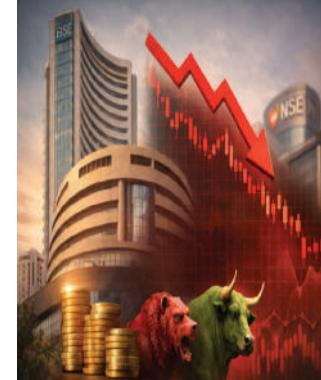




Aryan Age

The Age of Truth

Year 14, Issue 315 | Delhi, Saturday 16 May 2026 | 8 PAGES | ₹ 2.00



PG 02 Siddaramaiah demands rollback of fuel hike

PG 03 AAP questions Delhi law and order over Janakpuri POCISO case and gangrape in bus incident

PG 06 Children Rescued From Train While Being Taken For Labour Work In Punjab

PG 07 Struggling KKR face must-win battle against rampaging Gujarat Titans

PG 08 Stock markets end in red, rupee hits record low

Petrol, diesel prices hiked by Rs 3 per litre across major cities



New Delhi : Fuel prices across the country have gone up sharply after oil marketing companies increased petrol and diesel rates by up to Rs 3 per litre, adding to the burden on consumers and transport operators.

Following the revision, petrol prices in Delhi rose from around Rs 94.77 per litre to Rs 97.77 per litre, while diesel prices climbed from Rs 87.67 per litre to Rs 90.67 per litre. Similar hikes were reported in

several metro cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

The latest increase comes amid volatility in global crude oil markets and rising international energy costs, which have put pressure on domestic fuel retailers.

Industry observers said the revision reflects higher input costs faced by oil companies after a prolonged period of relatively stable retail fuel prices.

In Mumbai, petrol prices crossed the Rs 106 per litre mark, while diesel rates moved above Rs 94 per litre. Chennai and Kolkata also witnessed a steep rise in retail fuel rates after the revision.

The increase is expected to impact transportation costs, logistics expenses and daily household budgets, with sectors dependent on fuel consumption likely to face additional pressure in the coming weeks.

Commercial vehicle operators and delivery businesses are likely to feel the immediate impact of the increase, while consumers may see higher prices in goods and services due to elevated freight expenses.

The fuel price revision comes at a time when global crude prices remain uncertain amid geopolitical tensions and supply-related concerns in the international energy market.

Modi Begins Five-Nation Tour, Reaffirms Support for UAE After Attacks



New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday reaffirmed India's strong support for the United Arab Emirates and condemned the recent attacks on the Gulf nation as he began a multi-nation diplomatic tour aimed at deepening India's strategic and economic engagement with key partners in West Asia and Europe.

gesture." "I look forward to our discussions towards furthering India-UAE ties across key sectors like energy, investment, supply chains, and more," Modi said in a separate post on X.

The Prime Minister's visit to the UAE marks the first leg of his six-day tour that will also take him to the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Italy, with New Delhi aiming to strengthen strategic ties, bolster energy security, and expand cooperation in advanced technologies against the backdrop of global geopolitical tensions and trade disruptions.

The multi-nation tour comes as India seeks to deepen engagement with Europe and key Gulf partners following the conclusion of the India-European union Free Trade Agreement earlier this year and amid continuing uncertainty in West Asia affecting energy markets and shipping routes. New Delhi is also looking to consolidate ties with European nations following the conclusion of the India-European union Free Trade Agreement earlier this year, while maintaining close engagement with Gulf partners that remain crucial to India's energy imports and the welfare of millions of Indian expatriates.

Iran has 'no trust' in Washington regarding negotiations due to 'contradictory messages'



New Delhi : Iran has "no trust" in the US and will only negotiate with Washington if it is actually serious about talks, said Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi as talks on ending the war remain on hold amid an uneasy truce.

Regarding passage through the Strait of Hormuz, Araghchi said that all vessels can pass through the vital waterway except those which are at war with Tehran, adding that vessels wanting to transit should coordinate with its navy.

The situation around the conduit is "very complicated," he added. Araghchi said that

"contradictory messages" by Washington have made Tehran reluctant to hold any negotiations, due to mounting suspicion as to its real intentions regarding negotiations, adding that the mediation process by Pakistan had not failed but was facing "difficulty."

Iran is trying to keep the ceasefire intact so as to give diplomacy a chance but is prepared to resume fighting, he told reporters during the BRICS foreign minister summit in India.

Araghchi's statement on Friday comes hours after US President Donald Trump said his patience with Iran was running out and that he'd agreed in talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping that Tehran must reopen the strait.

Araghchi said that Tehran would "appreciate any country which has the ability to help, particularly China."

Monsoon expected early again, Kerala onset around May 26: IMD

New Delhi : Amid apprehensions of economic slowdown exacerbated by multiple factors such as crude oil price shock and currency depreciation triggered by the US-Iran conflict and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, there seems to be some positive news regarding the southwest monsoon—the most awaited weather phenomenon in the country every year. The monsoon, this year, is again expected to arrive early over Kerala with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting its onset around May 26, with a model error margin of ±4 days.

The monsoon, which typically strikes the southernmost tip of India around June 1, may mark its third consecutive early arrival if the forecast holds true. It reached Kerala on May 27, 2025, and May 31, 2024.

According to the IMD, conditions are currently

favourable for the advance of the southwest monsoon over parts of the south Bay of Bengal, the Andaman Sea, and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands within the next 24 hours. Usually, the monsoon first sets in over the South Andaman Sea around May 22 before progressing towards the Indian mainland.

While the early onset brings cautious optimism, weather forecasts for the rest of the country remain mixed. The IMD warned that severe heatwave conditions are likely to continue over northwest and central India during the ongoing week. Meanwhile, isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected over the northeast this week, and over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe, and South Interior Karnataka over the next 3-4 days.



conditions over the Indian Ocean. The latest climate model forecasts also indicate that positive IOD conditions are likely to develop towards the end of the season.

A positive IOD is generally good for the monsoon. It creates warmer sea surface temperatures in the western Indian Ocean, which increases moisture transport toward the subcontinent, often leading to above-normal rainfall and acting as a counter to dry El Niño conditions, according to analysts. Also, the Northern Hemisphere snow cover extent during the past three months (January to March 2026) was slightly below normal. Winter and spring snow cover over the Northern Hemisphere, as well as Eurasia, has a general inverse relationship with the subsequent seasonal rainfall over the country.

Meteorologists say that at present, weak La Niña-like conditions are transitioning to ENSO-neutral conditions over the equatorial Pacific. Atmospheric circulation features across the tropical Pacific remain consistent with weak La Niña-like conditions. The Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System (MMCFS) suggests the development of El Niño conditions during the season.

A respite is the neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)

Earlier in the day, shortly after arriving in Abu Dhabi, the Prime Minister thanked Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for personally receiving him at the airport, describing it as a "special

SC shifts to virtual hearings twice a week after PM's fuel-saving appeal

New Delhi : After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to the public to save fuel, the Supreme Court Friday decided to conduct hearings only via video conference on Mondays and Fridays.

From Tuesday to Thursday every week, the apex court will adopt a hybrid mode.

As per the new arrangement, all hearings on Mondays and Fridays will take place only online. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, lawyers and litigants will have the option of appearing either physically or virtually.



"Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for fuel conservation is a timely and responsible call towards environmental sustainability and national resource management," said BJP's national spokesperson-cum-lawyer Aviral Malik.

"I welcome the Supreme Court's proactive decision to conduct virtual hearings on Mondays and Fridays, with a hybrid option on other working days. This move not only aligns with the spirit of 'Green Justice' but also demonstrates the Court's

sensitivity towards public interest and technological advancement in justice delivery," he added.

In each Registry branch or section, the apex court allowed up to 50 per cent of staff to work from home (WFH) for up to two days per week. However, it is subject to the preparation of weekly rosters and ensuring the uninterrupted functioning of the court.

