



Aryan Age

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PM Modi recalls Pokhran-II tests, says India showed world it 'cannot be bent'

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday invoked the legacy of the 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests, saying the operation demonstrated India's "unwavering resolve" and proved to the world that no external pressure could force the country to bow down.

In a post on social media platform X marking the anniversary of the nuclear tests, Modi said, "On this very day in 1998, the nuclear tests conducted by India showed the world

how unwavering our nation's resolve is. After the tests on May 11, the entire world was pressuring India, but we demonstrated that no force can make India bow down."

The Prime Minister's remarks came as the country marked another anniversary of Pokhran-II, also known as Operation Shakti, a landmark moment in India's strategic and defence history that established the nation as a declared nuclear weapons state.

Pokhran-II consisted of

a series of five underground nuclear weapon tests under the leadership of former Prime Minister Atal



carried out at the Pokhran Test Range in Rajasthan on May 11 and May 13, 1998. The tests were conducted

Bihari Vajpayee and involved both fission and thermonuclear devices, signalling India's

capability to develop advanced nuclear weapons systems.

The tests triggered strong international reactions at the time, including sanctions and diplomatic pressure from several Western countries, particularly the United States and Japan. However, the Vajpayee government defended the decision as essential for safeguarding India's national security interests in a challenging regional environment.

Pokhran-II is widely regarded as a defining

moment in India's strategic doctrine and eventually paved the way for the country's emergence as a recognised nuclear power on the global stage. The tests also shaped India's long-term nuclear policy, including its doctrine of credible minimum deterrence and no-first-use.

Modi has frequently referenced the Pokhran tests and Vajpayee's leadership in his speeches, portraying the operation as a symbol of national strength, self-reliance and strategic autonomy.

Centre raises import tariffs on gold and silver; prices rally on MCX



New Delhi: The Centre has raised import tariffs on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent as part of efforts to curb overseas purchases of the metals and ease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves.

The move comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to citizens to avoid buying gold for a year to help conserve foreign exchange reserves. Global bullion prices are already soaring amid geopolitical uncertainty, volatile crude oil markets, and fears of a prolonged conflict in West Asia.

India imports nearly all the gold it consumes, so higher duties are expected to directly influence domestic gold prices, jewellery rates, and investment demand.

The move may help narrow India's trade deficit and support the rupee, one of Asia's worst-performing currencies. The government has imposed a 10 per cent basic customs duty and a 5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on gold and silver imports, taking the effective import tax to 15 per cent from 6 per cent.

Gold and silver futures

witnessed a massive rally on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). MCX silver futures for July 2026 delivery surged by Rs 16,743, or nearly 6%, to Rs 2,95,805 per kilogram. Gold futures for June 2026 delivery also jumped Rs 9,206, or 6%, to Rs 1,62,648 per 10 grams.

The central government had addressed concerns related to India's energy supplies, and reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to all citizens to reduce their consumption of petrol and diesel.

Sujata Sharma, joint secretary for ministry of petroleum & natural gas, said, "I would like to convey to you that the Prime Minister has urged all citizens of the country to reduce their consumption of petrol and diesel. Wherever possible, utilise the Metro and public transportation; opt for carpooling; prioritise railways as a mode of transportation for goods; and wherever feasible, increase the usage of electric vehicles. Let us all come together and make every possible effort to conserve energy in our daily lives, so that the economic burden currently weighing upon the nation may be alleviated."

Iran to hold talks with US if Washington meets 5 conditions: Reports

Tehran: Iran will hold talks with the United States if Washington meets five conditions, the Fars news agency reported, citing a source. The conditions include ending the war on all fronts, particularly in Lebanon, lifting sanctions against Iran, unblocking Iranian assets, compensating for damages, and recognising Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, the report said on Tuesday. Tehran conveyed to Pakistan, the mediator in Iran's dialogue with the US, that the naval blockade has also reinforced the Iranian side's view that the US cannot be trusted. On February 28, the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iranian territory. Iran responded by striking Israeli territory and US military facilities in the Middle East. The US and Israel claimed their "preemptive" attack was necessary to counter the perceived threat coming from Iran's nuclear programme, but they soon made it clear that they wanted to see a change of power in Iran. On April 7, Washington and Tehran announced a ceasefire. Subsequent talks in Islamabad ended without a breakthrough. No resumption of hostilities has been reported, but the US has imposed a blockade on Iranian ports. Mediators are currently working to arrange a new round of negotiations. On May 4, US President Donald Trump said that Washington's main goal remains ensuring that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons.

CM Mann meets Gadkari; centre promises Rs 400 crore for state projects

Chandigarh: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday met union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi and discussed several pending infrastructure projects related to roads and highways in the state.

Following the meeting, Mann said the discussions were held in a positive atmosphere and claimed that the Centre had assured financial support for key infrastructure works in Punjab. The Chief Minister said the state had sought around Rs 170 crore from the Central Road and Infrastructure Scheme (CRIS) fund, but the union Minister assured an allocation of nearly Rs 400 crore for various ongoing and upcoming projects.

Mann said several long-pending projects would now be expedited, including the Valla flyover project in Amritsar, which has been causing inconvenience to commuters travelling between the airport and Sri Darbar Sahib. He said Gadkari had directed officials to prioritise and speed up the completion of the project. The Chief Minister further said that the Bhawanigarh-Kot Shamir road, Malerkotla-Barnala road and the Barnala-Bajakhana road corridor would be upgraded into four-lane highways to improve connectivity and facilitate smoother transportation across the region.

He also stated that the Ferozpur-Fazilka road is expected to be declared a National Highway and widened

in the coming period. According to Mann, the move would fulfil a long-standing demand of residents living in border areas as well as the armed forces.

During the interaction, Gadkari reportedly appreciated the Punjab government's 'Road Safety Force' initiative and indicated that similar models could be considered for implementation in other states to improve highway safety and emergency response systems.

On the issue of land acquisition delays, Mann said only a few projects in Punjab were currently facing hurdles. He asserted that the state government would ensure fair compensation to farmers through the arbitration process so that development projects could move ahead without major disputes.

The Chief Minister also reacted to the recent alleged firing incident at the residence of Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh's manager and the threats linked to it. Condemning the incident, Mann said such actions could be attempts to exert pressure on well-known personalities to enter politics and stressed that entertainment personalities should not be dragged into such matters.

Referring to national concerns, Mann also raised the issue of the NEET paper leak and urged the Centre to act seriously to safeguard the future of students. He said ensuring better opportunities, infrastructure growth and employment generation remained essential for building a "Rangla Punjab."

IUML leadership meet today to finalise ministerial strategy

Malappuram: The Indian union Muslim League (IUML) leadership will meet on Wednesday to discuss the party's ministerial representation in the incoming United Democratic Front (UDF) government and finalise its political strategy ahead of Cabinet formation in Kerala.

The crucial leadership meeting, scheduled for 10 am, is expected to deliberate on the number of Cabinet berths to be sought by the party and identify IUML MLAs likely to be considered for ministerial positions.

According to party sources, discussions are also likely to focus on internal power-sharing

arrangements and representation from various regions and community segments within the party. There is speculation in political circles that a section within the IUML may press for the post of Deputy Chief Minister in the new government.

The meeting comes amid growing discussions within the party over balancing seniority, regional interests, and organisational considerations while selecting ministers.

Senior leaders are also expected to review the party's role in the new UDF government and chalk out its approach on key governance and political matters in the coming days.

Party leaders

maintained that the UDF's Assembly election victory was the result of the combined efforts of all alliance partners and said the coalition should move forward in a coordinated manner.

According to sources, the leadership will also assess feedback from party workers and elected representatives regarding public expectations from the new government and the party's responsibilities within the ruling front.

The meeting is considered significant as the IUML remains one of the strongest allies in the UDF and is expected to play a major role in the formation of the new ministry.

Global oil reserves see massive reduction amid Strait of Hormuz disruptions; threaten future price surges – International Energy Agency

Paris: Global oil reserves are shrinking rapidly due to the disruptions caused by the ongoing US-Israel war against Iran, as well as posing the threat of further oil price surges in the near future, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has warned.

"The world is drawing oil inventories at a record pace as importing countries confront unprecedented disruptions to Middle Eastern supply," the IEA said in its monthly oil market report released today.

"Rapidly shrinking buffers amid continued

disruptions, may herald future price spikes ahead," reports CNN.



As per the report's findings, worldwide oil stockpiles took a huge dip from their pre-war levels, plunging by 246 million barrels between March and

April to just 7.9 billion barrels, as the daily drawdowns from worldwide oil inventories in

the Iranian blockade, now in excess of 1 billion barrels, have led the global oil demand to crash dramatically, as businesses and households cut consumption in response to the massive swelling of prices and constrained supplies. The "steepest losses" are in the petrochemical sector, where there is less oil and natural gas to make crucial goods such as plastics, fertilizers and pharmaceuticals, as per IEA data.

Aviation sector has also

taken a heavy hit, as the total number of flights taking off worldwide "is also running well below normal levels, helping to ease some of the pressure on jet fuel prices, which nearly tripled after Middle Eastern exports were cut off," the agency added.

"Escalating demand destruction is underpinned by a surge in oil prices since the start of the war."

The IEA now sees world oil demand at 104 million barrels per day this year, 1.3 million barrels-a-day less than its pre-war forecast.

Vijay wins floor test non-chalantly, TVK crosses first hurdle, DMK walks out, PMK abstains

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay heading the TVK government in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday proved his majority in the 234-member Legislative Assembly, winning the confidence vote non-chalantly with the backing of the supporting parties and the members of the Rebel AIADMK camp, after the 59-member principal Opposition DMK staged a walk out, while the four-member PMK, an ally of AIADMK, and BJP abstained from voting.

After a debate on the motion moved by Vijay reposing confidence in his government and floor leaders of various parties spoke on it, the motion was put to vote. Though there are two options, Speaker JCD Prabhakar chose the option of counting of those supporting the government, instead of voice vote.

In the head count, of the total 171 members present in the 232-member House (Vijay resigned one seat, and Madras HC restrained one

TVK MLA from taking part in trust vote), Vijay with the support of 144 members, including from the Rebel AIADMK MLAs, comfortably won the floor test, despite 22 members voting against it opposing the motion and five adopting a neutral stand.

After the head count, which was carried out after shutting down the doors of all the entrances of the Assembly hall, the Speaker took another head count of all those supporting the motion under six divisions and announced that Vijay, who had emerged as the single largest party winning 108 seats won the floor test successfully with the support of 144 members, while 22 voted against the motion and five remained neutral.

The 144 MLAs who supported the motion included TVK's 104 MLAs (minus Speaker and Deputy Speaker) and one MLA restrained by Court in taking part in the trust vote of the total 107 MLAs as Vijay

resigned one of the two seats he had won), 13 from five supporting parties, one from AMMK and the rest from the Rebel AIADMK MLAs.

This is the first and resounding victory for the four-day government headed by Vijay, whose TVK had emerged as the single largest party with 108 MLAs, but lacked majority, and went on to prove his strength as directed by Governor R V Arlekar while inviting him to form the government after mustering the requisite numbers needed for majority with the support of some parties.

After Vijay moved the motion, floor leaders of supporting parties, including Congress, CPI, CPI(M), VCK and IUML spoke in favour of the motion pledging their support for the Chief Minister to keep the communal BJP which could not gain any foothold in the state and was trying to gain backdoor entry.

After the expelled lone Legislator Kamaraj of AMMK, an ally of the

AIADMK-led NDA, spoke pledging his support to Vijay, amid some interruptions, another ally,



the PMK floor leader Ms Sowmya Anbumani hailed some of the measures launched by the Chief Minister, including ordering shutting down of 717 state-owned TASMALC liquor outlets within two weeks, and announced that 4 of PMK legislators are abstaining from voting.

Winding up the debate, Leader of the Opposition

Udhayanidhi Stalin, urging the government to work for the welfare of all the sections, said the DMK,

winning 108 seats, heralding a new era in the Dravidian heartland and ending the six-decade long entrenched bipolar domination by DMK and AIADMK, with the actor-turned-politician himself winning from two seats.

Of the present 107 MLAs, after Vijay resigned one of two seats from where he was elected, the Madras High Court has restrained one of his party MLAs, Seenivasa Sethupathy, elected by a margin of one vote, from taking part in the No-Confidence motion on a petition moved by former DMK Minister K R Periyakaruppan challenging his election and sought recounting of postal ballots alleging that the votes polled in Tirupattur constituency in the southern Sivagana district, was sent to another constituency--Tirupattur in Tirupattur district, which put the TVK's strength at 106.

Vijay however reached out to the allies of the DMK, which has emerged as the second largest party and as

the principal Opposition, and the five parties came forward to extend their support, with Congress breaks ranks with the Dravidian major, allied with TVK and pledged the support of its five MLAs, while CPI, CPI-M, VCK and IUML with two MLAs each, pledging their outside support unconditionally, stretching the numbers to 119, past the halfway magical mark of 118.

In this context, Vijay's victory chances got a major boost, when 'rebel MLAs' of the AIADMK, who are aligned against Party General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami openly announcing their decision to support the TVK government. Since both the groups, the other being headed by EPS, decided to oppose it.

The AIADMK had a total 47 Legislators. Of them 22 supporting EPS voted against the motion while 25 Rebel MLAs supported it, despite the EPS camp stating that all the AIADMK MLAs

should abide by the orders of the Party Whip and former Minister Agri

S S Krishnamurthy and those violating it would attract disqualification under the anti-defection law.

Tamil Nadu Governor R V Arlekar, while inviting him to form the Government on Saturday night, has directed him to prove his majority within three days (by tomorrow), after he was sworn-in on Sunday, heralding assumption of a non-DMK, non-AIADMK regime for the first time since 1967.

A day after he assumed office, the newly elected MLAs took oath as members of the House on Monday and the elections for the post of Speaker and Deputy Speaker was held the next day leading to moving the confidence motion in the House today to prove his majority.

Ahead of the Trust vote, the ruling TVK has elected its Virugambakkam MLA R Sabarinathan as the Government's Whip.



CM Suwendu Adhikari cuts down convoy size following PM Modi's fuel-saving appeal

Kolkata: Responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for fuel conservation amid the ongoing West Asia crisis, West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced a reduction in the number of vehicles in his official convoy and directed security personnel to remove unnecessary cars.

Speaking outside the Assembly after taking oath as the MLA of Bhabanipur on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said he had instructed his security team to ensure that only essential vehicles remained part of the convoy.

"I have told the security personnel to remove unnecessary vehicles," Adhikari said while interacting with reporters outside the Assembly premises.

As the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Adhikari is entitled to Z-plus category security along with central security cover, resulting in a double-layered security ar-



angement.

Owing to these protocols, his convoy generally consists of a large number of vehicles.

However, following the Prime Minister's appeal for fuel conservation, Adhikari decided to rationalise the

convoy while maintaining the mandatory security arrangements as per protocol.

The move came shortly after Prime Minister Modi urged government functionaries and citizens to reduce fuel consumption in view of the economic pressure aris-

ing from the crisis in West Asia.

