturalgas Apr 27	250.40	-0.20 -0.08

Pantherun, Phoenix ink distribution pact to expand in Israel

Bengaluru: Pantherun Technologies on Friday announced that it has signed a distribution agreement with Phoenix Technologies to expand its presence in the Israeli market.

Under the agreement, Phoenix Technologies will represent and sell Pantherun's product portfolio in Israel, enabling wider access to its advanced technology solutions among local customers and partners.

The partnership is aimed at strengthening Pantherun's foothold in Israel, a market known for its strong innovation ecosystem and demand for cutting-edge technologies. The company said the collaboration with an experienced distributor is expected to accelerate the adoption of its solutions across key industries.

"We are extremely pleased to establish this partnership with Phoenix Technologies. Israel is a highly innovative market with strong demand for advanced technology solutions. Finding a distributor with the market penetration, experience, and technical expertise of Phoenix gives us great

confidence that Pantherun's products will reach the right customers and applications," said Srinivas Shekar, CEO of Pantherun Technologies.

Abraham Gelber, CEO of Phoenix Technologies, said the collaboration would create strong synergies. "We believe that the combination of Pantherun's product line and Phoenix's capabilities and expertise will enable us to provide attractive solutions to the Israeli high-tech industry," he said.

The agreement marks a key step in Pantherun's international expansion strategy and underscores its focus on building regional partnerships to support customers globally.

Pantherun Technologies develops advanced solutions for high-performance electronic systems and next-generation applications across industries, while Phoenix Technologies is a leading franchised distributor in Israel, specialising in electronic components, modules, and IP cores for sectors including AI, communication, defence, aerospace, medical, and security.

Stock market gains over 1pc, investors get richer by Rs 6 lakh cr

Mumbai: The Indian stock market on Friday rebounded strongly supported by positive global cues.

At close, the Sensex was up 918.60 points or 1.20pc at 77,550.25, and the Nifty was up 275.50 points or 1.16pc at 24,050.60.

Among the sectors, Auto, Capital Goods, Consumer Durables, Realty, Power, FMCG, PSU Bank, Metal, PSU Bank, Private Bank added 1-2pc. On the other hand, IT index shed 1.7pc.

In the IT stocks, Wipro shares rose 1pc, and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) declined 2.5pc. Bank shares rebounded from the previous session's losses, rising up to 3pc.

ICICI Bank emerged as the top gainer rising 3.3pc. Federal Bank and Axis Bank gained 2.38pc and 2.34pc, respectively.

State Bank of India,



HDFC Bank, Punjab National Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were trading higher by 1-2pc.

On Nifty, the key gainers were Asian Paints, Eicher Motors, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Auto, Shriram Finance. The losers included Coal India, Sun Pharma, In-

fosys, TCS, Tech Mahindra. Nifty Midcap and Small-cap indices rose 1.5 percent each.

Investors earned about Rs 6 lakh crore as the overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rose to Rs 451 lakh crore from nearly Rs 445 lakh crore in the pre-

vious session.

On BSE, over 100 stocks touched their 52-week high. These included Adani Energy, Ather Energy, ABB India, Hitachi Energy, Cummins India, Titan Company, MCX India, Anand Rathi, Natco Pharma, among others.

Defence-related shares rallied up to 16pc. Bharat Forge and Dynamic Technologies advanced 3.43pc and 2.9pc while Hindustan Aeronautics, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders and Paras Defence and Space Technologies were trading higher by 1-2pc.

SpiceJet shares hit the upper circuit for the third consecutive session locked in the 5 percent upper circuit at Rs 12.27. In a week, Sensex and Nifty gained nearly 6 percent each, marking their best weekly performance snapping a six-week losing streak.

Talks on with over 20 countries to open market access, trade opportunities: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, announced on Friday that India is in talks with 20 additional countries to open market access and broaden trade opportunities.

He said these negotiations are aimed to build on nine Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed over the past three-and-a-half years.

These FTAs provided preferential access to 38 developed nations.

Piyush Goyal's remarks came while addressing the business leaders in Coimbatore.

"We are in discussions with, apart from these 38 countries, at least 20 more countries to open market access in all of them. The

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Eurasian region, and Israel as participants in these ongoing trade talks," he said.

Highlighting the business opportunities in Coimbatore, he said the city is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. He described Coimbatore as the power centre of South India's entrepreneurial strength and credited the region's MSMEs for providing essential policy guidance to the Centre.

"Industry leaders come and complain to me that we are getting zero-duty imports from countries where we don't get access for our goods, but they are dumping goods in our country at zero-duty. But we have not done a single FTA with any



of our competitors. All our FTAs are with developed countries where per capita income is high, where they are not competing with us in our industries, and where we can get market access to expand our businesses."