However, registry officials could limit or modify the WFH setup if the nature of work in any particular branch needed physical presence, it added.

The PM's appeal came due to the economic fallout of the West Asia crisis. He has appealed to citizens to reduce fuel consumption in view of rising global crude oil prices linked to tensions in West Asia.

NEET-UG re-exam on June 21 after paper leak row; CBT format from next year

New Delhi : The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Friday rescheduled the NEET-UG 2026 examination for June 21 after scrapping the earlier test amid a major paper leak controversy that sparked widespread protests from students and parents across the country.

Addressing a press conference here, Pradhan said the original NEET-UG examination was conducted on May 3, but suspicions emerged days later over the circulation of a so-called "guess paper."

"The examination was held on May 3. Concerns were raised on May 7 regarding a guess paper, and those complaints were immediately referred to central agencies. Within a few days, it was confirmed that the paper had been leaked," he said.

He said the government acted swiftly after authorities verified the breach. "Once we were certain about the leak, we immediately decided that there should be no compromise with students' fair chance," Pradhan said, referring to the government's decision to cancel the examination on May 12.

The revised examination date was announced through an official notification issued by the NTA after receiving approval from the Government of India. Fresh admit cards for candidates will be released on June 14.

Announcing a series of corrective measures, union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the medical entrance examination would shift to a fully computer-based test (CBT) format from next year in an effort to strengthen transparency and plug systemic loopholes.

Reiterating the Centre's stance against exam fraud, the

minister said strict action would be taken against those involved. "Our approach will remain zero tolerance towards malpractices and anti-social elements. With advancements in technology, such challenges are emerging, but we will not allow any compromise with students' future," he said.

Pradhan said the Central Bureau of Investigation has been tasked with carrying out a comprehensive probe to identify how the question paper was leaked and determine those responsible for the breach.

"We do not want any mafia to snatch seats from hardworking students. Student trust is of utmost importance," he said.

The minister acknowledged that despite reforms introduced on the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Committee, vulnerabilities remained in the



examination process and further safeguards were needed to ensure error-free conduct of national-level tests.

He also announced relief measures for candidates, stating that examination fees paid by students would be refunded and that the re-test would be conducted free of cost.

To make the process easier for aspirants, Pradhan said students would be allowed to select their preferred examination city a week before the test, while transportation support would also be arranged wherever possible, taking weather conditions into consideration. He assured students that the government would continue overhauling the examination system to restore confidence and prevent similar incidents in the future.

Delhi Police Bust Major Counterfeit Garment Racket in Naraina, Over 3,400 Fake Branded Jeans Seized

New Delhi : The District Investigative Unit (DIU) team of West District Police has busted a major counterfeit garment manufacturing racket operating from the Naraina Industrial Area in Delhi and recovered more than 3,400 fake branded jeans along with thousands of forged labels, tags, and packaging materials during simultaneous raids at four locations.

DCP West Darade Sharad Bhaskar said that the police conducted extensive search operations in Naraina Industrial Area after receiving information regarding the manufacturing and storage of counterfeit garments of reputed international brands. He said the raids led to the recovery of counterfeit jeans of brands including Levi's, Zara, Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfger, besides seven industrial stitching machines used in manufacturing fake garments.

Police said the accused identified in the case are Vipin Sardana, Rishab Garg, Neeraj Bhambri, and Ravi Prakash. During the raids, police recovered hundreds of counterfeit jeans, forged labels, and fake packaging material from the premises linked to the accused persons. According to police, the largest recovery was made from a factory in Naraina Phase-I linked to accused Vipin Sardana, where counterfeit jeans of multiple international brands, along with stitching machines and forged tags, were seized. Additional recoveries were made from units linked to Rishab Garg, Neeraj Bhambri, and Ravi Prakash. Delhi Police said further investigation is underway to trace the entire supply chain, including manufacturers, distributors, and other people connected to the counterfeit garment network.

Congress blames 'Leadership Crisis' in Modi govt for rising fuel prices and inflation

New Delhi : The Congress on Friday intensified its attack on the Narendra Modi government over rising fuel prices and the broader economic situation, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge accusing the Centre of creating a "Modi-government-made crisis" through what he described as poor leadership, lack of vision and administrative incompetence.

In a strongly worded statement, Kharge said the people of the country must understand that the current economic distress was not solely the result of the international fuel crisis but also a consequence of failures within the government.

"The people of the country must understand that, along with the international fuel crisis, the major reason behind India's current economic troubles is the leadership crisis in the Modi government, the lack of visionary thinking, and sheer incompetence," Kharge said.

He alleged that ordinary citizens were being forced to bear the burden of rising petrol, diesel and LPG prices because of policy failures at the Centre.

"This is a Modi-government-made crisis, the burden of which the people of the country are being forced to bear through higher prices of petrol, diesel, and LPG," the Congress president said.

Kharge warned that increasing diesel prices would trigger inflation across sectors and hurt industries, households and farmers alike.

"When diesel prices rise, it creates a cascading effect of inflation across the country. Everyone — from industries and household budgets to farmers — is adversely affected," he said.

The Congress chief also targeted the government's handling of the West Asia conflict and India's energy security strategy, alleging that the Centre failed to act despite

clear warning signs of a possible fuel disruption.

"When the West Asia war began, the country was told that 'all is well,' and the Congress party's questions were dismissed. No concrete steps were taken. Instead, India's sovereignty was mortgaged because of America's 'permission' and 'allowance,'" Kharge said.

Referring to reports surrounding India's continued purchase of discounted Russian crude oil, Kharge questioned why India had allegedly been placed in a position where it needed American approval for energy imports.

"In March, the 30-day waiver granted for purchasing Russian oil reportedly contained humiliating words such as 'allow' and 'permission' from the United States. According to reports, the Government of India is now seeking an extension of that waiver. The question is: why has Modi ji put the

country in a position where it has to seek 'permission'?" he asked.

Kharge further accused the Centre of profiting from fuel taxation when global crude prices

were low while now passing the burden of inflation onto citizens.

"Is it not true that when international crude oil prices were low, the Modi government gave no relief to the common people and instead earned Rs 43 lakh crore in central taxes over the last 10 years? Then why is the burden of inflation now being imposed on the public?" he said.

The remarks come amid growing concerns over global energy markets following escalating tensions in West Asia, which have pushed up international crude oil prices and renewed fears of inflationary pressure in import-dependent economies such as India.

Adding to the Opposition's criticism, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal accused the government of prioritising corporate interests over public welfare.

"Welcome to Amrit Kaal, mitron!" Venugopal wrote in a post on social media platform X.

"When global crude oil prices plummeted, the Modi Government pocketed billions in profits, and now — three months after a completely predictable crisis — the public is being forced to absorb the pain," he said.

Venugopal also linked the government's handling of the

economic situation to the controversy surrounding industrialist Gautam Adani, alleging that the Centre was more concerned with protecting business allies than shielding citizens from rising costs.

"This government's crisis management is only to save Adani from prosecution, not to save the common public from economic shocks. Instead of giving a plan on how the poor will be shielded from shocks, they are suffocating the people day by day," he said.

"The people are completely fed up with this regime and its mismanagement," the Congress leader added.

The Centre has previously defended its fuel taxation policy by arguing that excise revenues were necessary to fund welfare schemes and infrastructure spending, while also maintaining that India's energy security decisions are guided solely by national interest.





Siddaramaiah demands rollback of fuel hike

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday launched a sharp attack on the union Government over the ₹3 per litre increase in petrol and diesel prices, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of burdening ordinary citizens to cover up economic failures and policy mismanagement.

In a statement, Siddaramaiah said the fuel price hike was "another direct attack on the daily life of ordinary Indians" and alleged that the Centre was forcing people to pay the price for its "failed foreign policy, poor economic management, and reckless handling of inflation."

The Chief Minister said petrol prices in Bengaluru had crossed ₹106 per litre, while diesel was nearing ₹94 per litre, warning that the increase would trigger a rise in transportation costs and prices of essential commodities.