The Prime Minister had also decided to reduce the number of vehicles in his own convoy by nearly 50 per cent as part of the initiative.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah too adopted simi-

lar measures by cutting down vehicles in his convoy.

On Wednesday, Adhikari took the oath as the MLA from Bhabanipur in the West Bengal Assembly.

Along with him, several ministers and newly elected legislators also took the oath.

The oath-taking ceremony was administered by protem Speaker Tapas Roy. Meanwhile, BJP legislators were also seen following the Prime Minister's appeal by opting for public transport to attend the Assembly session.

Several BJP MLAs travelled to the Assembly in buses on Wednesday to participate in the oath-taking ceremony.

The fuel-saving measures by top political leaders are being viewed as a symbolic as well as administrative response to concerns over rising economic pressure linked to the geopolitical situation in West Asia and its impact on energy prices and fuel consumption.

AP CM appeals citizens to follow PM advisory in 'My Nation-My Responsibility Spirit'

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday appealed to the people to follow the austerity measures advised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in view of the ongoing global uncertainty arising from the conflict in West Asia.

The Chief Minister said the state government would soon announce a detailed action plan for implementing austerity measures across sectors.

Highlighting the possible global economic impact of the continuing tensions in West Asia, Naidu stressed the importance of collective responsibility and disciplined consumption patterns to safeguard the country's economic interests. Addressing a programme, he said citizens should adopt the spirit of "My Nation-My Responsibility" during challenging international situations. Naidu asserted that reducing the consumption of petrol and diesel would help conserve valuable foreign



exchange reserves and lessen the burden arising from rising global fuel prices.

"The consumption of petrol and diesel should be reduced, as this would result in saving foreign exchange," the Chief Minister said. He also underlined the growing relevance of remote working practices and suggested that work-from-home culture should be encouraged wherever possible. "Work from home is a reality. A situation will arise where the entire world works from home. This should be encouraged," Naidu observed. The Chief

Minister further called for curbing unnecessary expenditure and criticised the growing trend of large vehicle convoys used by public representatives and officials. "Travelling in large convoys of vehicles has become a major fashion for everyone. Public representatives should set an example by reducing the number of vehicles in their convoys," he said. Naidu also suggested that security arrangements for dignitaries should be rationalised to reduce avoidable fuel consumption and expenditure.

Odisha CM halves convoy fleet, urges public to embrace austerity amid global oil crisis

Bhubaneswar: Mohan Charan Majhi has reduced the number of vehicles in his personal security convoy by half in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for austerity measures amid the global oil crisis triggered by the ongoing situation in West Asia.

Welcoming the Prime Minister's call for fuel conservation and economic discipline, the Odisha Chief Minister said states must actively contribute to national efforts aimed at reducing unnecessary expenditure and conserving energy resources.

Majhi said responsible fuel consumption and financial prudence had become essential in view of the rising global uncertainty caused by geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

He asserted that governments and public representatives should lead by example by adopting measures that reduce avoidable fuel usage and official expenditure.

As part of this initiative, the Chief Minister decided to cut down the number of vehicles in his own convoy by 50 per cent.

The move is being seen as a symbolic gesture intended to encourage citizens and government officials to embrace austerity and avoid wasteful practices. Majhi also appealed to people across Odisha to reduce their dependence on private vehicles and make greater use of public transportation systems. He advised citizens to use personal vehicles only when absolutely necessary and avoid unnecessary travel in order to help conserve

fuel.

The Chief Minister said collective public participation would play a crucial role in reducing pressure on fuel consumption and protecting the country's economic stability during uncertain global conditions. He further urged people to adopt simpler lifestyles and avoid excessive spending in line with the Prime Minister's broader message on economic prudence.

Majhi also called upon citizens to avoid unnecessary foreign travel, stating that reducing overseas trips could help save valuable foreign exchange reserves. In addition, he appealed to people to refrain from non-essential purchases such as gold, echoing the Centre's emphasis on careful spending during the current global crisis.

CM poster for Shivakumar outside KPCC office fuels Karnataka Congress leadership buzz

Bengaluru: A large poster projecting Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar as the next Chief Minister has been put up outside the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee office in Bengaluru, adding fresh momentum to leadership speculation within the ruling party.

The development comes amid renewed Congress leadership buzz in Karnataka after Public Works Department Minister Satish Jarkiholi indicated that the party high command would turn its attention to the state after completing organisational matters related to Kerala, reviving discussions on cabinet reshuffle and internal balance of power.

The poster prominently positions Shivakumar in a

leadership framing that goes beyond routine celebratory hoardings typically seen in party spaces. The messaging is being read in political circles as a clear projection of him as a "CM face", even though there has been no official endorsement from the party leadership.

Reports also point out that the timing of the poster outside the KPCC office has added significance, as the venue is considered the central organisational hub of the Karnataka Congress, making the display symbolically important rather than incidental.

Another aspect noted is the absence of any accompanying official party communication or attribution, suggesting it may be the work of supporters rather than an au-



thorised campaign, though it has still succeeded in triggering internal discussion within party ranks.

The poster has also drawn attention because it appears against the backdrop of ongoing speculation over the Siddaramaiah-Shivakumar leadership equation, which continues to shape political narratives within the

state unit since the formation of the Congress government in 2023.

Party insiders, however, maintain that such displays are not unusual in Karnataka's political landscape, where factional expressions often surface through posters and banners, especially during periods of perceived organisational uncertainty.

What has further amplified attention is the fact that the poster emerged at a time when talk of cabinet reshuffle and leadership clarification is already active within the party ecosystem, giving it added political weight.

Officials within the Congress have not issued any formal reaction to the development, while the poster continues to draw attention from visitors and party workers at the KPCC premises.

The combined effect of the poster and Jarkiholi's remarks has thus reinforced the perception that Karnataka Congress remains in a phase of internal churn, with leadership signals increasingly playing out in both formal statements and symbolic political messaging.

BJP accuses Cong of betrayal over Dalit quota issue, warns statewide stir

Bengaluru: A sharp political confrontation has erupted in Karnataka over the issue of SC and ST reservations, with the BJP accusing the Congress government of betraying Dalit communities and weakening constitutional safeguards meant for marginalised groups.

The controversy intensified after senior BJP leaders launched a coordinated attack on the state government, alleging that the reservation framework had been deliberately delayed and diluted under the current administration.

Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy demanded the immediate implementation of enhanced reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. "The Congress government has stalled the reservation process with unconvincing excuses. The issue is not the Ninth Schedule, it is lack of intent and weak advocacy," Narayanaswamy said while criticising the state government's handling of the matter. He further alleged that the ruling Congress had drifted away from the constitutional

ideals championed by B. R. Ambedkar.

"Dalit communities and the ideals of Dr B.R. Ambedkar are being ignored. This is not administrative delay, this is political avoidance," he said, warning that the BJP would intensify protests if the reservation demands were not addressed immediately.

In a parallel attack, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok accused the Congress government of reversing gains achieved for SC and ST communities during the previous BJP regime. Ashok said the former BJP government had increased SC reservation from 15 per cent to 17 per cent and ST reservation from 3 per cent to 7 per cent based on recommendations made by commissions after years of struggle. "Our government increased SC reservation from 15 to 17 per cent and ST reservation from 3 to 7 per cent based on commission recommendations. That was the result of a 30-year struggle," he said. "Now they have diluted those gains. This is a betrayal of Dalit communities," Ashok alleged while questioning the intent of the gov-

ernment led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

He further asked whether the Congress government's approach reflected a genuine pro-Dalit policy or what he termed "political deception".

The BJP also criticised the government's legal handling of the reservation issue, alleging serious shortcomings in the presentation of the case before courts. Senior BJP leader Rajugovda Nayak claimed that the state government had failed to appoint competent legal representatives and was not defending the reservation policy effectively. "The government has not appointed proper lawyers, and they are not even defending the case effectively. Is this how you protect Dalit rights?" Nayak asked, adding that Dalit communities were being misled through what he described as legal excuses. The BJP leaders also cited examples of states such as Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu, arguing that higher reservation levels had been implemented and sustained there through legal and constitutional mechanisms.

Tanvir Sadiq slams LoP Sharma, says he has forgotten J&K politics after Assam return

Srinagar: National Conference leader and MLA, Tanvir Sadiq on Wednesday hit back at Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma over his remarks targeting the Omar Abdullah-led government, saying the BJP leader had "forgotten the politics of Jammu and Kashmir" after returning from Assam.

Reacting to Sharma's statement that the NC is a sinking ship and will drown at any cost, Sadiq, who is also the chief spokesman of the ruling party, said the BJP leader was disconnected from the political realities of Jammu and Kashmir and was making baseless remarks out of fear of losing his position as Leader of Opposition.

"He is dreaming. He has come from Assam and forgotten the politics of J&K. I want to wake him up again. I

will go to his house and make him drink coffee so that he understands this is Jammu and Kashmir, not Assam," Sadiq told reporters in Srinagar.

Sharma served as the Election Co-Incharge (Saha Prabhari) for the 2026 Assam Assembly Elections. The NC leader said the people of Jammu and Kashmir had given a decisive mandate to the National Conference and rejected both the BJP and PDP.

"People have taken a big part in the elections and giving the mandate to the National Conference, not to BJP and not to PDP. The National Conference is here to stay, and even after five years, it will return to power," he said.

Defending references to marathons and sports activities, Sadiq said such events promoted a healthy lifestyle

and reflected public engagement.

"Those who play cricket, football and participate in sports know the value of such activities. They keep talking about running and marathons because they do not understand anything else," he remarked.

Sadiq further alleged that Sharma was under pressure within his own party. "They failed in the Assembly and now they are afraid that even the post of Leader of Opposition may be taken away. That is why he is making such statements," he added. The NC leader also rejected PDP allegations of backdoor appointments, accusing the party of indulging in corruption and irregularities during its tenure in government. He challenged PDP leaders to identify even a single case of corruption involving the present National

Conference government or its ministers.

"Let them identify one person who can say that even one rupee was taken by our government or any minister. Otherwise, the whole world knows how their own relatives used to sit with lists deciding rates for transfers and postings," he said.

Without naming any individual, Sadiq alleged that PDP leaders had institutionalised corruption and were now levelling "false accusations" against the NC government. He claimed that transfer postings were allegedly monetised during the PDP regime and said repeated allegations by the party were an attempt to divert attention from its own record.

Responding to criticism over the liquor sale, Sadiq also drew a comparison between the PDP and National Conference tenures.

Mehbooba Mufti welcomes RSS leader's remarks, pushes for renewed India-Pakistan Engagement

Srinagar: Former Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday welcomed RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale's remarks advocating dialogue with Pakistan and described engagement between the two countries as an essential component for lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mehbooba said the PDP had consistently maintained that dialogue was the only way forward to improve the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

"There is no way without it (dialogue). You have seen that a small country like Iran and on the other hand, America, such a big

superpower, and Israel, how many attacks they have done on Iran and now they want to resolve the issue through dialogue. Similarly, Operation Sindoor took place a year ago. I think there is a realisation from both sides, especially what the leader of the RSS has said, that we should talk to them. So, I think there is no other way. If we want to stay united and progress, then we have to do it," she told reporters in Srinagar.

Her remarks came after Hosabale said India must respond firmly to cross-border terrorism while also keeping the doors for talks with Pakistan open.

Referring to former chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's stand,

she said peace and stability in the region could not be achieved without keeping channels of communication open with Pakistan.

"..Even former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had said that friends can be changed, but neighbours cannot," she said.

Mehbooba said past peace initiatives between India and Pakistan during the tenures of Vajpayee and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had positively impacted Jammu and Kashmir by reducing militancy, arrests and civilian hardships.

She also alleged that Jammu and Kashmir was witnessing an "atmosphere of oppression," claiming that people were being ha-



arrassed in the name of anti-national activities. The PDP chief referred to arrests, dismissals of employees, bulldozing of houses and closure of institutions, alleging that such actions had created fear among people.

"Thousands of people

are lodged in jails outside Jammu and Kashmir. There is surveillance, FIRs over social media posts and repeated use of laws like PSA and UAPA," she claimed.

Referring to reports of informal engagements between retired diplomats and

military officials from India and Pakistan in recent months, Mehbooba expressed hope that renewed dialogue between the two countries could help ease tensions and provide relief to people in Jammu and Kashmir.

When asked that ruling National Conference allegations that PDP issued maximum number of alcohol licences during their tenure, she said the BJP had been part of the government during the PDP's tenure and the party lacked the numerical strength required to push through a prohibition policy.

"The National Conference today has around 50 MLAs. Their own MP, Aga Ruhullah, has said they

promised people during the Assembly elections that liquor shops would be shut. These are his words, not mine," she said.

Mehbooba added that if the PDP had enjoyed a similar majority, it could have taken stronger measures on the issue.

Referring to NC president Farooq Abdullah, she said earlier governments had also resisted prohibition due to revenue concerns. She further argued that Jammu and Kashmir could have generated substantial revenue through its hydropower resources instead of depending on liquor sales. Targeting the NC leadership, Mehbooba alleged that key power projects were handed over to the

NHPC during earlier NC-led governments.

"When Farooq Sahib became Chief Minister in 1996 and Omar Abdullah was a minister in the BJP-led government, seven power projects were handed over to NHPC. ... Recently, even two more projects were handed over," she claimed.

Mehbooba said retaining control over hydropower projects could have strengthened Jammu and Kashmir's economy and reduced dependence on liquor revenue. "If we had our own power projects, we would not need liquor shops for revenue, and even the electricity problem could have been addressed," she added.

Briefs :

Delhi cops secure conviction in POCSO case within weeks

New Delhi: In a swift investigation leading to a speedy conviction, the Nihal Vihar police station here secured a five-year rigorous imprisonment sentence for a 25-year-old man convicted in a POCSO Act case involving an 11-year-old girl in outer Delhi, official said on Monday. According to the police, the incident took place on April 3 around 9 pm, when the minor girl was allegedly molested while playing outside her residence in the Nihal Vihar area. The accused, who was reportedly sitting near the victim's house, allegedly assaulted the child before fleeing the spot. Following the complaint, a case was registered under Section 74 of the (BNS) and relevant provisions of the POCSO Act at the Nihal Vihar police station. An investigation was immediately launched considering the sensitivity of the case. During the probe, the police scanned and analysed footage from more than 100 CCTV cameras installed in and around the locality. Through technical surveillance and local verification, the accused was identified as Dharmender, a resident of Madhubani district in Bihar, who had been living in Laxmi Park, Nihal Vihar, for nearly one.

Kejriwal questions Centre over economic appeals, seeks transparency on country's financial condition

New Delhi: Former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday questioned the Centre over recent public appeals made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking citizens to reduce fuel consumption, limit foreign travel, avoid foreign goods and cut down on purchases of gold, saying such measures indicate concern over the country's economic condition. Addressing a press conference along with Saurabh Bhardwaj, the AAP chief said the government should disclose the actual state of the economy and explain why such appeals are being made. He said citizens would be willing to make sacrifices if required, but added that transparency from the government was necessary to maintain public confidence. Kejriwal said India had faced several economic and wartime challenges since Independence, but claimed that no previous Prime Minister had asked citizens to simultaneously adopt multiple austerity-related measures of this nature.