"Today two-third of

global trade is open for all of you to get preferential market access to expand your businesses," Goyal said. The minister also highlighted the integration of the national power grid as a foundational achievement for industrial growth.

"The national grid gives reliability and resilience that the data centre really requires," he said.

Amid the ongoing crisis in West Asia, Piyush Goyal recently held a virtual interaction with the Minister of Foreign Trade of United Arab Emirates Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi to explore strengthening India-UAE trade ties. "We discussed opportunities to further strengthen India-UAE trade ties and expand avenues for deeper bilateral cooperation. I look forward to advancing our strategic partnership to new heights," Goyal posted on X. Notably, UAE is the second biggest export market for India and shipments have suffered due to war-related disruptions in logistics.

Crisil upgrades Sammaan Capital to AA (positive) rating with stable outlook

New Delhi: Credit rating agency CRISIL has upgraded the long-term debt programme rating of Sammaan Capital Limited to CRISIL AA (positive)/Stable, marking a significant milestone for the Delhi-based non-banking financial company.

The upgraded rating reflects a high degree of safety with regard to timely servicing of financial obligations and indicates very low credit risk, reinforcing investor confidence in the company's financial stability.

According to an official statement released by Sammaan Capital, the upgrade comes after key structural and ownership changes that have strengthened the company's overall financial profile.

A major development

behind this improvement is the entry of International Holding Company (IHC), which has become the promoter of the company through its owned and controlled entity Avenir Investment RSC Ltd.

This transition followed the completion of a preferential issue and acquisition of a controlling stake, marking a strategic shift in the company's ownership and direction. In October last year, the IHC Group acquired a 41.2-41.5 percent controlling stake in Sammaan Capital—formerly known as Indi-

adabulls Housing Finance—for approximately ₹8,850 crore (around USD 1 billion). This investment has played a crucial role in enhancing the company's capital base and strengthening its balance sheet, paving the

way for improved creditworthiness.

CRISIL highlighted several key factors behind the rating upgrade, including strong strategic importance and support arising from the company's linkage with the IHC Group.

The agency also pointed to sustained strong capitalisation, which provides the company with the ability to absorb potential financial shocks and maintain stability. Another contributing factor was the presence of robust financial buffers, which enhance the company's resilience in a dynamic economic environment. Additionally, CRISIL noted the company's strategic pivot towards growth, indicating a renewed focus on expanding its operations and improving performance metrics.

IT giant TCS reports strong deal wins, AI revenue growth in FY26

New Delhi: Indian IT giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Thursday reported steady sequential growth and strong deal wins for FY26, even as overall annual revenue saw a marginal decline amid global macroeconomic headwinds, a TCS statement said here.

The company posted FY26 revenue of USD 30.02 billion, down 0.5 per cent year-on-year (-2.4 per cent in constant currency).

However, quarterly performance remained resilient, with Q4FY26 revenue at USD 7.62 billion, up 1.5 per cent sequentially.

A key highlight for the year was the

sharp rise in AI-led business. TCS said its annualised AI revenue crossed USD 2.3 billion in Q4FY26, reflecting accelerating enterprise adoption of artificial intelligence solutions. The growth was driven by increased deployment across enterprise transformation, digital engineering, and cloud modernisation services.

Executive Director and COO Aarthi Subramanian said FY26 marked a pivotal year for enterprise AI adoption, with strong momentum in AI-driven deals and platforms.

The company also strengthened its AI ecosystem through partnerships with

global players such as OpenAI, AMD and ABB, alongside investments in its HyperVault infrastructure to build next-generation AI capabilities.

TCS also launched AI-focused platforms and collaborations, including its Rapid Outcome AI solution built on NVIDIA technologies, aimed at helping enterprises scale AI adoption and achieve real-world business outcomes.

Despite increased investments in AI and growth initiatives, the company delivered strong profitability. Operating margin rose to 25 per cent for FY26, up 70 basis points year-on-year—the highest in four years—while net margin im-

proved to 19.8 per cent, up 80 basis points.

The company reported robust deal momentum, with total contract value (TCV) reaching USD 40.7 billion for FY26 and USD 12 billion in Q4 alone. It secured five mega deals during the year, including three in the final quarter, highlighting sustained client demand.

CEO and Managing Director K. Krithivasan said TCS has now delivered three consecutive quarters of sequential growth, supported by strong deal wins and broad-based performance across key markets.

"We are pleased to report the third

consecutive quarter of sequential growth, supported by three mega deals and a USD 12 billion TCV. While macro headwinds persist, customer conviction in technology investments remains strong," he said.

On the operational front, TCS expanded its client base, with the number of USD 100 million-plus clients rising to 66 and USD 1 million-plus clients increasing to 1,397. The company's workforce stood at 584,519 employees.