"This hike will not stop at fuel pumps. It will increase transport costs, vegetable prices, grocery bills,



milk prices, construction costs, school van fees, taxi and auto fares, farm input costs, and the price of almost every essential commodity," he said.

Siddaramaiah claimed that farmers, workers, small traders, home-

makers, and the middle class would bear the brunt of the hike.

He accused the Modi Government of collecting massive taxes when global crude oil prices were low without passing on full benefits to consumers, and then transferring

the burden to citizens whenever prices rise.

"This is not governance; this is exploitation," the Chief Minister said.

Alleging that the Centre had failed to control inflation, protect the rupee, and manage the economy, Siddaramaiah said the union Government was not standing with the common people during difficult times.

"We wish Prime Minister Narendra Modi had shown the same urgency and commitment to protect ordinary people as he shows in protecting his capitalist friends," he said.

The Chief Minister strongly condemned the fuel price increase and demanded an immediate rollback of the ₹3 per litre hike on petrol and diesel.

Holding the Prime Minister directly responsible for "mismanaging the economy" and "pushing ordinary families into deeper hardship," Siddaramaiah said Modi "must take responsibility and resign."

Karnataka Cong targets Centre over fuel hike

Bengaluru: Karnataka's ruling Congress on Friday mounted a coordinated political offensive against the Centre over the latest fuel price hike, with senior ministers accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government of failing both economically and diplomatically while burdening common citizens with rising living costs. Leading the attack, Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge declared that "Modinomics has failed", alleging that the Centre had concealed difficult economic realities during the election period only for the impact to emerge later through rising fuel prices and inflationary pressures. "Modinomics has failed, foreign policy has failed, PM's globe-trotting with no benefit to the nation. During elections, announcements were withheld, and once over, the truth emerged," Kharge said while

addressing reporters in Bengaluru. Framing the fuel price issue as part of a larger economic crisis, Kharge questioned what he called contradictions in the Centre's messaging on energy security and public austerity. "Is this the 'acche din' promised? He urges saving petrol and fuel, while ministers insist India is energy surplus. These contradictions raise questions," he said, demanding that the Prime Minister address Parliament and the nation on the "real crisis" confronting the country. The remarks were backed by Karnataka Home Minister G Parameashwara, who accused the Centre of ignoring the hardships faced by ordinary citizens already struggling with soaring prices of essential commodities. "At a time when the prices of many essential items are already rising, the Central Govern-

ment's policy of increasing diesel and petrol prices has exposed them. They have shown today that they are not pro-people," Parameashwara said. He argued that instead of raising fuel prices, the Centre should have explored subsidy measures to cushion the impact on consumers and transportation costs. Adding to the criticism, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar questioned calls for reducing fuel consumption, saying such appeals were disconnected from the realities of daily life. "How can I consume less oil? How can I stop using my vehicle?" Shivakumar asked, while also taking a swipe at the Prime Minister's handling of international relations. The coordinated statements from Karnataka Congress leaders indicate the party's attempt to sharpen its economic narrative against the BJP-led Centre by linking fuel prices.

Major IAS Reshuffle in Bihar, several top bureaucrats reassigned

Patna: Bihar government on Friday transferred several senior IAS officers and reassigned responsibilities across departments to streamline governance. According to the official notification, K. Senthil Kumar (1996 batch) has been transferred from the Sugarcane Industry Department and appointed as Additional Chief Secretary of the Labour Resources and Migrant Workers Welfare Department. He will also hold additional charge of the Backward and Extremely Backward Classes Welfare Department. H.R. Srinivas (1996 batch), who was holding additional charge of the same department, has been relieved of that responsibility. Rajesh

Kumar (2001 batch), earlier Commissioner of Kosi Division, Saharsa, has been appointed as Principal Secretary of the Public Health Engineering Department. Pankaj Kumar Pal (2002 batch) has been made Secretary of the Road Construction Department.

Abhay Kumar Singh (2006 batch) has been transferred as Secretary of the Information Technology Department and will continue to hold additional charge as Managing Director of Bihar State Electronics Development Corporation Limited (BELTRON). Dharmendra Singh (2006 batch), Secretary of the Cooperative Department, will hold additional charge of the Sugarcane

Industry Department.

Deepak Anand (2007 batch) has been appointed Secretary of the Food and Consumer Protection Department. Vinod Singh Gunjyal (2007 batch), Secretary of the Election Department and Chief Electoral Officer, has been given additional charge of the Education and Sports Departments. B. Rajender (1995 batch), Additional Chief Secretary of the General Administration Department, has been relieved of additional charge of the Education and Sports Departments. At the divisional level, Prem Singh Meena (2000 batch), Commissioner of Munger Division, will hold additional charge of Bhagalpur Division, while

Himanshu Kumar Rai (2010 batch), Commissioner of Darbhanga Division, has been given additional charge of Kosi Division. Avnish Kumar Singh (2010 batch) has been appointed Secretary-cum-Mines Commissioner of the Mines and Geology Department and will also hold additional charge as Managing Director of the state mining corporation. Divesh Sehra (2005 batch) has been relieved of his additional charges related to the Mines Department. Himanshu Sharma (2011 batch) has been posted as In-charge Secretary of the Science, Technology and Technical Education Department while retaining his existing additional responsibilities.

Kavitha says TRS formed to bring "qualitative change" in state politics

Hyderabad: Telangana Rakshana Samiti (TRS) President Kalvakuntal Kavitha on Friday said she had undergone a "profound transformation" after facing difficult experiences in life and launched the TRS to bring qualitative change in Telangana politics.

Addressing the Way2 News Conclave in Hyderabad, Kavitha said she had no grievances against former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao as the leader of the Telangana movement, but admitted that she had differences with him in his role as Chief Minister and BRS chief.

She stated that opinions expressed by her internally within the party were alleg-



edly leaked outside, which compelled her to publicly voice her views.

Kavitha said the new organisation aimed to focus on social justice, women's empowerment, youth entrepre-

neurship, agriculture reforms, and Telangana's water rights.

She alleged that both the previous and present governments had failed to adequately address farmers' is-

suces and criticised delays in irrigation projects, including the Palamuru project.

She also accused the BJP of attempting to weaken regional parties and alleged that the Congress government had failed to fulfil promises made to the people.

Referring to allegations involving BJP leader Bandi Sanjay Kumar's son, Kavitha demanded a fair investigation and said the government had lost public trust on the issue.

Kavitha further stated that the Telangana Rakshana Samithi would contest all Assembly constituencies in the next elections and expressed confidence that the people of Telangana would support the party.

Centre strengthening Govt healthcare infrastructure in Hyderabad: Kishan Reddy

Hyderabad: union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy on Friday said the Central Government was making concerted efforts to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in Hyderabad to ensure quality medical services for poor and middle-class families dependent on government hospitals.

Addressing the media after distributing medical equipment at Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHCs) in Harrajpenta, Golnaka, and Kachiguda, Kishan Reddy said that despite the presence of numerous private and corporate hospitals in Hyderabad, there was still a pressing need for high-quality government hospitals accessible to economically weaker sections.

He said poor families living in bastis were unable to afford expensive treat-

ment in private hospitals and therefore relied heavily on government healthcare facilities. Keeping this in mind, the Narendra Modi government was focusing on improving infrastructure and medical facilities in government hospitals across the city.

The union minister stated that the Centre had established a state-of-the-art ESI Medical College, Super Speciality Hospital and Nursing College in Hyderabad.

He claimed that the ESI Hospital was currently witnessing a higher outpatient footfall than even Osmania General Hospital and Gandhi Hospital.

Kishan Reddy further said that an AIIMS Bibinagar hospital was being constructed for Rs 1,300 crore to provide advanced treatment at nominal charg-



es.

He expressed hope that the Prime Minister would inaugurate the facility early next year.