Uniformity in legislative procedures necessity in tech-driven governance: Vijender Gupta

New Delhi: Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta on Tuesday said that uniformity in legislative procedures is no longer merely desirable, but it has become an institutional necessity in times of digital legislatures and technology-driven governance. Gupta has strongly endorsed the proposal to evolve a Uniform Model of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business for Legislative Bodies, during an important meeting of the "Committee of Presiding Officers to frame the Uniform Model of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Legislative Bodies," held in Mysore, Karnataka. According to Gupta, who was speaking at the meeting under chairmanship of UP Assembly speaker Satish Mahana, the Harmonised Rules of Procedure will strengthen transparency, executive accountability and coherence across country's democratic institutions.

Atishi targets centre over NEET-UG 2026 leak

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party leader and Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Atishi, on Wednesday criticised the Centre over the alleged NEET-UG 2026 paper leak. She alleged that the government has repeatedly failed in safeguarding national-level examinations and demanded accountability from the Narendra Modi-led government.

Addressing a press conference, Atishi said the alleged leak had shattered the dreams of lakhs of students and families who spend years preparing for the medical entrance examination.

She claimed this was the fourth instance of a NEET paper leak during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure, referring to



alleged irregularities linked to examinations in 2017, 2021, 2024 and 2026.

The former Delhi Chief Minister questioned whether sufficient safeguards had been put in place to prevent leaks during the conduct and transportation of examination papers. Referring to the Prime Minister's "Pariksha Pe Charcha" pro-

gramme, she asked whether similar discussions had been held with officials responsible for conducting examinations and ensuring security protocols.

Atishi also alleged that those involved in previous paper leak cases had not faced adequate action. Citing the 2024 NEET paper leak case, she claimed that

the main accused received bail after the CBI allegedly failed to file a chargesheet within the stipulated period.

She further alleged that examination leaks were taking place under political protection, a charge not responded to immediately by the BJP or the Central government.

The remarks come amid an ongoing probe into alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG 2026 examination conducted on May 3. The Central Bureau of Investigation recently registered an FIR in connection with the matter following a complaint from the Ministry of Education.

The agency is investigating allegations that examination-related documents were circulated prior to the test.

Nurses from across nation helped in making Delhi's healthcare world-class: CM

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta had conducted a surprise check at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) hospital, visiting various wards across the medical institution, meeting patients and also the nursing staff to take stock of the arrangements and working conditions.

Gupta, who witnessed the working, lauded the efforts of the entire nursing staff and their spirit of selfless service to the ailing patients admitted in the hospital.

During the visit on Monday, the eve of International Nurses Day, CM Gupta also spent time speaking with the nursing staff in an informal and heartfelt manner, listening to their experiences and acknowledging the challenges of their profession.

As a gesture of appreciation, she presented flowers to the nursing staff, an act

that left many of them visibly emotional.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM stated that nursing is not merely a profession, but a reflection of compassion, humanity and service. "Doctors provide treatment, but it is nurses who give patients emotional strength and care that often helps them heal," Gupta said, adding that the patience and commitment shown by nurses in difficult circumstances is truly inspiring. She interacted with the staff, comprising of nurses coming from different states, including Kerala, Rajasthan and Punjab, and noted that healthcare workers coming from across the country have played a major role in strengthening national capital's healthcare system and helping it achieve world-class standards. During her interaction with them, she announced that, bringing an

end to a long wait of 27 years, the Delhi government has implemented a record 27-fold increase in the stipend for nursing interns.

The amount received by them has been raised from Rs 500 to Rs 13,150, with the decision bringing much needed relief to 180 interns.

Meanwhile, in a related development, to facilitate the expansion of healthcare services, the government has also distributed appointment letters to 1,388 nursing officers and 41 paramedical staff members.

Gupta assured the staff that her government remains committed to improving the work culture for healthcare professionals and protecting their rights.

She said that respecting nursing staff, who work tirelessly day and night in service of patients, is a shared responsibility of both the government and society.

Upcoming Logistics & Warehousing Policy to help de-congest, boost industry, jobs & investment in Delhi

New Delhi: The Delhi government has reached a monumental milestone in urban planning by finalizing a comprehensive Logistics and Warehousing Policy. This ambitious framework, announced by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, is specifically designed to tackle the chronic issues of traffic congestion and environmental degradation while simultaneously boosting the commercial efficiency of the national capital. As the policy enters its final stages of implementation, the primary objective is to transform Delhi into a sophisticated, modern logistics hub. By streamlining freight movement and modernizing infrastructure, the government aims to move away from the chaotic, unorganized transport systems of the past toward a model defined by technological integration and sustainability. One of the most significant pillars of this policy is the development of Urban Consolidation and Logistics Distribution Centres (UCLDCs). These massive hubs will be strategically positioned in the peripheral areas of the city to act as filters for bulk cargo. Goods will be aggregated at these points before being distributed into the city in smaller, more manageable loads based on real-time demand. This strategic placement of UCLDCs is expected to drastically reduce the number of heavy freight vehicles entering central Delhi. By keeping the "big rigs" on the outskirts, the government anticipates a significant eas-

ing of traffic bottlenecks and a marked reduction in the hazardous pollution levels that have long plagued the city's residents.

Chief Minister Gupta also emphasized the creation of localized storage hubs and micro-fulfillment centers. These facilities are designed to cater to the modern consumer's need for speed, enabling businesses to execute faster last-mile deliveries while ensuring that logistics operations remain decentralized and efficient. To modernize the backbone of the city's trade, the policy includes the extensive upgrading of Inland Container Depots (ICDs). The plan also maps out dedicated logistics corridors, specialized truck terminals, and organized parking hubs, all intended to eliminate the practice of roadside loading and unloading that currently obstructs major city arteries. A specialized focus has been placed on the cold chain infrastructure, which is vital for the city's food security. The government plans to establish state-of-the-art cold storage facilities near major mandis (wholesale markets). This will drastically improve the shelf life and handling of perishable goods, reducing waste and stabilizing food prices for the general public.

In a strong push for a "Green Delhi," the policy mandates an aggressive shift toward electric vehicles (EVs) for last-mile delivery services. By incentivizing the logistics sector to ditch internal combustion engines, the government hopes to cre-

ate a silent, emission-free delivery ecosystem that serves as a model for other Indian metros. Sustainability efforts extend to the warehouses themselves, with the government promoting solar-powered warehousing systems. These energy-efficient infrastructures are designed to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the industry, aligning the city's commercial growth with global environmental standards. To bring the sector into the digital age, the government will introduce the Integrated Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP). This digital nerve center will enable real-time tracking and management of goods, providing a transparent and highly efficient interface for both the government and private stakeholders to monitor movement across the city. The policy is poised to be a game-changer for diverse industries, particularly e-commerce, which currently drives nearly 61% of warehousing demand in Delhi. Other beneficiaries include the textile, construction, electronics, and fresh produce sectors, all of which depend on the seamless flow of goods to remain competitive. Economic growth is a major byproduct of this framework, with officials predicting the generation of thousands of employment opportunities. New jobs are expected to emerge not just in transport and packaging, but also in specialized fields like IT-enabled logistics services, cold chain management, and green infrastructure maintenance.

NEET Exam; AAP Alleges Collusion Behind Repeated Paper Leaks

New Delhi: The cancellation of the NEET 2026 examination following a high-profile alleged paper leak has ignited a fierce political firestorm. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has spearheaded the criticism, launching a scathing attack on the Central government for its perceived failure to secure the integrity of national-level competitive exams. This latest controversy has quickly moved beyond the realm of academic administration, becoming a central point of political friction in the national capital.

Arvind Kejriwal led the charge, alleging that the

NEET examination paper has suffered multiple breaches during the tenure of the Narendra Modi-led government. The Delhi Chief Minister expressed grave disappointment, claiming that despite the recurring nature of these incidents, no decisive or significant action has been taken against the powerful syndicates responsible for compromising the testing process.

Kejriwal further asserted that these repeated failures point toward a deeper issue of "political collusion and protection." He argued that such sophisticated leaks could not occur without

high-level administrative loopholes, suggesting that the "paper leak mafia" enjoys a level of immunity that prevents the law from reaching the true masterminds behind these operations.

The human cost of the cancellation was a major theme in Kejriwal's address. He expressed deep concern for the lakhs of students and their families who dedicate years of their lives to preparing for the grueling medical entrance exam.

For many, the cancellation represents not just a delay in their careers, but a crushing emotional and financial blow to their aspira-

tions.

Providing a historical context to his allegations, Kejriwal claimed that the examination has now been compromised four times in recent years. He specifically referenced alleged leaks in 2017, 2021, and 2024, arguing that the 2026 incident is part of a systemic pattern of failure rather than an isolated administrative error.

The AAP leadership highlighted the immense distress the cancellation has caused among parents, many of whom have invested substantial financial resources into coaching and private tutoring.

Delhi CM in Assam attends BJP govt's swearing-in, says mandate reflects victory of good governance

New Delhi: Calling the people's verdict in Assam historic, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday credited chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's leadership, his unwavering commitment to public service and the immense trust reposed in him by the people of the state for the BJP's spectacular showing. Gupta attended the swearing-in ceremony of the BJP government in Guwahati, where she extended best wishes to Sarma on taking oath as Assam Chief Minister for a second consecutive term. She said Assam had made

remarkable strides in recent years in areas such as development, governance, infrastructure, investment, cultural preservation and public welfare. Under Sarma's leadership, she noted, the state has emerged as a new development model for the North East. Gupta said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Northeast has been brought firmly into the mainstream of the country's development journey. Assam, she said, is witnessing rapid growth in infrastructure, connectivity, tourism, education and employment.

Dust control norms tightened in Delhi, 100 GSM nets mandatory at C&D sites

New Delhi: The Delhi government has made the use of high-density dust screens mandatory at all construction and demolition (C&D) sites in a major step aimed at curbing dust pollution and improving air quality in the national capital. The latest directive issued by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee mandates stricter dust mitigation measures across construction zones to reduce the release of particulate matter into the atmosphere.

According to the new order, the minimum thickness of green nets being used at construction and demolition sites has now been fixed at 100 GSM (grams per square metre). All project proponents and construction agencies have been directed to comply with the new specification with immediate effect.

The decision has been taken in view of the significant contribution of construction and demolition activities to air pollution in Delhi.

Dust generated from large-scale construction projects, excavation work, debris transportation and uncovered material has long been identified as one of the major sources of particulate pollution in the city.

Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said the government was intensifying efforts to tackle pollution through stricter enforcement, scientific interventions and improved monitoring systems. He stated that the latest move reflects the government's commitment to addressing pollution

through practical and measurable solutions.

According to Sirsa, Delhi's battle against air pollution is being pursued with urgency and seriousness through a "whole-of-government approach". He said authorities are working simultaneously on policy reforms, technology-backed monitoring systems, scientific methods and stronger enforcement mechanisms to create a robust shield against pollution in the city.

The latest directive follows earlier instructions issued by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), which had laid down guidelines for dust pollution control as well as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for inspection of construction and demolition projects.

Officials noted that although earlier directions had already mandated the installation of tarpaulin sheets or green nets around construction sites and over stored construction material, there was previously no minimum technical specification prescribed for the quality or density of the dust barriers being used.

The absence of a fixed standard had reportedly created a compliance gap, with many construction sites using low-quality nets that were ineffective in containing fine dust particles. By prescribing a minimum 100 GSM standard, the Delhi government now aims to ensure that dust barriers function as genuine

pollution-control mechanisms rather than symbolic installations.

The environment minister emphasised that high-density dust screens are critical for effective containment of construction dust at the source itself. He stated that the introduction of the 100 GSM standard would make dust mitigation measures more practical, measurable and enforceable across all project sites in the city.

Environmental experts have repeatedly highlighted that dust from construction and demolition activities contributes significantly to PM10 and PM2.5 pollution levels in Delhi, particularly during dry weather conditions. Fine dust particles generated at construction sites often spread across nearby residential and commercial areas, affecting public health and visibility.

Officials believe that the stricter dust-screen requirement will improve containment of airborne particles and reduce the spread of debris and dust during ongoing construction work. The move is also expected to strengthen accountability among builders and project agencies operating in the city.

The government has additionally made registration of all construction and demolition sites on the official dust monitoring portal mandatory. Authorities say the digital platform will improve oversight, compliance tracking and transparency in enforcement activities related to pollution control measures.

The online dust portal is expected to help authorities monitor active construction projects in real time and identify violations more efficiently. Officials added that the digital system will allow better coordination between enforcement agencies and improve response times in cases of non-compliance.

The DPCC order has been circulated to several major civic, infrastructure and construction-linked agencies for immediate implementation. These include Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), Central Public Works Department (CPWD), and the Public Works Department (PWD), among others.

Authorities have indicated that strict enforcement and inspections will be carried out to ensure compliance with the new norms. Violations of dust-control measures may attract penalties and action under environmental regulations.

The latest decision forms part of Delhi government's broader anti-pollution strategy, which includes tighter controls on dust emissions, vehicular pollution, waste burning and industrial emissions. With pollution remaining one of the capital's most pressing environmental challenges, officials say stronger preventive measures at construction sites are essential for long-term air quality improvement.

Editorial

Corporate Jihad and Security Under Siege

Throughout India's history, aggressions launched from the seat of power in Delhi have repeatedly sought to strike at the nation's culture and identity. While direct Mughal rule may no longer exist today, a new 'Jihadi' crisis born of that very same mindset appears to be tightening its grip on modern India. From Delhi to Kanyakumari, a communalist faction has become active, dreaming of reclaiming the entire stretch of 'Hindukush to Hindustan' as their own and re-establishing the dominion of a specific religion over this land. This faction seeks to strike at the very foundations of the nation not merely through the force of the sword, but through various modern manifestations of 'Jihad.' A conspiracy to transform India into a mono-religious state is being hatched through the collusion of fatwas issued from across the border and a network of domestic fundamentalists individuals who are highly educated, professionally established, and backed by political patronage. Whether it involves opposing the national anthem Vande Mataram or brazenly denigrating the Hindu faith, a sinister and chilling 'narrative' is at work behind these actions. This crisis is no longer confined solely to street level violence; it has now penetrated the closed doors of corporate offices and IT hubs' the very nerve centers of the nation's economic power.