Chief Financial Officer Samir Sekaria said the company continued to invest in growth through a Build-Partner-Acquire strategy, including

acquisitions and AI-focused initiatives, while maintaining strong financial discipline and cash flows. The company proposed a final dividend of Rs 31 per share, taking total shareholder payout for FY26 to Rs 39,571 crore. TCS also continued to invest heavily in talent development, recording 69 million learning hours during the year, with over 270,000 employees gaining higher proficiency in AI and machine learning skills. Regionally, growth in Q4 was led by the UK and North America, while sectorally, energy, resources and utilities recorded the strongest sequential growth.

Olectra Unveils New Brand Identity, Adopts Tagline 'Transforming Everyday'

Hyderabad: Olectra Greentech Limited (part of the MEIL Group), India's leading electric bus manufacturer, on Friday unveiled its new brand identity as part of its strategic evolution into an innovation-driven company focused on integrated mobility and energy solutions.

The Hyderabad-based company also introduced a new tagline, "Transforming Everyday," reflecting its vision to lead the global transition towards sustainable and value-driven mobility.

Announcing the re-branding, the company said the refreshed identity signifies Olectra's transformation from a pioneering electric bus maker into a future-ready organisation committed to delivering responsible mobility and energy solutions.

The new brand positioning features a modern visual language, sharper narrative

and a unified voice aligned with its long-term strategic goals.

As part of its renewed vision, Olectra said it aims to become a trusted partner in mobility and energy solutions through accessible innovation, operational excellence and enhanced customer experience, creating long-term value for stakeholders.

The rebranding exercise is built around three key pillars - pragmatic Futurism, Accessible Innovation and Trusted Guide, which the company said will shape its approach to product development and market engagement going forward.

The company has also reinterpreted its visual identity, redesigning its central triangle into the "Olectra Prism" to symbolise structural integrity and direction, while the surrounding circle, termed the "Olectra Universe," represents the wider

ecosystem of stakeholders, cities and infrastructure it serves.

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director Mahesh Babu said the new identity reflects the company's ambition and future direction.

"Olectra's new brand identity is not just a visual change it represents our ambition, mindset and the direction we are heading.

As we transform into a future-ready, innovation-led organisation delivering integrated mobility and energy solutions, this new identity reflects our core values and our commitment to transforming everyday across the mobility and energy ecosystem," he said. Backed by strong manufacturing capabilities and a growing order pipeline in the government sector, Olectra said it is entering the next phase of growth from a position of operational strength.

'Adani Group will carry forward JAL legacy,' says founder Jaiprakash Gaur

Mumbai: Founder of the Jaypee Group, Jaiprakash Gaur, on Friday expressed confidence that the legacy of Jaiprakash Associates Limited (JAL) will continue to thrive under the leadership of the Adani Group, following its selection as the successful resolution applicant.

In an official statement, Gaur said he firmly believes that under the leadership of Gautam Adani, the company will move forward with renewed energy, responsibility, and purpose while safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders.

"I have full confidence that under the leadership of Gautam Adani, the legacy of Jaiprakash Associates will be carried forward... ensuring that aspirations of all stakeholders are fulfilled," Gaur stated.

He also conveyed his respect for the decision taken by the Committee of Creditors (CoC), which selected the Adani Group as the successful bidder in the corporate insolvency resolution process.

"The Committee of Creditors has selected the Adani Group as the successful resolution applicant, and we fully respect this decision," he added.

Gaur took the opportunity to thank the Vedanta Group for its participation and interest in the bidding process, acknowledging the competitive nature of the resolution exercise. He further described the insolvency resolution process as "fair and transparent," appreciating the role played by the CoC and the resolution professionals in conducting the proceedings. JAL had en-



tered insolvency proceedings after facing significant financial stress, with the process aimed at restructuring its debt and ensuring continuity of operations under new ownership. The bid by the Adani Group to acquire JAL received approval from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on March 17, 2026, marking a major

step in resolving the company's long-standing financial challenges. However, the development was challenged by Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta, which moved the Supreme Court of India seeking a stay on the ₹14,535-crore takeover. Vedanta argued that it had earlier been declared the highest bidder and alleged that the decision was

reversed in favour of the Adani Group despite its higher offer. Agarwal claimed that Vedanta had submitted a bid of approximately ₹16,726 crore, higher than Adani's offer, and had even received prior written confirmation regarding its winning status. Despite these claims, the Supreme Court declined to stay the NCLT's decision and allowed the acquisition process to proceed. The apex court instead directed Vedanta to approach the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) for further relief and urged the tribunal to hear the matter on a priority basis. Founded in 1979, Jaiprakash Associates Limited has played a significant role in India's infrastructure and real estate sectors, developing landmark assets such as the Budd International Circuit.