The minister added that although construction work was still underway, the AIIMS Medical College and Nursing College had already started functioning, and inpatient services and

surgeries were being conducted.

The union minister said the Central Government had also installed oxygen plants and liquid oxygen facilities in major hospitals, including Osmania, Gandhi, NIMS, and Railway Hospitals in Secunderabad.

Under the National Health Mission, infrastruc-

ture development works were being taken up in government hospitals across Hyderabad, he added.

As a Member of Parliament, Kishan Reddy said he was providing modern medical equipment, including ECG, eye-testing and blood-testing devices, to Primary Health Centres in his constituency.

He stated that medical equipment worth around Rs 9 lakh was distributed on Friday to the UPHC centre in Bagh Amberpet.

He also said shelters for patients and attendants had been constructed at government hospitals in the constituency and that Basti Dawakhana had been upgraded under the Centre's Wellness Centres initiative.

Dialysis centres had also been established in district headquarters, AIIMS and ESI hospitals, he added.

Krishnaiah urges Telangana CM to fulfil promise of filling two lakh jobs

Hyderabad: R Krishnaiah has urged A Revanth Reddy to fulfil the Congress party's major election promise of providing two lakh government jobs in Telangana, stating that lakhs of unemployed youth in the state were still waiting for recruitment notifications and appointment opportunities. In a detailed letter addressed to the Chief Minister, Krishnaiah stressed that the issue of unemployment had played a decisive role in the outcome of the Assembly elections and remained one of the most important concerns for the youth of Telangana. Krishnaiah stated that the Congress party had received overwhelming support from unemployed youth, job aspirants, students, and educated families during the elections because of its repeated assurances regarding large-scale recruitment in government departments.

According to him, the promise of filling two lakh vacancies had generated hope among lakhs of candidates who had been preparing for competitive examinations for several years. The Rajya Sabha member alleged that the previous (BRS) government had lost public confidence mainly because it failed to address the growing concerns of unemployed youth. He claimed that the earlier administration had neglected recruitment processes and delayed filling vacancies in several key departments, leading to frustration among educated youth across the state. Krishnaiah recalled that senior Congress leaders, including Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, had strongly campaigned on

employment-related assurances during election rallies and public meetings. He said the promises made during the campaign created expectations among job aspirants who now expected the government to act swiftly and transparently. The BC welfare leader claimed that although the Congress government had announced recruitment measures after coming to power, only around 69,000 jobs had reportedly been filled so far. He said this number was far below the promised target and pointed out that a large number of sanctioned posts continued to remain vacant in several departments and institutions. Highlighting the situation in the Police Department, Krishnaiah said nearly 18,000 vacancies were still pending.

Bengal CM Adhikari orders CID probe after cellphones recovered from Presidency Correctional Home

Kolkata: Suwendu Adhikari on Friday displayed 23 mobile phones allegedly seized from inmates lodged inside the Presidency Correctional Home and claimed that a deep nexus existed between prison officials, criminals and a section of political leaders that allowed criminal networks to operate from within jails in West Bengal. Addressing reporters after the recovery operation, Adhikari described the incident as evidence of serious corruption and administrative failure within the prison system. He alleged that inmates were continuing to manage criminal operations from inside correctional homes with the support or negligence of certain officials and politically connected individuals. Following the recovery of the mobile phones, Adhikari announced the suspension of Presidency Correctional Home Superintendent N. Kujur and Chief Controller Dipta Gharai. He said strict action was necessary to send a clear message that any negligence or involvement by jail authorities in facilitating illegal activities would not be tolerated. The Chief Minister claimed that organised criminal net-

works were continuing to function from inside prisons across the state and alleged that the problem had persisted for several years. According to him, corruption had spread across multiple levels of the correctional administration system, enabling inmates to maintain communication with external criminal associates. Adhikari said the state government was determined to dismantle such networks and prevent criminals from operating freely from inside jails. He asserted that the administration would not allow correctional homes to become centres for planning and coordinating unlawful activities. Referring specifically to controversial political figure Sheikh Shahjahan, Adhikari stated that the government would not permit individuals like him to continue running criminal operations from within correctional facilities. He said the administration was committed to tightening prison monitoring systems and strengthening internal vigilance. Sheikh Shahjahan, a leader associated with the All India Trinamool Congress from Sandeshkhali in the Sundarbans region, was arrested earlier after re-

maining absconding for 55 days. His arrest followed an alleged assault on a team of Enforcement Directorate officials who had visited his residence in connection with the alleged public distribution system scam in West Bengal. Shahjahan has been named as the prime accused in several serious cases, including allegations related to land grabbing, assault and sexual exploitation of women. The allegations against him had triggered major political controversy and public protests in the state earlier this year. According to officials, the recovery of the mobile phones took place during coordinated late-night raids conducted inside the Presidency Jail on Thursday. The operation was reportedly launched following complaints that inmates were using smartphones to remain in contact with criminal networks operating outside prison premises. The raids were carried out jointly by teams from Kolkata Police and correctional authorities in the presence of senior officials and a senior police officer. Multiple prison barracks and inmate areas were searched during the operation.

Briefs :

NEET aspirant dies by suicide in Delhi; family takes body for cremation without informing police

New Delhi: A 20-year-old NEET aspirant, who had been preparing for the medical entrance test for the past few years, allegedly committed suicide at her residence in northwest Delhi's Azadpur, police said on Friday. The deceased's family later took the body to a crematorium without informing police, a senior officer said. No suicide note was found at the spot, and the exact reason behind the woman taking the step is yet to be ascertained, the officer said. "The victim was a NEET aspirant. We are probing as to why she took the extreme step. No suicide note has been found," the officer said. On Tuesday, the National Testing Agency (NTA) cancelled the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET, held on May 3 for medical admissions amid allegations of paper leak. A re-examination has been scheduled for June 21. A PCR call was received at the Adarsh Nagar police station on Thursday informing that a woman's body was brought to the Kewal Park Shamshan Ghat for cremation without police intimation. A police team rushed to the crematorium and found that the deceased was a resident of Lal Bagh in Azadpur, the officer said. A probe revealed that the woman had allegedly committed suicide at her residence earlier in the day. The family, who later claimed that they were unaware of the legal formalities, took the body to the crematorium to perform the last rites without informing the authorities, the officer said.

Delhi records minimum temperature of 26.2°C, light rain likely during day

New Delhi: Delhi woke up to a warm morning on Friday, with the minimum temperature settling at 26.2 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The weather office has forecast the possibility of very light to light rain accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and strong winds with speeds of 30-40 kmph, reaching up to 50 kmph during the morning hours. The Palam weather station recorded a minimum temperature of 24.6 degrees Celsius and Lodhi Road logged 25.8 degrees Celsius. The Ridge station recorded a minimum temperature of 24.3 degrees Celsius and Ayanagar 25.6 degrees Celsius. IMD data showed. The IMD has forecast partly cloudy skies during the day, with the maximum temperature likely to settle around 41 degrees Celsius. Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 160, in the 'moderate' category, at 9 am, Central Pollution Control Board data showed.

Delhi Metro to launch hydrogen-powered shuttle bus service in Central Vista today

New Delhi: In a major push towards green mobility and sustainable public transport, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) will launch a hydrogen-powered shuttle bus service in the Central Vista area of the national capital from Friday. The initiative is being rolled out in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL). Officials said the project aims to strengthen clean urban mobility, reduce dependence on private vehicles, and improve last-mile connectivity for government employees and commuters in central Delhi.

AAP questions Delhi law and order over Janakpuri POCSO case and gangrape in bus incident

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Thursday targeted the BJP-led Centre over two recent crimes against women in the national capital, including the alleged rape of a three-year-old girl at a private school in Janakpuri and the alleged gangrape of a woman inside a moving bus.

Addressing a press conference along with Delhi AAP chief Saurabh Bharadwaj and MLA Kuldeep Kumar, Singh questioned the law-and-order situation in Delhi and sought accountability from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Lieutenant Governor and the Delhi Police.