The incident that came to light at 'Tata Consultancy Services' (TCS) in Nashik a renowned international corporation stands as a truly spine-chilling example of this 'Corporate Jihad.' In a space where the discourse ought to revolve around technology and progress, communalist Muslims had, in the name of Jihad, unleashed absolute chaos. Nida Khan regarded as the mastermind behind the Nashik TCS episode along with her cohort of fundamentalist employees, had effectively transformed the office environment into a veritable camp of religious persecution. These monsters went to the extent of openly demanding sexual favors from young Hindu women, subjecting them to abuse, and even attempting to convert them to another faith. The number of these religious fanatics within TCS had grown so significantly that they were able to manipulate even the management to dance to their tunes. The sheer extent of their intimidation can be gauged from the fact that they would offer *Namaz* (prayers) in the office during lunch hours and, on Fridays under the pretext of *Jumma* prayers effectively transform the IT hub into a mosque. Disparaging Hindu deities and using abusive language against them had become a daily occurrence at the workplace. A deeply unfortunate aspect of this saga is that the company's HR Head, Ashwini Chaunani, deliberately turned a blind eye to these complaints, thereby effectively shielding the accused. It was only when the parents of one of the victims mustered the courage to speak out that this horrifying scandal finally exploded into the public domain.

The political ramifications of this case are equally alarming. A religiously fanatical party like the MIM has stepped forward to provide shelter and patronage to such elements. It has come to light that Imtiaz Jaleel a former journalist who subsequently became the public face of the MIM along with his party's corporators, has been at the forefront of shielding these criminals. The fact that the absconding accused, Nida Khan, was ultimately arrested from the residence of an MIM corporator in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar offers a stark indication of just how deep and extensive this nexus runs. While the Nashik Police deserve commendation for going undercover within TCS to expose this 'Jihadi' ring, the fundamental question remains unanswered: how was such nefarious activity allowed to persist for years on end within a world-class corporate organization? With the arrest of employees such as Danish Sheikh, Tausif Attar, and Raza Memon, it has become abundantly clear that the phenomenon of 'Jihad' is no longer confined merely to 'Love Jihad,' 'Political Jihad,' or 'Business Jihad'; it has now begun to insidiously infiltrate and hollow out the 'Service Sector' as well.

A similar manifestation of this cruel jihadi mindset was witnessed in the Nayanagar area of Mira Road, a suburb of Mumbai. There, a jihadi named Jaib Zuber Ansari launched a life-threatening knife attack on two security guards, simply after inquiring about their religion. This incident was a pre-meditated attempt to disrupt peace within the country and to spread terror. While a major tragedy was averted due to the police arresting him in the nick of time, the incident serves as irrefutable proof of the deep-seated hatred against the Hindu community that has been sown in the minds of such religious fanatics. The 'video scandal' that came to light in Paratwada, Amravati district, further underscores the horrific nature of this jihadi menace. A case has emerged involving a 19-year-old youth named Ayan Ahmed, who sexually exploited over 200 minor girls and secretly filmed obscene videos of them. Luring girls into a trap of false love, exploiting them, and subsequently blackmailing them using these videos represents an extremely terrifying manifestation of 'Love Jihad.' The depraved rampage unleashed jointly by Ayan and his accomplice, Uzer Khan, is enough to strike terror into the heart of every parent in society. Although the administration sent a stern message by demolishing Ayan's unauthorized residence using a bulldozer, such malicious tendencies continue to lurk beneath the surface of society.

When examining all these incidents collectively, a common thread becomes apparent: a concerted effort to demoralize the Hindu community by exacerbating their sense of insecurity. This crisis assumes an even graver dimension when highly educated youths working in corporate sectors fall victim to such jihadi tendencies. The morale of such religious fanatics has been steadily bolstered ever since individuals holding high constitutional offices such as former Vice President Hamid Ansari began expressing their opposition to 'Vande Mataram.' The greatest tragedy of all is that, at every turn, these religious fanatics appear to enjoy the patronage and protection of one political force or another. The time has come to deal a decisive blow to this suffocating, python-like grip of Jihad. This crisis will not be resolved merely by registering criminal cases or making arrests. Strict legal action must also be taken against the management of companies that ignore their employees' complaints and shield the accused. In corporate organizations, alongside standard 'background verification,' there must be stringent regulations regarding employee conduct and any religious activities being conducted on the premises. Parents within society also need to be more vigilant regarding their children. The only effective remedy is to identify instances of 'Love Jihad' or corporate harassment in their early stages and promptly report them to the police. Furthermore, while apprehending such criminals, the administration must disregard any political pressure and employ a 'bulldozer' policy to instill a deterrent fear. Crushing the fanatical forces that seek to fragment the nation in the name of Jihad and that destroy the lives of Hindu girls is not merely the duty of the police; it is the duty of every patriotic citizen. The struggle waged by the parents of the victim at TCS, Nashik, serves as an inspiration to all. Unless we unite to resist this python-like stranglehold, these fanatics will continue to obstruct our path of progress. If we wish to bequeath a safe India to our future generations, it is imperative that we eradicate this Jihadi mindset today. Whether it is the fugitive Nida Khan or the ruthless Ayan Ahmed, they must all face such severe legal repercussions that no one ever dares to betray the nation in the name of Jihad again.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Reviews NMHC Progress, Sets July 2026 Target for Phase 1 Completion

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MOPSW) Sarbananda Sonowal reviewed the progress of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) under construction at Lothal and set July 2026 as the target for completion of Phase 1 of the project. During the review, the minister directed officials to accelerate construction activities and ensure timely completion of critical components, including panels, mural work, ceiling fabrication and flooring. Sonowal emphasised strict adherence to timelines to operationalise the complex within the stipulated deadline.

"The National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) is a landmark initiative to showcase India's rich maritime legacy and civilisational connect with the seas. Under the visionary leadership and guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, we are committed to developing NMHC as a world-class destination that celebrates our heritage while inspiring future generations. We must ensure timely completion with the highest standards of quality," Sonowal said.

Highlighting the global dimension of the project, the minister stressed the need for collabora-



tion with neighbouring and maritime nations, including countries from ASEAN, to showcase shared oceanic heritage and historical linkages with India. Officials were asked to actively pursue such partnerships to enhance the international profile of the complex. India has already signed 10 MoUs with Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, South Korea, UAE, Portugal, Vietnam, Oman, Israel, and Thailand while 4 more countries — Italy, France, Myan-

mar & Cambodia — are likely to sign the MoUs for collaboration in developing NMHC as a global centre of Maritime history.

Sonowal also underscored the importance of inter-ministerial coordination, directing closer collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism to ensure effective execution and positioning of NMHC as a major tourism and cultural hub. Sonowal further called for the preparation of a comprehensive

calendar of events in alignment with national and state tourism departments to drive sustained visitor engagement and high footfall.

In addition, the minister sought clarity on the revenue model to ensure sustainable maintenance and long-term viability of the complex.

"NMHC is not just an infrastructure project — it is a tribute to India's maritime spirit and a gateway to understanding our historical global connections. With

Prime Minister Modi ji's unwavering focus on development and cultural preservation, we are building a platform that will strengthen tourism, generate economic opportunities and reinforce India's identity as a maritime nation," Sonowal added.

Phase 1A of the project, targeted for completion by July this year, includes six museum galleries, the Lothal township, aquatic theming, common area theming, a jetty walkway and the display of Indian Navy artefacts.

The next phase, Phase 1B, will see an investment of approximately ₹3,000 crore and will include eight additional museum galleries, a lighthouse museum, the Bageecha complex, Lothal-NI-VAV components, and a 50-dome theatre, among other attractions.

Once completed, the NMHC is expected to emerge as a global centre for maritime history, tourism and cultural engagement, significantly contributing to India's vision of preserving heritage while driving economic growth.

Sonowal also reviewed the situation at Gulf of Straits near Iran and steps being taken for safe passage of ships bound for India. He asked officials to take all necessary steps for safe passage of India bound ships.

"Mission for Cotton Productivity"

The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has officially greenlit the Mission for Cotton Productivity, a massive initiative backed by an investment of ₹5,659.22 crore. Running from the 2026-27 fiscal year through 2030-31, this mission is designed to revitalize India's cotton landscape by systematically dismantling existing bottlenecks that have historically hindered the sector's growth.

This strategic intervention aims to reverse the trend of declining growth rates and address persistent quality concerns that have plagued Indian cotton in the global market. By injecting significant capital and oversight, the government intends to stabilize the industry and provide a robust foundation for long-term economic sustainability for millions of stakeholders.

At its core, the mission is a direct manifestation of the Prime Minister's 5F vi-

sion: Farm to Fibre, Fibre to Factory, Factory to Fashion, and Fashion to Foreign. This holistic framework ensures that the mission does not just focus on the soil, but follows the material through every stage of value addition until it reaches international consumers.

A primary technical pillar of the mission is the development of High-Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds. These seeds are being engineered to be both climate-resilient and resistant to devastating pests and diseases, ensuring that farmers are no longer at the mercy of unpredictable biological threats that can wipe out entire harvests.

To ensure these scientific breakthroughs reach the ground, the mission leverages a massive network of State Governments, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), and State Agricultural Universities. This collaborative infrastructure is tasked with the large-scale promotion

and rapid adoption of the latest crop production technologies, bridging the gap between the lab and the field.

The mission introduces advanced cultivation methods such as the High-Density Planting System (HDPS) and Closer Spacing (CS). By optimizing land use and plant populations, these techniques are expected to dramatically increase the output per hectare, moving away from traditional, less efficient farming patterns.

Quality control is receiving a significant upgrade through the modernization of approximately 2,000 ginning and processing factories. By promoting best practices in processing, the mission aims to ensure that the cotton supplied to the industry is least-contaminant, meeting the stringent standards required by high-end textile manufacturers.

Infrastructure for testing is also being overhauled, with a focus on establishing

modern, standardized, and accredited facilities nationwide. These labs will provide reliable quality assessments and global benchmarking, allowing Indian cotton to be traded with a clear, verified pedigree of excellence.

A cornerstone of the mission's international strategy is the Kasturi Cotton Bharat branding and traceability initiative. This program is designed to position Indian cotton as a premium, sustainable, and globally trusted product, ensuring that international buyers can trace the journey of the fibre back to its origin.

Digital integration plays a vital role in empowering the primary producer. By digitizing market yards (mandis) and using e-platforms, the mission enables transparent price discovery. This allows farmers to bypass unnecessary intermediaries and gain direct market access, ensuring they re-

ceive a fair share of the value created.

In an era of environmental consciousness, the mission promotes circular economy practices. By focusing on cotton waste recycling and resource efficiency, the initiative aims to reduce the environmental footprint of the textile industry while simultaneously generating new, additional value streams from materials previously considered scrap.

Uniquely, the mission looks beyond cotton to diversify India's entire fibre base. It incorporates natural alternatives such as flax, ramie, sisal, milkweed, bamboo, and banana. This strategic integration ensures that India can meet evolving global demand patterns for sustainable and exotic natural textiles.

The implementation is a massive inter-ministerial effort involving the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and the Ministry of

Textiles. It draws on the expertise of 10 ICAR institutes, one CSIR institute, and 10 All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) centres across the major cotton-growing states.

Geographically, the mission will initially concentrate its efforts on 140 districts across 14 states. This targeted approach allows for the concentrated application of technology and training, creating centers of excellence that can eventually serve as blueprints for the rest of the country.

The ultimate goal is ambitious: increasing lint productivity from 440 kg/ha to 755 kg/ha by 2031, resulting in a total production of 498 lakh bales. With approximately 32 lakh farmers set to benefit, this mission stands as a definitive milestone in making India a self-reliant powerhouse in the global cotton sector.

CSIR-CRRI and BPCL Received India Book of Records Asia Book of Records Recognition for Innovative Use of End-of-Life Plastic in Road Infrastructure

The CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI), in a landmark collaboration with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), has officially carved its name into the annals of engineering history. The partnership was recently honored by both the India Book of Records and the Asia Book of Records for a pioneering feat titled "First Roadblock Section Constructed Using Technical Textile Geocell Made from End-of-Life Plastic." This prestigious recognition underscores a revolutionary shift in how India approaches both waste management and civil engineering.

The grand felicitation ceremony, held at the CSIR-CRRI Auditorium in New Delhi, was a high-profile event attended by the vanguard of India's scientific community. The occasion was graced by Dr. (Mrs.) N. Kalaiselvi, Director General of CSIR and Secretary of DSIR, whose presence highlighted the national significance of this project. The ceremony served not just as a celebration of a record, but as a formal validation of a technology that could redefine the future of sustainable infrastructure across the continent.

At its core, this achievement represents a monumental milestone in the quest for sustainable road infrastructure. By successfully demonstrating the scientific and practical utilization of end-of-life plastic waste, the project provides a viable solution to one of the most pressing environmental crises of the 21st century. The construction sector, traditionally resource-heavy, is now being shown a "green" pathway where waste is no longer a liability but a functional asset in building the nation's connectivity.

The technology behind this record is as complex as it is impactful. It involves the development of technical textile geocells—three-dimensional honeycomb-like structures—manufactured entirely



from processed end-of-life plastic. These geocells are designed to stabilize soil and provide structural reinforcement to road sections. This innovative approach converts difficult-to-manage plastic waste, which would otherwise linger in landfills for centuries, into high-value infrastructure materials with long-term utility.

Dr. Ch. RaviSekhar, Director of CSIR-CRRI, emphasized that this initiative is a direct response to two critical national priorities: the promotion of a circular economy and the development of resilient road systems. By integrating plastic waste into geocell applications, the institute is effectively reducing the environmental burden of plastic disposal while simultaneously improving the load-bearing capacity of roads, especially in challenging terrains where traditional materials might fail.

Speaking on the technical merits of the project, Dr. Ambika Behl, Scientist F at CSIR-CRRI, noted that the accomplishment is a testament to the synergy between research institutions and the public sector. She highlighted that the goal was to develop "field-oriented" technologies—solutions that don't

just work in a controlled laboratory setting but are robust enough to withstand the real-world rigors of heavy traffic and fluctuating weather conditions.

Adding to the technical narrative, Sh. Gagandeep Singh, Scientist E from CRRI, pointed out that the engineering requirements were never compromised for the sake of sustainability. The project involved exhaustive material characterization and validation studies to ensure that the recycled plastic geocells met strict standards for structural integrity and durability. The team proved that "green" roads could be as tough, if not tougher, than those built with conventional materials. The role of BPCL was equally instrumental, showcasing the importance of industry-academia collaboration. Dr. Mahesh Kasture, Chief Manager at BPCL, highlighted that translating high-level research into scalable field applications requires a partner with the industrial capacity to see it through.

This record reflects a shared commitment to environmental stewardship, proving that India's corporate giants are increasingly aligning their operational goals with resource efficiency and ecological

balance.

Furthering the corporate perspective, Dr. T. Chiranjeevi, GM (R&D) at BPCL, explained that the formulation of this project was a strategic component of the company's broader sustainability mandate. As refineries look for ways to minimize their environmental footprint, projects like the plastic-to-geocell conversion help fulfill corporate social and environmental responsibilities while contributing to the nation's technological self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat). The record-breaking roadblock section is more than just a physical structure; it is a proof-of-concept for technical textiles in India. These specialized fabrics and structures are becoming vital in modern engineering, and using recycled materials to produce them adds a layer of economic benefit by lowering the cost of raw materials. This creates a "win-win" scenario for the economy and the environment alike.

The Asia Book of Records specifically acknowledged the novelty and impact of this first-of-its-kind demonstration. By setting a benchmark for the entire continent, CSIR-CRRI and BPCL have positioned India as a leader in "Waste-

to-Wealth" engineering. The recognition serves as a signal to other nations that plastic waste can be systematically harvested and repurposed to build the very veins of modern commerce—our roads.

The ceremony concluded with a forward-looking sentiment, as the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. Vinod Kumar, Chief Scientist at CSIR-CRRI. He reiterated that the institute would continue to push the boundaries of what is possible in road research. The success of this project has already sparked interest in scaling the technology for larger highway projects across different states in India.

As the world moves toward the year 2026, the urgency for sustainable development has never been higher. The integration of end-of-life plastic into infrastructure is no longer a futuristic dream but a present-day reality. This record-breaking project serves as a blueprint for municipal corporations and highway authorities to adopt recycled geocells, potentially saving millions in material costs and preventing tons of plastic from entering the oceans. Beyond the technical and environmental aspects, the achievement has a significant social impact. It demonstrates to the public that scientific innovation is working in their favor, creating cleaner cities and better infrastructure. The visibility provided by the India Book of Records helps build public trust in recycled products, which is essential for the widespread adoption of circular economy principles.

In conclusion, the recognition of CSIR-CRRI and BPCL for this world-class feat marks the dawn of a new era in Indian construction. By turning the "plastic menace" into a "plastic miracle," these scientists and engineers have shown that with the right collaboration, even the most difficult waste products can be used to pave the way toward a more sustainable and resilient future for all.



Briefs :

Sirsa Schools Begin Innovation Workshop Under ATL Programme

Sirsa : A four-day Atal Tinkering Lab workshop started at government schools in Sirsa to encourage innovation, scientific thinking and technical learning among students and teachers.

The workshop began at Government Girls Senior Secondary School with enthusiastic participation from teachers of physics, chemistry, biology and computer science along with principals of PM SHRI schools where ATL labs have been established.

Officials said 26 schools in Sirsa district already have Atal Tinkering Lab facilities to help students learn modern technology and experimental methods. The workshop aims to improve scientific thinking, creativity, innovation, technical skills and problem-solving abilities among students.

Teachers are being trained in robotics, 3D printing, artificial intelligence, sensor-based projects and design thinking.

District Education Officer Subhash Kumar Phutela said ATL labs provide an excellent platform for developing students' creativity and scientific approach.

He encouraged teachers to use the training effectively at school level so students can progress in innovation and technical education. District science specialist Dr Mukesh Kumar said classroom learning alone is no longer enough in today's world and students need practical and experimental learning opportunities.

Technical sessions were conducted by trainers from STEMpedia, who gave hands-on training in robotics, artificial intelligence and Internet of Things-based activities.

Young Cadets Given Leadership Roles At Kunjpora Sainik School

Karnal : Sainik School Kunjpora organised its investiture ceremony for the academic session 2026-27 and handed leadership responsibilities to 44 cadets.

The appointments were officially given during the traditional piping ceremony conducted by Principal Captain Gurbir Singh, Vice Principal Lt Col Nirmaljeet Singh, Wing Commander Soniya Sharma and Lt Col Sandeep Rathee.

The positions included school captain, vice-captain, adjutant, prefects, sports captain, cultural captain, mess captain, house captains and house prefects. Cadet Aryan Ranjan was appointed as school captain while Vishal Sehgal became school vice-captain. Sahitya Rawal was appointed school adjutant. The school also honoured academic toppers with excellence badges and certificates for their outstanding performance.

Addressing the students, Principal Captain Gurbir Singh congratulated the newly appointed cadets and encouraged them to follow the values of discipline, leadership, honesty and responsibility.

He advised students to lead by example and work for the growth and reputation of the institution.

The prestigious Sainik School Kunjpora in Karnal recently marked a significant milestone in its military-style educational journey by hosting its investiture ceremony for the 2026-27 academic session.

Anil Vij Orders Renaming Of Ambala Chowk And Road

Ambala : Haryana Minister Anil Vij has directed officials to rename Sadar Bazaar Chowk as "Maharana Pratap Chowk" and Nicholson Road as "Maharana Pratap Road" in Ambala.

Vij wrote to the Executive Officer of the Municipal Council, Ambala Sadar, asking officials to begin the process immediately.

The minister had earlier provided Rs 50 lakh from his discretionary fund for installation of the statue.

On May 9, during Maharana Pratap Jayanti celebrations, a 12.5-foot-high statue of Maharana Pratap was unveiled at Sadar Bazaar Chowk.

The statue weighs around 16 quintals and has been made from a five-metal alloy known as "panch dhatu".

The urban landscape of Ambala is set to undergo a significant symbolic transformation following a directive from Haryana Minister Anil Vij. In a move aimed at honoring historical legacy,



the minister has officially instructed local authorities to rename two of the city's prominent landmarks. Specifically, Sadar Bazaar Chowk is to be rechristened as "Maharana Pratap Chowk" while the well-known Nicholson Road will henceforth be recognized as "Maharana Pratap Road." This decision reflects a broader effort to align local infrastructure with the

names of iconic national figures.

To ensure the swift implementation of this change, Minister Vij has formally communicated with the Executive Officer of the Municipal Council of Ambala Sadar. In his correspondence, he emphasized that the administrative process for the renaming should commence immediately. This direct intervention by

the minister highlights the priority being placed on these geographical updates, which are intended to instill a sense of pride and historical continuity among the residents of the city. The renaming is not merely a linguistic change but the culmination of a larger commemorative project spearheaded by the minister. Earlier, Anil Vij had allocated a substantial sum of Rs 50 lakh from his

discretionary fund to facilitate the installation of a grand statue at the site. This financial commitment underscores the scale of the project and the government's intent to create a lasting landmark that serves as a focal point for the community in Ambala Sadar. The timing of this directive is closely linked to a major local event that took place on May 9. During the celebrations of Maharana Pratap Jayanti, a magnificent 12.5-foot-high statue of the legendary Rajput warrior was unveiled at the heart of Sadar Bazaar Chowk. The unveiling ceremony served as a tribute to the historical figure's bravery and resilience, providing a physical anchor for the newly proposed name of the intersection.

The craftsmanship of the statue itself is a point of significant interest for the local population and visitors alike. Standing tall as a permanent fixture of the square, the statue weighs approximately 16 quintals.

Digital Receipts Bring Relief To Haryana Farmers

Karnal : The Haryana Government has introduced a digital system to stop the long-running practice of issuing "kachi parchis" in grain markets and improve transparency in crop procurement. Under the new system, farmers are now receiving digital J-forms directly on their mobile phones with complete details about crop quantity and payment received.

The move is aimed at protecting farmers from exploitation and ensuring transparency in transactions under the Minimum Support Price system. The Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board started strict action against the use of "kachi parchis" from April 1.

Officials said many farmers had complained that commission agents were issuing informal slips instead of official receipts, creating chances of manipulation in crop weight, pricing and payments. Market committee secretaries were directed to stop the practice and ensure that only official J-forms were issued in mandis.

The practice of "kachi parchis" was abolished after directions from the Punjab and Haryana High Court following a public interest litigation filed by former scientist Dr Virender Singh Lather.

In the petition, Dr Lather had alleged that farmers were losing 30 to 40 per cent of the value of their produce because of manipulation and underreporting through informal slips.

Dr Lather welcomed the government's move and said the digital system would bring much-needed transparency in procurement operations. Officials said digital J-forms are being sent directly to farmers' phones so that transactions are immediately recorded and chances of tampering are reduced. They added that the move would also help prevent financial losses to the state caused by fraudulent practices. Farmers have also welcomed the new system. Vikas, a farmer who recently sold his crop in a mandi, said receiving the receipt on his phone gave him confidence and clarity about the transaction.

Smart Solar Irrigation Workshop Held For Farmers In Sirsa

Sirsa : A workshop and field demonstration on smart solar-powered irrigation technology was organised at Kharian village in Sirsa district to promote modern farming methods and solar-based irrigation systems.

The programme was conducted by experts from Birmingham City University along with agricultural experts from Panjab University, Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University and Guru Jambheshwar University.

As part of the project, smart sensors and an automated controller were installed on a solar irrigation pump at the farm of progressive farmer Dayanand Jhaharia. The project aims to encourage farmers to shift from diesel and traditional electricity systems to solar

energy for irrigation and farming activities.

The smart sensors continuously monitor temperature, rainfall, solar panel temperature and water usage. The system also records energy produced by solar panels and tracks electricity used by pumps and household appliances.

Experts said cloud-based technology provides real-time information related to solar energy generation and water conservation. The project also focuses on solving the problem of solar pumps remaining unused for many days in a year.

Officials said extra solar energy can now be used for running flour mills, fodder-cutting machines, EV charging units and household appliances. Experts believe the technology can reduce pres-

sure on the power grid and lower electricity subsidy costs while making farms more self-reliant.

Around 65 farmers and women entrepreneurs attended the workshop and learned about the practical benefits of the technology.

Experts especially highlighted how the system could reduce physical labour for women working in agriculture and create new income opportunities.

The agricultural landscape in Sirsa is witnessing a technological evolution following a specialized workshop and field demonstration focused on smart solar-powered irrigation. Held in Kharian village, this initiative was designed to bridge the gap between traditional farming practices and modern, sustainable technology.

Nagada Workshop Helps Children Connect With Folk Culture

Rohtak : A 15-day nagada workshop is being organised for children at Abhinav Toli in collaboration with the North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala.

Children are learning the traditional folk instrument from famous nagada player Subhash Nagada, who has performed in 20 countries and trained many students through programmes organised by the Union Government and other institutions.

Subhash said Haryana folk instrument, earlier known as naqqara, once held an important place in songs and folk dances but is now slowly disappearing.

He said the workshop was organised to preserve rare folk traditions and con-



nect the younger generation with cultural heritage.

Jagdeep Jugnu, founder of Abhinav Toli, said the workshop aims to increase children's interest in culture and traditions while helping them stay connected with their roots.

Kajal, director of the organisation, said Abhinav Toli also provides education and creative training to underprivileged children in activities such as dance and painting.

Theatre artiste Avinash Saini also attended the

workshop and spoke about career opportunities in music and musical instruments.

He praised the children for learning difficult rhythms like Kaharva and Dadra in a short time under the guidance of instructor Subhash Nagada.

Congress Unity Push Gains Momentum In Haryana

Rewari : Efforts to reduce internal divisions within the Haryana Congress have started gaining strength after senior leader Rahul Gandhi joined the statewide "Sadbhav Yatra" led by former MP Brijendra Singh.

Speaking to the media at the residence of former minister Capt Ajay Singh Yadav in Rewari, Brijendra Singh said the yatra had received a strong response from people and was appreciated by Rahul Gandhi.

He said the yatra would conclude in Rohtak, which is considered the political stronghold of senior Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Brijendra Singh said five Assembly constituencies, including Pataudi, Badli, Beri, Garhi Sampla-Kiloi



and Rohtak, still remained to be covered before the yatra concludes.

Factionalism within the Congress has become visible during the yatra as some

leaders participated actively while others stayed away.

Before Rahul Gandhi joined the programme, Bhupinder Hooda had reportedly called the yatra a private

event.

Capt Ajay Singh Yadav said the yatra was being organised to strengthen Congress and connect with people across Haryana. He said

all party leaders should participate in it because Rahul Gandhi had supported the programme.

Yadav also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his recent appeal asking people to avoid buying gold and reduce foreign travel.

He said the Prime Minister should first follow his own advice before asking people to make sacrifices.

Yadav claimed that the government should reduce its own expenses and unnecessary programmes instead of repeatedly asking citizens to sacrifice.

He also expressed concern that the Prime Minister's remarks could be preparing people for a possible increase in petrol and diesel prices.

Nuh Farmers Demand Help As Waterlogging Ruins Crops

Nuh : Farmers living near Akera Lake in Nuh district have once again demanded compensation and a permanent drainage system after waterlogging damaged more than 5,000 acres of farmland.

The farmers said they have been suffering for over three years because rising water levels have destroyed their fields and pushed many families into debt.

Farmers from nearly six villages wrote to the Haryana Agriculture Minister, saying that continuous waterlogging had made large areas of fertile land useless for farming.

Local residents said the

problem has continued because there is no proper drainage system in the area.

During the rainy season, the situation becomes even worse as rainwater floods the fields further and damages crops.

Khurshed, a farmer from Akera village, said that despite owning farmland, many families are now forced to buy food grains and take loans because they have been unable to grow wheat and other crops for the past three years.

Farmers claimed that stagnant water has completely disturbed farming activities and caused re-

peated financial losses. Residents also said that the nearby Aravalli region has created another problem as wild animals often enter the fields and damage crops.

Villagers said many officials, public representatives and even the Governor had visited the area earlier and promised solutions, but no real action was taken.

The farmers are now demanding either a permanent drainage solution or compensation for crop losses suffered over the last three years.

They warned that they may launch a major protest if the government fails to act soon.

AAP Alleges Political Pressure After Firing At Diljit Dosanjh Manager's House

Chandigarh : A political controversy erupted after reports of firing outside the Karnal house of Gurpartap Singh Kang, who is said to be singer Diljit Dosanjh's manager.

While the Haryana Government denied that any firing incident took place, Punjab's ruling Aam Aadmi Party claimed the matter was politically motivated.

AAP leaders strongly alleged that the Lawrence Bishnoi gang targeted the house to pressure Diljit Dosanjh after he reportedly refused to join the BJP.

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema accused the BJP of protecting



the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. He claimed that after Diljit

Dosanjh made it clear that he had no interest in joining the

BJP, his manager became a target.

BJP sweeps Haryana local body polls

Chandigarh : The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the dominant force in the Haryana local body elections as counting progresses on Wednesday, securing significant victories across municipal corporations and councils. The ruling party clinched the Mayor seats in the high-stakes Sonapat and Ambala Municipal Corporations, while also maintaining a strong lead in Panchkula.

In Sonapat, BJP's Rajiv Jain was elected Mayor after securing a decisive 78,035 votes, defeating his nearest rival, Kamal Diwan of the Congress, who garnered 54,788 votes. The victory was mirrored in Ambala, where BJP candidate Akshita Saini won the Mayoral race with 52,794 votes, defeating Congress's Kulwinder Kaur Saini by a substantial margin of 21,358 votes. The party's success extended to the ward level, with the BJP winning 16 wards in Ambala.

The saffron party also made deep inroads into traditional strongholds and other local bodies. In Sampla, considered a bastion of former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, BJP's Praveen Koch won the Chairman's post. Similarly, Ajay Jangra



of the BJP secured the Chairman position in Dharuhera, and Vinita Peepal won the Chairperson's seat in the Rewari Municipal Council.

However, the opposition managed to find a footing in Uklana, where Congress-backed candidate Reema Soni won the Chairperson's election, defeating the BJP's Nikita Goel. In Dharuhera, the BJP's Ajay Jangra secured 9,392 votes, leaving independent candidate Babu

Lal Lamba and Congress's Kumari Raj in the second and third spots, respectively.