Referring to the alleged sexual assault of a three-year-old girl at a Janakpuri school, Singh claimed that the child was assaulted by a school caretaker in the presence of a teacher.

He alleged that the victim's family faced delays at the police station while attempting to lodge a complaint and further claimed



that the accused obtained bail within five days in the POCSO case.

Singh also alleged that the victim's mother had accused senior police officials of pressuring the family and attempting to suppress the matter. However, there was no immediate response available from Delhi Police or the Lieutenant Governor's office on the allegations made by the AAP leaders.

The AAP MP further claimed that party leaders were prevented from meet-

ing the Lieutenant Governor to raise concerns regarding the case.

According to Singh, Bharadwaj and other AAP leaders were detained when they attempted to seek answers over the bail granted to the accused.

During the press conference, Singh also referred to the recent alleged gangrape of a woman inside a moving bus in Delhi, calling it a serious reflection on women's safety in the capital.

He said the incident had drawn parallels with the

2012 Delhi gangrape case and demanded stricter accountability from authorities.

Singh said he would write to the Lieutenant Governor seeking a meeting with a delegation from the party to discuss the matter.

He also alleged that information was emerging about possible links between the accused, the school management and certain BJP leaders, though no evidence was presented during the press conference to substantiate the claim.

Delhi CM scales down convoy, tells opposition saving fuel is not politics

New Delhi: Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal for fuel conservation and reduced dependence on conventional energy sources, Rekha Gupta has announced a major change in her official travel arrangements by deciding to limit her convoy size and prioritise the use of electric vehicles and public transportation for official duties.

In a symbolic move aimed at setting an example for government officials and the public, the Chief Minister on Thursday travelled to the convocation ceremony of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi using an electric vehicle and with minimal security arrangements. The move was presented by the Delhi government as part of a broader effort to encourage fuel conservation and environmentally sustainable transport practices. According to officials, Rekha Gupta has decided that her official convoy would now largely be restricted to only four vehicles. The decision is being viewed as an attempt to reduce unnecessary fuel consumption, promote cleaner

modes of transportation and encourage more efficient use of government resources.

Apart from reducing the size of her own convoy, the Chief Minister has also directed ministers, senior government officials and departments to give preference to public transport systems such as the Delhi Metro and buses, along with electric vehicles, while carrying out official work and travel.

The Chief Minister appealed not only to ministers and legislators but also to bureaucrats, public representatives and ordinary citizens to actively adopt environmentally friendly travel practices. She encouraged people to use public transport, opt for carpooling arrangements and shift towards electric vehicles wherever feasible. Government sources said the move was in line with broader national efforts to promote sustainability, reduce fuel consumption and minimise pollution levels in urban areas. Delhi has long struggled with traffic congestion and environmental concerns, and officials believe greater use of EVs and public trans-

portation could contribute towards reducing emissions and dependence on fossil fuels.

Speaking about the decision, Rekha Gupta said the initiative reflected "vision" rather than "failure," responding sharply to criticism from opposition parties. She stated that the government was taking practical steps to implement the very measures that opposition leaders had earlier demanded should first be adopted by those in power. The Chief Minister remarked that opposition parties had previously questioned whether leaders and ministers themselves would be willing to reduce luxury and adopt simpler methods of transport. She said the present initiative demonstrated that the government was prepared to lead by example rather than merely issue appeals to the public. Targeting opposition leaders over their criticism, Gupta questioned whether they now had the courage to step out on public roads after giving up their attachment to luxury vehicles and elaborate convoys.

ED freezes Rs 526 cr assets in Gameskraft Online Rummy case, 3 directors arrested

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED), Bengaluru Zonal Office, on Thursday said it recently conducted search and seizure operations at the office and residential premises of Gameskraft Technologies Pvt. Ltd., along with those of its directors and key employees, in Bengaluru and the NCR region.

The searches led to the seizure of incriminating documents and electronic records, and the freezing of movable assets including bank balances, payment gateway balances, mutual funds, bonds, and fixed deposits worth Rs 526.49 crore. The agency also seized bullion, gold and diamond jewellery weighing 2.30 kg worth Rs 3.50 crore, along with cash amounting to Rs 11 lakh.

The investigation was initiated on the basis of multiple FIRs registered across several states under charges of cheating under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860.

Gameskraft Technologies Pvt. Ltd. operates online Rummy games and tournaments — classified as Real

Money Games (RMG) — through its mobile applications under brands such as RummyCulture, RummyPrime, Playship and RummyTime, along with a B2B mobile application named 'RummyCorner'.

According to the ED, the company has a user base of around 3 crore people across the country. The investigation revealed that a significant number of users were from states where online real money gaming is banned, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The agency alleged that the company manipulated geo-location systems to provide online Rummy gaming services in these prohibited states.

The ED further stated that the company charged users a commission ranging between 10 to 15 percent on stake and wagering amounts, which it described as "very high." The company had allegedly assured users that its gaming platform was transparent, secure and free from BOTs.

However, the investigation allegedly found that the company used

BOTs — automated programs or algorithms — to conduct online Rummy games without the knowledge or consent of users. Due to the deployment of these BOTs, users allegedly suffered heavy financial losses and mental distress.

According to the ED, users were initially lured through small rewards and early winnings, which they were allowed to withdraw, thereby creating a false sense of trust. Once users began participating with higher betting amounts, BOTs were allegedly deployed strategically, resulting in major financial losses.

The agency claimed that evidence gathered during the investigation showed genuine users suffered losses to BOT-linked user IDs amounting to nearly Rs 1,154 crore. The ED also said complaints and grievances received by the company through its application and front desk indicated that the alleged manipulative gaming structure caused severe financial distress to users, especially those from economically weaker backgrounds.

Delhi BJP prez expresses confidence that people will support PM's appeal to save fuel

New Delhi: Virendra Sachdeva has welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal urging citizens to reduce petrol and diesel consumption and avoid unnecessary foreign travel in order to help conserve foreign exchange and strengthen the national economy. Supporting the Centre's call for fuel conservation, Sachdeva described the measures as important steps being taken in the national interest during a challenging economic environment.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Delhi BJP president said the people of the national capital fully understood the significance of the Prime Minister's appeal and were prepared to support initiatives aimed at reducing fuel consumption and saving foreign exchange reserves. He stated that citizens across Delhi were aware of the need for responsible energy use and eco-

nomical discipline.

Sachdeva said that the Prime Minister's message was not merely an administrative appeal but a larger call for public participation in nation-building and economic self-reliance. According to him, reducing unnecessary fuel usage and promoting efficient transportation methods could collectively make a substantial contribution towards strengthening the country's financial stability.

Welcoming the Delhi government's recent announcements regarding fuel conservation, Sachdeva termed the measures "emergency steps" being implemented for the larger national good. He said the government's decision to encourage public transportation, electric vehicles and reduced convoy usage reflected a responsible approach towards resource conservation.

Delhi LG, CM attend Ambedkar Univ's convocation, degree not academic achievement but commitment to society: Sandhu

New Delhi: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi held its 14th annual convocation ceremony on Thursday in the presence of Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Rekha Gupta, who urged graduating students to view education not merely as a personal accomplishment but as a responsibility towards society, public service and nation-building. The ceremony brought together students, faculty members, researchers, academic leaders and distinguished guests to celebrate the achievements of the graduating batch.

Addressing the gathering during the convocation ceremony, Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu praised the university for establishing a unique identity in the fields of social sciences, humanities and public engagement over the last 17 years. He noted that the institution had emerged as an important centre of higher learning and intellectual development in the national capital.

Sandhu highlighted the remarkable growth of the university since its inception in 2008. He said the institution had started with only a diploma programme but had gradually evolved into a multidisciplinary university offering a broad range of academic programmes across different disciplines. According to him, the university's expansion reflected its commitment to quality education and academic excellence.