The election process was not without controversy. In Panchkula, Congress Mayoral candidate Sudha Bhardwaj alleged irregularities in the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), claiming that seals were broken and unauthorized access was provided to the strongrooms. Her allegations sparked protests by supporters, though

official responses to these claims were still pending during the counting process.

Celebrating the victory, Haryana BJP President Mohan Lal Badoli stated that the results reflect the public's "blessings for the triple-engine government." Scenes of jubilation were witnessed across the state as supporters carried the winning candidates on their shoulders and distributed sweets to mark the party's electoral success.

BJP Records Massive Victory In Panchkula Civic Elections

Panchkula : BJP mayoral candidate Sham Lal Bansal and party councillor candidates scored a one-sided victory in the Panchkula Municipal Corporation elections on Wednesday. The BJP won 17 wards in the civic body while two Independent candidates and one Congress candidate also secured wins. Sham Lal Bansal defeated Congress candidate

Sudha Bhardwaj by a huge margin of 35,735 votes. Bansal secured 66,593 votes while Bhardwaj got 30,856 votes.

Bansal remained ahead from the very first round and kept increasing his lead till the final round of counting. Congress candidate Sudha Bhardwaj alleged "vote chori" during the counting process and walked out of the counting

centre before the process was completed. She later said that she and her supporters would discuss the matter and decide their next step.

One of the major highlights of the election was the victory of Parth Gupta from Ward Number 6. He is the grandson of former Haryana Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta and won his first election. The count-

ing of votes for the municipal corporations of Ambala, Panchkula and Sonapat started at 8 am on Wednesday.

Voting for mayoral posts and ward councillors in Ambala, Panchkula and Sonapat was held on Sunday. Elections were also conducted for Rewari Municipal Council and municipal committees in Sampla, Dharuhera and Uklana.

High Court Seeks Reality Check On CCTV Systems

Chandigarh : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has asked the governments of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh to provide details about the actual functioning of CCTV systems installed at police stations and investigating agencies.

Justice Vinod S Bhardwaj directed the State Level Oversight Committees to submit detailed information through affidavits regarding CCTV installation, storage systems and monitoring mechanisms.

The court said the matter was very important because the Supreme Court had ear-

lier ordered that CCTV footage must be preserved for at least six months.

The High Court observed that it was necessary to know whether CCTV systems were actually working properly on the ground or whether compliance existed only on paper.

The Supreme Court had earlier directed all states and investigating agencies to install CCTV cameras in police stations and create state and district oversight committees to monitor the systems.

Lawyers representing Punjab, Haryana and Chan-

digarh sought time to submit detailed records regarding instructions issued by the Central Oversight Body and State Level Oversight Committees.

The court also asked for details about problems or shortcomings noticed during the last five years.

Justice Bhardwaj ordered that the information must be submitted by officers not below the rank of Member-Secretary of the State Level Oversight Committees. The matter will now be heard again on May 22.

Senior advocate Kshitij Sharma, appearing as Amic-

us Curiae, said instructions issued by the Central Oversight Body were not available publicly despite the Supreme Court's orders.

He also pointed out that many people regularly approach courts seeking preservation of CCTV footage, but governments often claim that the footage is unavailable or that cameras were not working.

The Amicus Curiae argued that there could be serious gaps in the implementation of CCTV monitoring systems and sought a detailed review of compliance at the field level.

BJP Wins Sampla And Dharuhera, Independents Shine In Rewari

Rohtak/Rewari : BJP candidates won the president posts in the Sampla and Dharuhera Municipal Committees, while Independent candidates performed strongly in the municipal elections in Rewari district.

In Sampla, BJP candidate Praveen Coach won the election by securing 4,391 votes. He defeated Independent candidate Ankit by 687 votes. Congress did not field any candidate in the Sampla Municipal Committee elections.

After his victory, Praveen said that solving drinking water and sewerage problems would be his top priority.

Independent candidates also performed well in Sampla by winning 11 out of 16 councillor seats.

In Dharuhera, BJP-supported candidate Satyanarayan alias Ajay Jangra became president of the Municipal Committee. He secured 9,392 votes and defeated Independent candi-

date Babu Lal Lamba, who got 3,156 votes. Congress candidate Kumari Raj finished third with 1,817 votes.

In Rewari district, Independent candidates dominated the councillor elections by winning 20 seats. BJP candidates won 11 seats while Congress secured only one seat.

The political landscape of Haryana's local governance has witnessed a decisive shift following the latest municipal election results, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) managed to clinch key leadership positions while facing a formidable challenge from Independent candidates. In the Sampla and Dharuhera Municipal Committees, the saffron party successfully secured the president posts, signaling a consolidation of power in these urban pockets.

However, the broader results across the councillor seats suggest a more fragmented and localized political preference, with Inde-

pendents emerging as a powerful third force that neither of the major national parties could ignore.

In Sampla, the contest for the presidency saw BJP candidate Praveen Coach emerge victorious after a closely watched battle. Coach secured a total of 4,391 votes, effectively outpacing his nearest rival, an Independent candidate named Ankit, by a margin of 687 votes. The victory is particularly notable given the tactical absence of the Congress party, which chose not to field an official candidate for the Sampla Municipal Committee presidency. This absence turned the race into a direct confrontation between the organized machinery of the BJP and the grassroots appeal of Independent challengers.

Following the declaration of the results, Praveen Coach addressed the media, framing his win as a mandate for urban development and infrastructure repair.

BJP Storm Sweeps Sonapat Civic Polls

Sonapat : The BJP registered a huge victory in the Sonapat Municipal Corporation elections by winning the mayoral seat and 17 out of 22 wards. The Congress managed to win only five wards in the election results declared on Wednesday.

BJP candidate Rajiv Jain once again received strong support from the people of Sonapat. He defeated Congress candidate Kamal Diwan by a margin of 23,247 votes. This was the second time within a year that Jain defeated the same Congress rival in a mayoral contest.

Rajiv Jain had earlier won the mayoral bypoll in March last year by defeating Kamal Diwan with a bigger margin of 34,970 votes.

A total of 10 candidates, including NOTA, were in the race for the mayor's post. Out of 1,42,688 votes cast on May 10, Rajiv Jain received 78,035 votes while Kamal Diwan secured 54,786 votes. INLD candidate Anand Kumar got 5,210 votes.

Among Independent



candidates, Anal Singhal received 651 votes, Dr Kamlesh Kumar Saini got 305, Chand Ram secured 318, Ramesh Kumar Khatri received 1,071, Sant Dharamvir Chotiwal got 275 votes and Hawa Singh secured 433 votes. NOTA received 1,606 votes, which was more than the vote count of any Independent candidate.

The counting of votes took place at BITS in Mohana village on the Sonapat-Gohana road under heavy security arrangements.

After the victory, Returning Officer and Additional Deputy Commissioner Ajay Chopra handed over the winning certificate to Rajiv Jain in the presence of BJP state president Mohan Badoli, MLA Nikhil Madaan, former Cabinet Minister Kavita Jain, BJP district president Ashok Bhardwaj and other party leaders.

Party workers celebrated the victory by distributing sweets at the counting centre. Later, the BJP also or-

ganised a massive victory procession in the city.

The political climate in Sonapat was charged with excitement on Wednesday as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a commanding victory in the Municipal Corporation elections. The results, characterized locally as a "BJP Storm," saw the ruling party clinch the prestigious mayoral seat along with a staggering 17 out of 22 available wards. This overwhelming mandate effectively consolidated the

party's power in the region, leaving the Congress party with only five wards and significantly diminishing the influence of third-party and independent contenders in the civic body.

At the heart of this victory was the re-election of Rajiv Jain, who demonstrated a remarkably consistent appeal among the electorate. Jain secured the mayor's post by defeating his primary rival, Kamal Diwan of the Congress, by a substantial margin of 23,247 votes. This victory was particularly symbolic, as it marked the second time in just over a year that Jain has bested Diwan in a direct contest for the city's top administrative position. While the margin was slightly narrower than his previous bypoll win, the result confirmed that his influence remains the dominant force in Sonapat's urban politics.

Historical context reveals that Jain's grip on the city has been tightening over time.

BJP Wins Big In Ambala Municipal Elections

Ambala : BJP candidates dominated the Ambala Municipal Corporation elections by winning 16 out of 20 wards along with the mayoral seat.

Congress candidates won three wards while one ward was won by an Independent candidate.

BJP candidate Akshita Saini won the mayoral election by securing 52,794 votes. Congress candidate Kulwinder Kaur received 31,436 votes while Independent candidate Sonia Rani secured 21,730 votes.

Congress candidates won wards 8, 14 and 19 while Ward 15 went to an Independent candidate.

After the victory, BJP leaders and workers organised a roadshow in Ambala City to thank voters for sup-

porting the party.

BJP district in-charge Dharam Veer Mirzapur said the victory had strengthened the party and would also impact future elections in Punjab. Former minister Aseem Goel said people of Ambala had shown trust in BJP policies and assured that newly elected representatives would work to meet public expectations.

Akshita Saini also thanked voters and BJP leadership for supporting her and promised to work for the people of Ambala.

The political landscape of Ambala witnessed a resounding shift on Wednesday as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a landslide victory in the Municipal Corporation

elections. The results, characterized by a dominant performance across both executive and legislative levels, saw the party clinch the mayoral seat along with a commanding majority of 16 out of 20 wards. This sweeping mandate effectively hands the reins of the city's governance to the BJP, leaving the opposition with limited representation in the new council.

In the high-stakes mayoral contest, BJP candidate Akshita Saini emerged as the definitive winner, reflecting a strong public endorsement of her leadership. Saini amassed a total of 52,794 votes, creating a significant gap between her and the primary challenger. Her victory is seen as a major milestone for the party's

local unit, as she successfully navigated a three-way contest to secure a clear mandate from the citizens of Ambala.

The Congress party, represented by Kulwinder Kaur, finished in second place with 31,436 votes. While Kaur managed to consolidate a portion of the anti-incumbency vote, the margin remained substantial. Adding to the complexity of the race was Independent candidate Sonia Rani, who secured a notable 21,730 votes. The strong performance by an Independent suggests that localized issues and individual popularity still carry significant weight in Ambala's urban voting blocks, even amidst a larger party-driven wave.

Haryana Human Rights Commission Flags Fire Safety Concerns

Chandigarh : The Haryana Human Rights Commission has expressed serious concern over fire safety arrangements in high-rise buildings after a major fire at a multi-storeyed hotel in Hisar. The Commission took suo motu notice of the incident after reports stated that the fire started from the basement kitchen area and quickly spread to several floors of the hotel. During the incident, a woman employee became trapped inside the building and had to jump

from the second floor to save herself. Local residents used a blanket to rescue her, but she suffered serious injuries.

The fire also reportedly caused several air-conditioners to explode, leading to heavy damage inside the hotel. The Commission observed that the incident exposed serious weaknesses in fire safety systems, emergency evacuation arrangements and disaster management preparedness in Haryana's multi-storeyed buildings. The Commission said it was

worrying that a person had to risk her life because proper rescue arrangements were not available.

The panel stressed the need for advanced fire-fighting equipment such as Hydraulic Platforms and Turn Table Ladders in high-rise buildings, hotels and crowded urban areas.

The Commission said such equipment is extremely important for rescue operations and emergency evacuation from upper floors during fire incidents.

Parents Demand Truth Behind Agniveer Son's Death

Chandigarh : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has directed Army authorities to give a detailed and clear order explaining the circumstances behind the death of Agniveer Akashdeep Singh, who died in Jammu and Kashmir last year while on duty.

Akashdeep Singh's parents, Karamjit Kaur and Balwinder Singh, approached the High Court after they allegedly did not receive proper answers from the Army about their 20-year-old son's death.

Their lawyer Rajesh Sehgal told the court that the Army had informed the family that a Court of Inquiry would investigate the matter, but till now the report and

information had not been shared with them. Justice Sandeep Moudgil directed Army authorities to examine all issues raised by the family and pass a reasoned order within six weeks. The court also ordered that the parents should be given a personal hearing.

Akashdeep Singh allegedly died on May 15, 2025 after suffering three gunshot injuries in Awantipora area of Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district.

His mother recalled that she had spoken to him on a video call the night before his death. She said he regularly talked to the family and had even booked NCC camp tickets for his younger brother. The next morning, the family received a phone call

from a Naib Subedar informing them about his death.

The parents said the post-mortem was conducted without their consent and the body was handed over to the family on May 16.

According to the family, Army officials later orally informed them that the case was suicide. However, the parents strongly denied this claim.

Balwinder Singh said his son sounded happy and normal during their last conversation and had spoken about a party in the unit that evening.

The parents even travelled to the forest area where their son died in an attempt to understand the circumstances.



Later, the Awantipora police informed the family that the inquest proceedings had been closed as a suicide case.

The family also filed RTI applications seeking the inquiry report but did not receive the details.

According to the par-

ents, they only received Rs 48 lakh under insurance cover and have not been given the two years' salary benefits or the Rs 44 lakh ex gratia amount. Karamjit Kaur said all of Akashdeep's belongings are still carefully preserved in his room at home.

The parents said they approached the High Court not for money but only to know the truth about how their son died.

The quest for clarity following a profound loss has led the parents of a young soldier to the steps of the judiciary. The Punjab and Haryana High Court recently intervened in a deeply sensitive case involving the death of 20-year-old Agniveer Akashdeep Singh, who lost his life while on duty in Jammu and Kashmir.

For his parents, Karamjit Kaur and Balwinder Singh, the past year has been defined by a painful search for answers that they believe have been withheld by military authorities. Their legal journey began when they felt

the information provided regarding their son's final moments was insufficient and contradictory.

Representing the grieving family, lawyer Rajesh Sehgal argued before the court that the Army had initially promised a thorough investigation through a Court of Inquiry. However, despite the passage of time, the family remains in the dark, as neither the formal report nor its specific findings have been shared with them. This lack of transparency has compounded the family's grief, transforming their mourning into a struggle for accountability. The parents contend that as the next of kin, they have a moral and legal right to under-

stand the exact sequence of events that led to their son's demise.

Justice Sandeep Moudgil, presiding over the case, took a firm stance on the necessity of transparency and empathy in such matters. He directed the Army authorities to meticulously examine every issue raised by the parents and to issue a "reasoned order" within a six-week timeframe. Crucially, the court also mandated that the parents be granted a personal hearing, allowing them to voice their concerns directly to the officials. This judicial intervention aims to bridge the communication gap that has left the family feeling alienated from the institution their son served.



Can't Indian coaches develop Indian hockey? Sreejesh slams Hockey India

New Delhi: Two-time Olympic medallist and legendary goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has openly criticised Hockey India after his tenure as coach of the junior men's team was abruptly ended despite producing results, questioning why Indian hockey continues to rely heavily on foreign coaches.

Sreejesh, who took charge of the junior side after retiring following the 2024 Paris Olympics, hinted that he was removed from the role to accommodate a foreign coach despite achieving strong results during his time with the team.