The Lieutenant Governor described the convocation ceremony as both the completion of one important phase of life and the beginning of

another journey filled with greater responsibilities and opportunities. He encouraged students to use the knowledge and skills acquired during their academic journey to contribute meaningfully to society and the nation.

Sandhu also appreciated the university's efforts in implementing the National Education Policy and promoting research-driven learning. He said the institution had made significant contributions in preserving Indian knowledge traditions, encouraging rural entrepreneurship and strengthening initiatives related to mental health awareness and student support systems. Emphasising the changing nature of education in the modern era, the Lieutenant Governor said academic institutions must remain closely connected with society, innovation and future-oriented learning. He remarked that education today should not be limited to classrooms alone but must equip students to respond to emerging global challenges and evolving economic realities.

Referring to rapid technological advancements across the world, Sandhu observed that artificial intelligence, digital transformation and changing economic systems were reshaping societies and employment opportunities globally. In such a scenario, he said, India's greatest strength continued to be its large and dynamic youth population.

He urged universities and educational institutions to actively promote multidisciplinary learning, research, entrepre-

neurship, vocational education and stronger collaboration with industries. According to him, such initiatives would help students become more adaptable, innovative and better prepared for future employment. The Lieutenant Governor also advised graduating students to develop qualities such as leadership, integrity, empathy and commitment to public service while pursuing their professional careers. He said academic success should always be accompanied by ethical values and social responsibility.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta congratulated the graduating students and described the occasion as a reflection of their hard work, discipline, perseverance and dedication. She said the convocation ceremony represented not only the conferring of academic degrees but also the acceptance of new duties and responsibilities towards society and the nation.

Gupta highlighted the university's remarkable journey since its establishment and noted that it had started with just 19 students before growing into an institution with more than 6,000 students. She said the university had consistently upheld and promoted the ideals and vision of B. R. Ambedkar through its educational and social initiatives. Referring to recent appeals made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister stressed the importance of resource conservation, self-reliance and individual contributions towards national development. She said even small efforts made by citizens in the national interest could strengthen the economy and accelerate the country's progress. Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood also addressed the gathering and described education as the most powerful force capable of transforming both individuals and nations.

Editorial

Youth Losing the Race for Marks

India's youth is considered the nation's greatest strength. However, due to rising competition, parental expectations, the influence of social media, and the immense pressure to score high marks, many students are spiraling into a vortex of mental stress. The rising number of student suicides is not merely a statistic; it serves as a grave warning to society. Today, education has become trapped in a relentless race for marks rather than a pursuit of knowledge, and a lack of meaningful dialogue is leaving students feeling increasingly isolated.

India shines today as a resplendent star on the global map, and the primary reason for this is our 'young demographic.' A nation where 65 percent of the population is under the age of 35—and where the average age hovers around just 29—is a nation that no one can stop from reaching the pinnacle of progress. Indian youth have left their indelible mark in every field, including science, technology, research, the arts, and sports. However, this glittering success has a dark, tarnished flip side. Our 'Young India' is currently embroiled in an internal struggle, and the rising rate of student suicides across the country has emerged as a matter of grave national concern. The 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India 2024' report, recently released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), raises serious questions regarding the efficacy of our education system and the resilience of our social fabric.

The statistics presented in this report are deeply disturbing. An analysis of trends since 2020 reveals a consistent and alarming rise in the number of student suicides. While 12,556 students ended their lives in 2020, this figure had climbed to 14,488 by 2024. Students now account for approximately 8.5 percent of all suicides committed across the country. This situation is particularly alarming for the state of Maharashtra, which has recorded the highest number of student suicides (1,909 incidents) in the entire nation. Following Maharashtra, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu rank next on the list. One cannot deny the grim reality that approximately 43 percent of all student suicides in the country occur within these four states alone. The season for 10th and 12th-grade results recently concluded; amidst the celebrations of success, news of some 'withered flowers' young lives cut short also reached our ears. In the Akola district, a student committed suicide despite securing 67 percent marks, simply because he failed to achieve the specific level of success he had anticipated. This incident serves as a stark reminder that we have begun to define success solely through the narrow lens of marks and percentages.

Today's education system has ceased to be a true center for the acquisition of knowledge; instead, it has transformed into an arena of competition. Driven by the escalating ambitions of parents and the academic burden imposed upon children from a very young age, students are gradually losing their childhoods. The relentless cycle commencing right from nursery school involving regular schooling, private tuition, specialized courses, and competitive examinations, causes students to lose touch with their own interests and passions. Children find themselves trapped within this cycle, unable to escape, and thus begins a cutthroat race for marks. A flawed narrative has taken root in society that the only way to give meaning to one's life is to become a doctor or an engineer. In reality, immense career opportunities exist in subjects such as History, Geography, Economics, Art, and Literature, and the contributions of experts in these fields are invaluable to the nation's development. However, because these fields are often undervalued, students constantly live under a singular, unrelenting pressure. To make matters worse, the virtual world of social media has only added fuel to the fire. Witnessing the 'perfect' lives, luxurious lifestyles, and high-paying jobs of others displayed on platforms like Instagram and Facebook often breeds an inferiority complex in students. The haunting fear "Am I falling behind everyone else?" ultimately pushes them into the abyss of depression. In today's times, we are connected through technology, yet we are drifting apart emotionally. 'Healthy dialogue' the very backbone of the Indian family system is becoming increasingly rare today. In the past, the stress weighing on children would be alleviated through conversations with the elders and grandparents in the household. Now, however with parents engrossed in work and children absorbed in their mobile phones no one truly understands the internal turmoil brewing within the minds of students. According to experts, a person contemplating suicide is waging a massive psychological battle within themselves. At such a critical juncture, if they receive a few words of affection and support from someone, they can be steered away from such thoughts. Therefore, it is imperative to re-establish an atmosphere of open and heartfelt communication within the family. Instead of evaluating children solely based on their academic scores, we must learn to appreciate and acknowledge the unique skills they possess. Instilling in students the belief that failure is not the end of life, but rather the first stepping stone toward success, is a responsibility that rests not only with parents but with society as a whole. Educational institutions must now shift their focus from merely completing the curriculum to prioritizing the mental well-being of their students. Counseling centers within schools and colleges should not exist merely in name; they must function effectively and actively. Imparting lessons on stress management, resilience in the face of failure, and essential life skills to students is the need of the hour. Only through the collective efforts of the government, teachers, parents, and society at large can we truly save these future pillars of our nation. Every student must understand that a slightly lower percentage in an examination or even failure in a single subject does not amount to the complete ruin of one's entire life. When we lose a student, the nation loses a valuable human resource. This is an irreparable loss. If we wish to channel the immense energy inherent in the younger generation into constructive endeavors, it is imperative that we empower them with mental resilience. We must instill in our students the realization that the value of human life far transcends the marks inscribed on a mere piece of paper. Only if we rebuild bridges of communication and redefine the parameters of success will the alarming statistics highlighted in the NCRB report eventually drop to zero. Rather than molding our youth into mere 'machines' racing in a competitive rat race, shaping them into sensitive and resilient human beings is the true hallmark of a civilized society. The time has come for every segment of society to engage in introspection and take decisive action to put an end to student suicides; otherwise, we risk pushing our nation's future into darkness with our own hands. If timely corrective measures are not implemented, this crisis will go down in history as a monumental tragedy. Safeguarding the mental well-being of our students is, in today's context, the greatest act of patriotism in the pursuit of building a prosperous and strong India. Protecting the mental health of students is the need of the hour. Society must instill in students the realization that life is not merely academic scores is what truly matters. The younger generation can be saved from depression only if parents, teachers, and society rebuild the bridges of communication. If we aspire to build a strong India, it is imperative to empower our youth mentally.

Piyush Goyal Felicitates LEAPS 2025 Winners Across 13 Categories Celebrating Excellence in Logistics and Innovation

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal felicitated the winners of LEAPS Awards 2025 across 13 categories spanning Core Logistics, MSMEs, Startups, Institutions and Special Categories at the LEAPS Awards 2025 and release of the LEADS Report 2025 today in New Delhi.

Shri Goyal today also released the LEADS 2025 report at the LEAPS Awards 2025 ceremony. The event witnessed participation from senior government officials, industry associations, logistics stakeholders, startups, MSMEs, academic institutions, members of evaluation committees and representatives from the logistics ecosystem.

Shri Piyush Goyal while addressing the LEAPS Awards 2025 and release of the LEADS Report 2025, said India has covered 38 developed and prosperous economies through nine Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) over the last three and a half years, with four already operational and five more expected to come into force in the next 12 months. Minister said along with the FTAs concluded earlier with Japan, Korea and ASEAN countries, these agreements now cover more than two-thirds of global trade and economies.

Shri Goyal said India is also actively negotiating trade agreements with several countries and regions including Chile and Maldives, with both agreements expected to be concluded before the end of the year. He added that negotiations are also underway with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which will cover all six Gulf nations including Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, in addition to Oman and the UAE. The Minister further said India is in active discussions with Canada, Eurasia, Mexico, SACU and Mercosur to expand trade engagement and market access opportunities.

The Minister added India achieved an all-time high export figure of USD 863 billion in the financial year ending March 31, 2026, despite global challenges including high tariffs, the continuing Ukraine conflict and the West Asia crisis. He noted that while global growth has slowed, India's exports

continued to grow, with services exports recording growth of around 8.5-9 per cent and overall exports growing by nearly 5 per cent over the previous year. He said the Government has now set an aspirational export target of USD 1 trillion for the current year, supported by the operationalisation

pressed confidence that India can further reduce logistics costs through continued investments, innovation, startup-led solutions and improved efficiencies. He also highlighted that initiatives such as GST, decriminalisation of laws, reduction of compliance burdens and simplification of business

and reduced around 42,000 compliance burdens. He added that further work is underway to simplify procedures, integrate databases and move more processes online.

The Minister also underlined the importance of balancing physical engagements with digital

ment. The initiative aligns with the vision of PM GatiShakti and the National Logistics Policy by promoting multimodality, efficiency enhancement, technology adoption and sustainable logistics practices.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary, DPIIT Shri Amardeep Singh Bhatia

pert Committee. The short-listed applicants were further evaluated by the Award Committee.

The applicants were assessed on parameters including technological innovation, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices, multimodality, alignment with the National Logistics Policy, operational efficiency, safety, research and development, gender diversity and contribution towards employment generation and skill development.

Shri Piyush Goyal also released the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2025 report today. LEADS is DPIIT's flagship assessment of logistics performance across States and Union Territories and serves as a key benchmarking and reform tool for improving logistics efficiency across the country.

LEADS 2025 reflects the Government's continued focus on integrated and data-driven logistics reforms under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan and National Logistics Policy. The framework supports cooperative and competitive federalism by enabling States and UTs to benchmark performance, identify gaps and prioritise targeted logistics interventions.

The seventh edition of LEADS- LEADS 2025 marks a significant evolution in the assessment of India's logistics landscape, featuring a more rigorous and refined evaluation methodology compared to previous years. LEADS 2025 also places greater emphasis on measurable and evidence-based indicators, with nearly 59% weightage assigned to objective indicators to strengthen assessment robustness and implementation tracking.

To better reflect the maturity and diverse progress of logistics ecosystems across the country, the LEADS 2025 framework has transitioned from its previous three-tier classification to a more comprehensive four-tier performance framework. The revised framework enables more nuanced assessment of logistics performance and supports targeted improvement pathways across different stages of logistics ecosystem development.



of multiple FTAs and enhanced market access opportunities.

The Minister said the West Asia crisis, slowing global growth and other international disruptions should be viewed by India as opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce logistics costs, strengthen competitiveness and expand export markets. He stressed that continuous improvements in logistics, technology adoption and business processes would help India further enhance its export competitiveness and foreign exchange earnings.

Shri Piyush Goyal said Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has taken up reduction of logistics costs as an urgent national mission to make India globally competitive. He said investments in infrastructure, seamless logistics systems, faster transportation and improved delivery mechanisms are helping improve efficiencies, productivity and competitiveness. The Minister noted that both State Governments and private companies have contributed significantly towards strengthening the logistics ecosystem and ex-

processes are helping create a more seamless logistics and business environment in the country.

The Minister said India's strengths include its democratic framework, large domestic demand, young population, diverse product and service offerings, strong digital infrastructure and skilled workforce. He highlighted that India produces 1.4 million STEM graduates annually and has emerged as a major destination for Global Capability Centres (GCCs), with nearly 1,700-1,800 GCCs already operational and another 500 in the pipeline.

He said the world is increasingly looking towards India for innovation, research and development and competitive manufacturing and services. He added that multinational companies are leveraging India's talent pool, lower operational costs and robust digital ecosystem for expanding their global operations.

Referring to ongoing efforts to improve ease of doing business, Shri Goyal said the Government has undertaken decriminalisation of nearly 1,000 offences through the Jan Vishwas Bill

technologies in official interactions and negotiations. He said India is increasingly leveraging videoconferencing and digital platforms in trade negotiations and governance processes to improve efficiency.

The Minister urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards nation building and further strengthening India's global competitiveness. He said every effort to improve efficiency, reduce costs and enhance productivity contributes towards making India a stronger economic power.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, organised the award ceremony of LEAPS 2025 (Logistics Excellence, Advancement and Performance Shield), the flagship national initiative recognising excellence, innovation and best practices across the logistics ecosystem. LEAPS 2025, the fourth edition of the initiative, has been designed to acknowledge organisations that have demonstrated leadership, operational excellence, innovation and sustainability in logistics and supply chain manage-

highlighted the importance of an efficient and resilient logistics ecosystem in improving India's global competitiveness and reducing logistics costs. He noted that LEAPS provides an important platform for recognising organisations that are driving transformation in the logistics sector through innovation, digitisation, sustainability and operational excellence.

The evaluation process for LEAPS 2025 was conducted through a structured and transparent mechanism. Online applications were invited through the Award portal of MHA (<https://awards.gov.in/>), from 13th October to 26th December 2025.

The Expert Committee meeting for LEAPS 2025 was held under the chairmanship of Joint Secretary, Logistics, DPIIT on 11th and 12th February 2026. Subsequently, the Award Committee meeting was held under the chairmanship of Secretary, DPIIT on 17th March 2026. Applications were received across 13 categories, comprising Core Logistics, MSMEs, Institutions, Startups and Special Categories were evaluated and presented before the Ex-

Union Minister of State for Coal and Mines, Shri Satish Chandra Dubey Visits Eastern Coalfields Limited

Union Minister of State for Coal and Mines, Shri Satish Chandra Dubey, visited Eastern Coalfields Limited on 13th May 2026. The visit was focused on reviewing the company's operational achievements, ongoing initiatives, and strategic roadmap for future growth. Discussions were held on key aspects relating to production, dispatch, mine safety, operational efficiency, and sustainable development initiatives undertaken by ECL.

As part of the programme, the Minister visited the Kunustoria Area of ECL, where he was welcomed by Shri Satish Jha, CMD, ECL in the presence of Md. Anzar Alam, Director (Finance), Shri Gunjan Kumar Sinha, Director (HR), Shri Girish Gopinathan Nair, Director (Technical), senior executives, General Managers, and Heads of Departments. A ceremonial Guard of Honour was presented to the Minister during the visit.

During the review meeting, Shri Dubey emphasized the need for balancing coal production with environmental responsibility and encouraged the adoption of modern, sustainable, and eco-conscious mining practices. He highlighted the importance of technological advancement, efficient resource utilization, and continuous improvement in safety standards to strengthen ECL's operational capabilities. Shri Satish Chandra Dubey appreciated the efforts of Eastern Coalfields Limited and congratulated Team ECL for its commendable performance during the financial year 2025-26 despite several operational challenges.