Under his guidance, the Indian junior men's team finished on the podium in all five tournaments they played, including winning the Junior Asia Cup and securing bronze medals at both the Sultan of Johor Cup and the FIH Junior Men's World Cup.

Expressing his disappointment in a strongly-worded post on social media, Sreejesh said the decision had left him shocked given the team's performances. He also questioned the federation's approach towards Indian coaches.



"It seems like my coaching career comes to an end after 1.5 years, during which we played 5 tournaments and secured 5 podium finishes, including a Junior World Cup bronze medal," Sreejesh wrote. Sreejesh said coaches are usually removed after poor results, making his situation difficult to understand. "I have heard about coaches getting fired after bad performances. But this is the first time I am experiencing being removed to make way for a foreign coach."

Sreejesh also revealed what he claimed Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey told him regarding the reasoning behind the move.

"The Hockey India President stated that the chief coach of the senior men's team prefers a foreign head coach for the junior team, believing it will help develop Indian hockey from the junior level through to the senior level."

Questioning that logic, Sreejesh added: "Can't Indian coaches develop Indian hockey?"

Sreejesh further revealed that Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had recently encouraged him to take on a larger coaching role as part of India's preparations for the 2036 Olympics.

"On 07-03-2026, during a meeting with the Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, I was told, 'Sreejesh, we need coaches like you to step up and lead our country as we prepare for 2036.'"

Contrasting that encouragement with Hockey India's current approach, Sreejesh ended his post by expressing frustration over the federation's continued preference for overseas coaches. "However, Hockey India continues to place its trust in foreign coaches over Indian ones across all four teams," he concluded.

Confident Swiatek rediscovers ruthless best in Italian Open

Rome: Four-time French Open champion Iga Swiatek underlined how she is rediscovering her finest form on clay with another ruthless win to reach the Italian Open semi-finals.

Poland's Swiatek, 24, needed little over an hour to beat American fifth seed Jessica Pegula 6-1 6-2 on Wednesday.

Dropping just three games against four-time major winner Naomi Osaka in the previous round laid down a marker - and the manner in which Swiatek swept aside Pegula was another statement victory.

Having appointed Rafael Nadal's former coach Francisco Roig last month, and leaning on 22-time major champion Nadal for advice on the practice court, Swiatek is starting to regain the level which made her so feared.

On this evidence, the world number four is re-establishing herself as the favourite to win the French

Open title next month, according to BBC Sport.

"The stuff we did in the last [few] weeks has helped and I have a lot of confidence in my shots," Swiatek said.

Swiatek became known as the 'Queen of Clay' as she gained a firm grip on Roland Garros, winning four titles between 2020 and 2024, as well as six WTA Tour events on the red dirt.

However, she lost her invincibility on the surface last year - unable to win a clay-court tour event before losing in the Paris semi-finals.

Swiatek tweaked her playing style under previous coach Wim Fissette, who tried to implement a more aggressive approach from the baseline. But she ended up losing confidence in what they were trying to achieve and quickly became ragged when matches started going against her. It has been a case of going back to basics with Roig, who she snapped up after his short stint with Brit-

ain's Emma Raducanu ended.

Swiatek played with the high intensity and relentlessness demanded by Roig from the start against Pegula - but, crucially, she always looked stable in her shot-making.

Playing with more patience and a higher margin for error meant she was able to draw mistakes from the 2024 US Open finalist.

Pegula was well below par on a surface she does not favour, but the manner in which Swiatek refused to let her level drop was a sure sign of her increasing assurance.

Swamping Pegula's second serve with deep returning was another notable feature. Tougher challenges will surely lie ahead in Rome - either Kazakhstan's second seed Elena Rybakina or Ukraine's seventh seed Elina Svitolina await in the semi-finals - but the signs for the rest of the French Open challengers are beginning to look ominous.

African Athletics Championships in Ghana inspire medal & qualification push

Accra: Athletes competing at the 24th African Senior Athletics Championships in Ghana have expressed confidence and determination as they seek medals and qualification marks for major international events.

The championships, which opened Tuesday at the University of Ghana Stadium in Accra, have attracted around 1,500 athletes from nations across the continent, competing across 44 disciplines.

Cameroon's Kole Etame Herwege said, "I'm grateful for the opportunity to be here and to compete and to represent my country. In my mind,

I just wanted to be in the competition and win my heat to qualify for the next run, which I did. So, I'm satisfied for today. Like any other athlete, I want to win the gold medal."

Local athlete Solomon Diamo said he was pleased with his opening performance and remained focused on qualifying for the Commonwealth Games and the World Athletics Championships. "In the 2024 African Games, I got an injury, and after I recovered, my coach pushed me hard to achieve my dreams. For this year, I will not disappoint myself. I'm just praying that my time will qualify me for

the semifinal. Ghanaians should expect the best because we are here to do our best," Diamo said.

Uganda's Kenneth Omoka said expectations from supporters back home had provided extra motivation, according to Xinhua.

"To me, the goal was to make it to the next level because I knew the first two would go to the semifinal automatically. I know my home country will expect a lot from me, and I know they have hope in me," Omoka said. Solomon Ayala of South Sudan described the championships as a valuable experience as he competed outside his country for the first time.

Promising talent Shahnnavaz gets national team call up for Asian U20 championships

New Delhi: India's rising long jump sensation Shahnnavaz Khan has been included in a 48-member national squad that will represent the country at the upcoming Asian U20 Athletics Championships to be held in Hong Kong from May 28 onwards.

The selection was made by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) based on performances recorded at key domestic competitions across the country.

Shahnnavaz Khan has been in outstanding form, recently registering a remarkable jump of 8.23 me-

tres, which also stands as a national U20 record in the long jump category.

The record-breaking performance came during the 24th National Junior Athletics Federation Cup held in Karnataka, where several young athletes delivered strong results to secure national selection.

The squad features a balanced mix of sprinters, jumpers, throwers and middle-distance runners, reflecting India's growing depth in junior athletics.

Among the prominent names selected is Mohammed Ashfaq, who will com-

pete in the 400m event as well as relay races.

Another key inclusion is Nitiin Gupta, who will participate in the 5000m race walk event.

In the field events, Pooja has been named in the women's squad for the high jump competition.

The men's U20 squad includes athletes across multiple disciplines such as sprints, hurdles, middle-distance events, jumps and throws, highlighting the team's overall strength.

In track events, athletes will compete in categories ranging from 100m and

200m sprints to longer distances such as 3000m and steeplechase events.

Relay teams have also been strengthened with participation across 4x100m, 4x400m and mixed relay events, which are expected to be key medal opportunities for India.

The women's U20 team also features strong contenders in sprinting, middle-distance running and field events, along with relay squads in both 4x100m and 4x400m categories.

Athletes like Muskan (5000m), Aisha Verma (3000m steeplechase), and

Sadhana Ravi (triple jump) are among those expected to contribute in their respective disciplines.

The squad selection reflects AFI's focus on nurturing young talent and providing international exposure to emerging athletes ahead of senior-level competitions.

With strong domestic performances behind them, the Indian contingent will be aiming for a successful campaign and valuable international experience at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Hong Kong.

Madrid turmoil takes center stage before Oviedo visit

Madrid: All eyes will be on the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium on Thursday as Real Madrid host already-relegated Real Oviedo in a La Liga fixture that comes amid rising tensions at the club.

The match arrives at a difficult moment for Real Madrid, following their 2-0 defeat in the El Clásico against FC Barcelona, a result that effectively confirmed Barcelona as La Liga champions this season.

Club president Florentino Pérez has also been in the spotlight after holding a press conference on Tuesday in which he strongly criticised sections of the media and hinted at internal political tensions within the club.

According to reports, Pérez's remarks came without any self-criticism, despite growing concerns about instability both on and off the pitch.

The situation has added



pressure on coach Álvaro Arbeloa, who is reportedly struggling to steady the squad and restore unity after a turbulent run of results and dressing-room issues.

Real Madrid also face a significant injury crisis, with several key players unavailable for selection ahead of Thursday's match.

Defenders Ferland Mendy, Éder Militão and Dani Carvajal are all sidelined due to injuries, further weakening the team's backline.

Midfielder Arda Güler is also ruled out after suffering a muscle problem, adding to the club's selection concerns.

Another major absentee is Federico Valverde, who is unavailable following a head injury sustained after an alleged dressing-room incident involving Aurélien Tchouaméni. There is also uncertainty surrounding Tchouaméni's reception from fans at the Bernabeu, given reported tensions within the squad.

Further speculation surrounds Kylian Mbappé, whose availability remains unclear after missing the Clásico due to a hamstring injury.

Reports suggest that even if Mbappé is declared fit, sections of supporters may express dissatisfaction over his recent performances and perceived commitment to the club.

Thursday's fixture is being viewed as an opportunity for Real Madrid to stabilise their campaign after a turbulent week both on and off the pitch.

Elsewhere in La Liga, Girona FC will host Real Sociedad in a crucial match for survival and European qualification ambitions.

Meanwhile, Valencia CF and Rayo Vallecano remain locked in a tight mid-table battle, with both sides still in contention for a possible UEFA Conference League spot next season.

Former boxer Manoj Kumar raises concerns over BFI selection process

New Delhi: Former Commonwealth Games gold medallist Manoj Kumar has raised concerns over the transparency of the Boxing Federation of India's (BFI) revised athlete assessment system, which will be used for selecting boxers for major upcoming events including the 2026 Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

The issue comes as the national boxing selection camp resumed on Wednesday after the Boxing Federation of India reverted to a trial-based selection process following a directive from the Sports Authority of India aimed at ensuring greater fairness and transparency.

Under the new system, elite campers at the NSNIS Patiala will be assessed between May 13 and 15 through a revised evaluation format designed to bring more objectivity into selection.

The BFI has introduced a five-judge scoring mechanism that includes one head coach and four judges who will evaluate boxers during sparring bouts.

According to the federation, scores will be announced immediately after each bout to ensure transparency and reduce any possibility of bias or post-assessment manipulation.

However, Manoj Kumar has questioned the structure of the new system, particularly the absence of experienced former boxers in the evaluation process.

In a social media post, he asked why former Arjuna Awardees, Dronacharya Awardees, Olympians and senior athletes were not included as observers or selection monitors.

"The entire selection process has been kept strictly limited to the head coach, judges. And the federation.

Why were former Arjuna Awardees, Dronacharya Awardees, Olympians, and senior players not included as observers or selection monitors?" he wrote.

He argued that including experienced former athletes would have enhanced the credibility and confidence of the selection process among current boxers.

Manoj Kumar specifically suggested that renowned former boxers such as Vijender Singh and Akhil Kumar should have been involved in the monitoring system.

He said their presence would have ensured greater trust among athletes competing for national selection.

Earlier, the BFI had announced that elite campers would be assessed through structured sparring sessions under a revised scoring system to ensure consistency with international competition standards.

As per the new guidelines, each sparring bout will be evaluated by judges and scores will be declared immediately after the contest, similar to official boxing match procedures.

The federation also clarified that previous evaluation parameters, including strength.

And conditioning tests conducted earlier at the camp, would no longer be considered in the selection process.

The earlier assessments covering sports science tests, weight management, health monitoring and attendance have been officially withdrawn and declared null and void.

The debate has highlighted ongoing concerns within Indian boxing over selection transparency and the need for greater involvement of former athletes in decision-making processes ahead of major international competitions.

Manchester United chiefs to recommend Carrick for permanent job

London: Michael Carrick is expected to be recommended to Sir Jim Ratcliffe as the permanent boss of Manchester United by the club's senior executives.

Former United midfielder Carrick, 44, has been viewed as favourite for the job since securing qualification for next season's Champions League during a successful period as caretaker head coach. United intended to delay making a decision on appointing a successor to Ruben Amorim, who was sacked in January, until the end of the season. However, as first reported by The Athletic chief executive Omar Berrada and director of football Jason Wilcox are thought to have concluded Carrick is the right man for the job and will tell Ratcliffe of their choice this week. Providing minority shareholder Ratcliffe agrees, United will begin formal talks

with Carrick before his future is confirmed.

Carrick has won 10 of his 15 matches in charge, losing just twice, to guide United from seventh

to third in the Premier League table and secure a return to the Champions League, according to BBC Sport. No Premier League club has won more points than the 33 Manchester United have collected since Carrick's appointment on January 13. Carrick oversaw victories over title contenders Manchester City and Arsenal as he won each of his first four matches in charge in a superb start to his role as caretaker. A seven-game unbeaten run was eventually ended in March, but subsequent key victories over Champions League rivals Aston Villa, Chelsea and Liverpool helped to ensure a return to Europe's elite club competition.

United were in disarray when Amorim was dismissed, with poor results and disagreements over the Portuguese's tactics and formation leading to an increasingly strained relationship with club officials towards the end of his 14-month tenure. But Carrick, who also had a three-game stint as United's temporary boss after Ole Gunnar Solskjær's dismissal in 2021, has steadied the club and impressed with his work on and off the pitch. Carrick has made a positive impression behind the scenes and been praised internally for his commitment to United's youth development programme. He has repeatedly stressed his belief in taking a long-term view with his decisions - he has been involved in discussions about recruitment - and a succession of United players have called for Carrick to be given the job full-time.

Manuel Neuer linked with shock Germany comeback for World Cup

Berlin: Ahead of Germany's mandatory squad announcement for the 2026 FIFA World Cup on May 21, veteran goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has reportedly emerged as a surprise candidate for a national team return.

According to German magazine Kicker, the 40-year-old's comeback to the national team has not been ruled out.

The publication reported that Neuer is included on the preliminary list of 55 players submitted by Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann ahead of the tournament.

Despite Neuer announcing his international retirement after UEFA Euro 2024, and Nagelsmann repeatedly referring to that decision in recent months, Kicker said

the 2014 World Cup winner is now being seriously considered for a recall.

The magazine added that signs are growing the 38-year-old Nagelsmann has reconsidered his previous stance on bringing Neuer back into the squad, according to Xinhua.

So far, Hoffenheim goalkeeper Oliver Baumann has been named Germany's first-choice keeper for the World Cup, with Stuttgart's Alexander Nübel viewed as the backup option.

Kicker reported that Baumann, Nübel, Augsburg goalkeeper Finn Dahmen, Bayern Munich's Jonas Urbig and Neuer are all under consideration.

While German media reports indicate Neuer is close to signing a one-year con-



tract extension with Bayern Munich, another surprise development also appears possible.

Bild reported that talks between Neuer and Bayern are ongoing, with the veteran goalkeeper prepared to help oversee a transition period as 22-year-old Urbig gradually takes over as the club's first-

choice keeper.

Bayern supervisory board member Uli Hoenes recently described Neuer as a valuable mentor for Urbig's development. Nagelsmann is expected to reduce his World Cup goalkeeping options to three next Thursday. According to the reports, Neuer would consider reversing his

international retirement if Nagelsmann were to restore him as Germany's first-choice goalkeeper for the World Cup

in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The goalkeeper and Nagelsmann are also said to have repaired tensions dating back to the coach's time at Bayern Munich.

Neuer retired from international football after Euro 2024 following an injury-hit period that began with the serious skiing accident he suffered in December 2022. His performances for Bayern in the Bundesliga and UEFA Champions League this season have reignited speculation over a possible return after previously stating he intended to focus solely on club football.



MARKET

BSE Sensex			Nifty 50			Nifty 500			Nifty Next 50			Nifty 100			Nifty Bank			Nifty Midcap 100		
Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change		Close	Percent change	
74,608.98	0.067%		23,412.60	0.14%		22,377.35	0.35%		69,166.40	0.85%		24,369.05	0.27%		53,456.15	-0.18%		60,164.65	0.77%	
Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open		Previous close	Open	
74,559.24	74,439.34		23,379.55	23,362.45		22,299.90	22,292.15		68,586.55	68,490.75		24,303.05	24,282.30		53,555.20	53,600.40		59,560.65	59,761.40	
High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low		High	Low	
75,191.57	74,134.48		23,582.95	23,262.55		22,532.00	22,208.50		69,630.60	68,275.40		24,538.75	24,184.10		54,103.90	53,194.25		60,607.65	59,560.65	

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Asian Paints	2,617.60	4.47
Adani Enterpris	2,498.00	3.86
Tata Steel	219.62	3.59
Hindalco	1,073.10	3.04
Adani Ports	1,737.80	2.94

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Eicher Motors	6,971.50	-2.17
M&M	3,111.80	-2.02
Power Grid Corp	301.50	-1.57
Infosys	1,123.10	-1.51
TATA Cons. Prod	1,235.00	-1.44

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	162,300.00	8,858.00 5.77
Silver Jul 03	296,800.00	17,738.00 6.36
Crudeoil May 18	9,777.00	54.00 0.56
Naturalgas May 26	279.50	8.60 3.17

TVS Motor records 30 pc revenue growth, 40 pc growth in Operating PBT in FY 2025-26

Chennai: Two and three wheeler makers TVS Motor Company on Wednesday announced that it has posted a highest ever revenue for the 2025-26 fiscal at Rs. 47,270 crores registering a growth of 30% as against Rs. 36,251 crores recorded in 2024-25.

The operating EBITDA for the year at 12.9% improved by 60 bps over the last year and for the year ended grew by 40 per cent at Rs. 4,975 crores as compared to Rs. 3,563 crores reported during previous year.

During the year, the Board of Directors had declared an interim dividend of Rs. 12 per equity share (1,200%), involving an aggregate payout of Rs. 570 crores for the financial year ended March 31, 2026.

Further during the year, the company also allotted 4 fully paid bonus Non-Convertible Redeemable Preference Share (NCRPS) having a face value of Rs. 10 each for every equity share held, amounting to Rs. 1,900 crores, with the maturity date of September 01, 2026.

During the year ended March 2026, the overall two and three-wheeler sales of TVS Motor, grew by 24% at 58.89 Lakh units as against 47.44 Lakh units in the year 2024-25. Motorcycles sales during the fiscal year grew by 24% recording 27.13 Lakh units as against 21.95 Lakh unit in the year ended March 2025. Scooter sales during the fiscal year grew by 27% at 24.13 Lakh units as against 19.04 Lakh units in the year ended March 2025.

Electric vehicles grew by 33% registering sales of 3.71 Lakh units in the year 2025-26 as against 2.79 Lakh units during 2024-25. TVS Motor now has more than 9 Lakh delighted EV customers.

Three-wheeler sales for the fiscal year grew by 63% at 2.19 Lakh units in the year ended March 2026 as against 1.35 Lakh units in the year ended March 2025.

On Q4 performance, the company achieved highest ever quarterly revenue of Rs. 12,808 crores.

Sensex, Nifty snap four-day losing streak; metal stocks lead gains

Mumbai: The Indian Stock Market on Wednesday ended marginally higher after four days of consecutive losses. Strong gains were witnessed in metal, oil-linked, and select heavy-weight stocks, offsetting weakness in IT and auto shares. At close, the Sensex rose 49.74 points or 0.07 per cent to 74,608.98, while the Nifty gained 33.05 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 23,412.60. Oil marketing company stocks ended near the day's high. HPCL rose over 5 per cent after announcing its quarterly results. BSE 150 Midcap index rose by 0.71pc, while the BSE 250 Smallcap index climbed by 0.27pc. The overall market capitalisation of the firms listed on the BSE rose to nearly Rs 459 lakh crore from Rs 456 lakh crore in the previous session. The Indian Rupee weakened 0.1 per cent to 95.7450 against the US dollar, surpassing Tuesday's



previous all-time low of 95,737.5. Among the sectors, Metal stocks emerged as the top-performing sector. Nifty Metal index surged 3.18 per cent.

Further, Oil & gas, infrastructure, and consumer durable stocks also ended firmly higher. IT stocks remained under pressure for a

second straight session. The Nifty IT index fell 1.13 per cent, while the Nifty Auto index declined nearly 1 per cent.

India's renewable energy generation rose 20pc in FY26 amid decline in coal and lignite-based generation: Report

New Delhi: India's renewable energy (RE) generation rose 20 per cent in FY26 while coal and lignite-based generation declined 4.3 pc year-over-year (Y-o-Y), said a report released by Council on Energy, Environment and Water's Green Finance Centre (CEEW-GFC) here on Wednesday.

The report noted that India added a record 57.5GW of net power generation capacity in FY26, which is 33.2GW up from FY25. Renewable energy, including large hydro, accounted of 54.6 pc of net capacity addition.

On the other hand, solar-driven solutions led renewable energy additions with 44.6GW, followed by wind at 6.1 GW. It has contributed to taking India's total installed capacity up to 533 GW with a contribution of 72pc from renewable energy.

"As of March, 151 GW of RE capacity (including large hydro but excluding rooftop solar) is under construction, with 90 GW, 29 GW, 19 GW, and 13 GW coming from solar, wind, hybrid, and large hydro, respectively," the report said.

The report noted that on the tenders front, Renewable Energy Implementing Agencies (REIAs) issued 10.4GW of renewable energy tenders.

Auctions by REIAs and state agencies accounted for 14.25 GW, with innovative formats accounting for 76 per cent of auctioned capacity, according to the report.

Gagan Sidhu, Director, CEEW-GFC, said, "India's energy transition continues to gather pace, with RE accounting for 95 per cent of net capacity addition in FY26 and RE generation seeing a 20 per cent increase over the previous year."



"CEEW-GFC's Market Handbook shows that this year, we saw a more competitive market, with a 35 per cent market concentration. However, at the same time, the sector is also at an important crossroads."

Sidhu noted that foreign direct investment (FDI) saw a 26 per cent drop in the first three quarters of FY26 compared to the same period in

FY25. In light of the multiple global disruptions playing out, it is all the more critical that we keep on track to achieve our RE targets.

According to the report, FY26 is an inflection point for energy storage as 37 storage tenders have been announced. It includes 31 for Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), underscoring

storage's critical role in India's clean energy transition.

The report highlights a marked improvement in the financial health of India's power distribution companies (DISCOMs).

"Legacy dues owed to generating companies fell sharply to INR 4,109 crore as of February 2026, down from Rs 49,451 crore in January 2024, highlighting the success of late payment surcharge rules. 65 million smart consumer meters have been installed across the country."

Sovereign Green Bonds worth Rs 20,000 crore were issued through four equal 30-year tranches at a coupon rate of 6.98 per cent.

Cumulative Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in RE for the first three quarters of FY26 stood at USD 2.5 billion, with solar energy attracting 79 per cent of these flows, the report added.

Uber to expand Hyderabad centre, plans corporate office in 'Future City'

Hyderabad: Global mobility major Uber is set to expand its (CoE) in Hyderabad and is exploring the establishment of a corporate office in the proposed 'Bharat Future City' near the city. A delegation led by Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi met Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy at his Jubilee Hills residence on Wednesday and discussed the company's expansion plans in Telangana. During the meeting, Khosrowshahi informed the Chief Minister that Uber's Hyderabad Centre of Excellence — the company's first such facility outside the United States — currently employs around 600 engineers and is being further expanded. He also conveyed the company's interest in establishing an Uber corporate office in the upcoming Bharat Future City and sought the Telangana government's support for future initiatives. Revanth



Reddy urged Uber to focus on addressing the growing parking challenges in major Indian cities and suggested that the company explore setting up multi-level parking facilities, particularly near Metro stations, where parking shortages have become a major concern. The CM also proposed integrating parking infrastructure with EV charging centres to support sustainable urban mobility. Uber representatives assured him that the suggestions would be studied seriously. Explaining the State government's vision

for Bharat Future City, Revanth Reddy said the project is being developed over 30,000 acres near Hyderabad and aims to attract 500 globally renowned companies. He noted that several firms had already shown interest in setting up operations there. The CM added that the Future City is located about 25 kilometres from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, and that more than 100 companies participated in a global summit held at the project site last December, many of which expressed investment interest.

CCEA raises MSP for Kharif crops for 2026-27, announces major hike for sunflower, cotton

New Delhi: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs today approved an increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for 14 Kharif crops for the 2026-27 marketing season, with the sharpest hikes announced for sunflower seed, cotton, nigerseed and sesamum, as the government sought to ensure higher returns to farmers ahead of the sowing season.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the revised MSPs were aimed at ensuring "remunerative prices" to growers and maintaining the government's commitment to provide at least 1.5 times the weighted average cost of production for crops.

The government has increased the MSP of Kharif crops for Marketing Season 2026-27 to ensure remunerative prices to the growers for their produce," Vaishnaw said. According to the Cabinet decision, sunflower seed recorded the highest absolute increase in MSP at Rs 622 per quintal, taking the new MSP to Rs 8,343 per quintal. Cotton MSP was raised by Rs 557 per quintal, while nigerseed saw an increase of Rs 515 and sesamum by Rs 500 per quintal.

The MSP for common paddy, the country's principal Kharif crop, was increased by Rs 72 to Rs 2,441 per quintal for the 2026-27 season, while Grade A paddy was fixed at Rs 2,461 per



quintal. Among pulses, tur/arhar MSP was raised by Rs 450 to Rs 8,450 per quintal, urad by Rs 400 to Rs 8,200 per quintal and moong by Rs 12 to Rs 8,780 per quintal. In oilseeds, soybean MSP was increased by Rs 380 to Rs 5,708 per quintal and groundnut by Rs 254 to Rs 7,517 per quintal.

For coarse cereals and nutri-cereals, the MSP for bajra was fixed at Rs 2,900 per quintal, maize at Rs 2,410, ragi at Rs 5,205 and hybrid jowar at Rs 4,023 per quintal. The Minister said the revised MSP structure remained in line with the union Budget 2018-19 announcement that MSPs would be fixed at a level of at least 1.5 times the all-India weighted average cost of production. The estimated margins over production cost are highest for moong at 61 per cent, followed by bajra and maize at 56 pc each and tur/arhar at 54 pc. For the remaining crops, the expected margin has been estimated at around 50 pc.

The government also

highlighted its continued policy emphasis on encouraging farmers to shift towards pulses, oilseeds and nutri-cereals, also known as Shree Anna, by offering comparatively higher MSPs for these crops.

A Cabinet note also pointed to a substantial rise in government procurement and MSP payments during the last decade. It said procurement of paddy during 2014-15 to 2025-26 stood at 8,418 lakh metric tonnes (LMT), compared to 4,590 LMT during 2004-05 to 2013-14. Similarly, procurement of all 14 Kharif crops rose to 8,746 LMT during 2014-15 to 2025-26 from 4,679 LMT in the preceding decade. The government said MSP payments to paddy farmers increased sharply to Rs 16.08 lakh crore during 2014-15 to 2025-26, compared to Rs 4.44 lakh crore during 2004-05 to 2013-14. Total MSP payments to growers of the 14 Kharif crops rose to Rs 18.99 lakh crore during the same period, up from Rs 4.75 lakh crore in the earlier decade.

Centre raises import tariffs on gold and silver; prices rally on MCX

New Delhi: The Centre has raised import tariffs on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent as part of efforts to curb overseas purchases of the metals and ease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves.

The move comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to citizens to avoid buying gold for a year to help conserve foreign exchange reserves. Global bullion prices are already soaring amid geopolitical

uncertainty, volatile crude oil markets, and fears of a prolonged conflict in West Asia.

India imports nearly all the gold it consumes, so higher duties are expected to directly influence domestic gold prices, jewellery rates, and investment demand.

The move may help narrow India's trade deficit and support the rupee, one of Asia's worst-performing currencies.

The government has imposed a 10 per cent basic customs duty and a 5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on gold and silver imports, taking the effective import tax to 15 per cent from 6 per cent.

Gold and silver futures witnessed a massive rally on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). MCX silver futures for July 2026 delivery surged by Rs 16,743, or nearly 6%, to Rs 2,95,805 per kilogram. Gold futures for June 2026

delivery also jumped Rs 9,206, or 6%, to Rs 1,62,648 per 10 grams.

The central government had addressed concerns related to India's energy supplies, and reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to all citizens to reduce their consumption of petrol and diesel.

Sujata Sharma, joint secretary for ministry of petroleum & natural gas, said, "I would like to convey to you that the Prime Minister has urged all citizens of the

country to reduce their consumption of petrol and diesel. Wherever possible, utilise the Metro and public transportation; opt for carpooling; prioritise railways as a mode of transportation for goods; and wherever feasible, increase the usage of electric vehicles. Let us all come together and make every possible effort to conserve energy in our daily lives, so that the economic burden currently weighing upon the nation may be alleviated."

pealed for voluntary austerity measures amid the uncertainty caused by the conflict.

The Prime Minister urged citizens to reduce petrol and diesel consumption wherever possible and postpone non-essential purchases such as gold.

Meanwhile, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said India currently has sufficient stocks of crude oil and cooking gas to meet domestic demand.

Addressing the CII Annual Business Summit 2026, Puri said the country has reserves of 60 days of crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), along with 45 days of lique-

had already reduced excise duties on fuel, while state-run oil marketing companies were currently absorbing the rise in crude prices triggered by geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

He said the RBI was closely monitoring the evolving economic situation and would continue to take decisions based on incoming data.

"We are being more and more data dependent. We are taking it more meeting by meeting. The RBI is being flexible in its approach and is ready to look through the shock if it's transitory, but if it is entrenched, we need to take action," the RBI Governor said.

His remarks came shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi ap-

Fuel prices may increase if West Asia conflict drags on: RBI Governor

New Delhi: India may have to raise retail fuel prices if the ongoing conflict in West Asia continues for a prolonged period, Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra has warned.

Speaking at a conference hosted by the Swiss National Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Switzerland, Malhotra said the government may eventually be compelled to pass on higher global crude oil prices to consumers.

"If this is to continue for a longer period of time, it is just a matter of time before the government will pass on some of the price increases," he said.

Malhotra noted that the Centre

had already reduced excise duties on fuel, while state-run oil marketing companies were currently absorbing the rise in crude prices triggered by geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

He said the RBI was closely monitoring the evolving economic situation and would continue to take decisions based on incoming data.

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