The Minister particularly appreciated ECL's forward-looking and sustainable initiatives aimed at promoting environmentally responsible mining practices and



long-term community development. He noted that such innovative approaches would play an important role in enhancing energy efficiency while reducing the environmental footprint of mining operations.

He also commended the scientific mine closure activities being undertaken by ECL for the systematic reclamation and repurposing of mined-out land. These initiatives, he observed, contribute significantly towards ecological restoration, sustainable land use, environmental conservation, and the socio-economic development of local communities residing in and around mining areas. The Minister emphasized that responsible mine closure practices are essential for ensuring long-term sustainability and creating opportunities for future community-oriented infrastructure and green development projects.

Further appreciating ECL's efforts toward cleaner and more efficient coal transportation systems, Shri Dubey highlighted the implementation and expansion of First Mile Connectivity (FMC) projects across various operational areas.

He stated that these projects are in-



strumental in minimizing air pollution, reducing dependence on road

transportation, improving logistical efficiency, and enabling faster, safer, and more environment-friendly evacuation of coal.

The Minister also acknowledged the company's initiatives for expanding solar energy installations and promoting renewable energy integration within mining operations. He remarked that such efforts reflect ECL's commitment towards transition to sustainable energy practices while simultaneously optimizing operational efficiency and reducing carbon emissions.

He further advised that systematic and periodic stock verification measures need to be adopted for ensuring accuracy of declared coal

ments in West Asia and emerging energy challenges worldwide, the Minister emphasized the crucial role of ECL in strengthening the nation's energy security and maintaining operational resilience while maintaining optimum utilization of resources. He expressed confidence that ECL would achieve even greater milestones across all operational and developmental parameters.

Shri Dubey also shared valuable policy guidance and strategic inputs aimed at enhancing productivity and supporting the long-term growth of the company. Reiterating the Government's commitment towards strengthening India's energy security, he expressed appreciation

stock. Referring to the prevailing global scenario due to develop-

for the dedication and collective efforts of Team ECL.



Briefs :

Fuel Prices Rise By Rs 3 Per Litre, Public Voices Anger

Panipat : The increase of Rs 3 per litre in petrol and diesel prices has upset commuters, transporters, farmers and businessmen across Haryana.

In Panipat, petrol is now being sold at Rs 97.92 per litre while diesel costs Rs 90.39 per litre. Earlier, petrol was priced at Rs 94.93 and diesel at Rs 87.39 per litre. People said the sudden increase would badly affect household budgets and transportation costs.

Dharambir Malik, State President of the All India Motor Transport Congress and district president of the Panipat Transport Association, said transporters are already under pressure.

He explained that a truck travelling from Panipat to Mumbai consumes nearly 1,000 litres of diesel, meaning the fuel cost for one trip has increased by around Rs 3,000 after the hike.

He also pointed out that transporters already pay toll taxes of around Rs 30,000 to Rs 32,000 during such trips, while transport fares have not increased accordingly.

Local resident Jitender Kumar said rising fuel prices would increase transportation and production costs, which would directly affect common people.

Industrialists Vinod Dhambija and Rajiv Aggarwal from the Haryana Chamber of Commerce and Industry said industries are already facing pressure because of rising raw material prices, fuel costs, gas prices and higher wages.

Opposition leaders also criticised the government and demanded rollback of the fuel price increase.

Haryana Changes Rules For Sports Incentives To Government Employees

Chandigarh : The Haryana Government has revised the rules related to salary increments for government employees who participate in national and international sports competitions. Under the new rules, employees who qualify for sports-based increments will receive the benefit from the month after their claim is approved by the competent authority. The government has also fixed a time limit for submitting claims. Eligible employees must apply within one year after the competition ends.

Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi issued fresh instructions to make the policy clearer and easier to implement. Officials said the revised rules were prepared after reviewing older instructions issued in 1990. The government clarified that sports persons appointed directly under the Outsourcing Sports Persons Policy will not receive the benefit of extra increments under these rules.

The state government already provides several benefits to employees taking part in sports events, training camps, mountaineering expeditions and Civil Services sports competitions. These benefits include treating participation period as official duty, granting special leave, travel facilities and salary increments for outstanding achievements. The government has directed all departments, boards, universities and district authorities to ensure that employees are informed properly about the revised rules and that they are implemented strictly.

Only 64% Haryana Voters Linked Before Electoral Roll Revision

Chandigarh : Ahead of the Election Commission of India's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, a voter-mapping exercise in Haryana has shown that only 64.06 per cent of voters in the state could be linked with previous records.

Out of Haryana's 2.07 crore registered voters, only 1.32 crore voters were successfully matched during the exercise. The process was carried out before the Special Intensive Revision was launched in Haryana along with 15 other states and three Union Territories.

Officials matched names from the current voter list with electoral rolls prepared during the last Special Intensive Revision in 2002. If a voter's name was not found, officials tried to verify details using names of parents or other relatives.

Faridabad recorded the lowest voter linkage in the state. Out of 18.91 lakh voters, only 5.60 lakh could be matched, which comes to 29.61 per cent.

Gurugram also showed poor results, with only 5.42 lakh out of 15.54 lakh voters linked, which is 34.84 per cent. Panchkula recorded 51.08 per cent mapping, while Sonapat recorded 58.36 per cent, Panipat 58.83 per cent and Rohtak 59.64 per cent.

According to the Election Commission, the Special Intensive Revision is



being conducted due to large migration, frequent changes in voter lists, duplicate voter entries, names of deceased people remaining in records and complaints regarding inclusion of foreigners.

Under the process, Haryana's 20,629 Booth Level Officers will distribute forms to voters and help them connect their names with earlier records or with names of relatives already listed in the rolls.

The officers will collect these forms and submit them to Electoral Registration Officers and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers.

After this, draft voter lists will be prepared. Notices will be issued to voters whose names cannot be matched with old records.

Officials will then decide whether names should be included or removed from the final list.

District Magistrates will hear the first appeals against these decisions, while second appeals will be heard by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Officials said house-to-house verification by Booth Level Officers will take place from June 15 to July 14. Polling stations will also be reorganised during this period and each booth will have a maximum limit of 1,200 voters.

The draft electoral rolls will be published on July 21 and claims or objections can be submitted till August 30.

The state of Haryana is currently facing a significant administrative challenge as

it prepares for the upcoming Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls mandated by the Election Commission of India. A preliminary voter-mapping exercise has unveiled a startling discrepancy in the state's democratic records, revealing that a substantial portion of the registered population cannot be immediately linked to historical data.

This initiative was designed to cleanse the system and ensure that every individual on the list is a legitimate, verifiable resident, yet the early results suggest that the road to a perfected database will be long and complex for the regional authorities.

The statistical breakdown of this mapping exer-

cise is particularly striking when one considers the sheer volume of the electorate involved in the process.

Out of Haryana's total registered voter base of approximately 2.07 crore individuals, only 1.32 crore voters were successfully matched with existing records during the initial phase of the verification. This means that a significant percentage of the population remains in a state of administrative limbo, requiring further investigation to confirm their eligibility and presence within their respective constituencies before the final electoral rolls are codified for future use.

The timing of this discovery is critical, as it precedes a massive Special Intensive Revision launched across sixteen states and three Union Territories to modernize the voting infrastructure of the country.

This specific exercise in Haryana serves as a foundational step to ensure that the subsequent intensive revision is based on accurate, authenticated data rather than outdated or potentially flawed lists. By identifying these gaps early, the Election Commission aims to prevent the disenfranchisement of legitimate voters while simultaneously purging the system of any inaccuracies that could compromise the integrity of the democratic process.

HHRC Takes Serious Note Of Rising Suicides And Violence In Haryana Jails

Chandigarh : The Haryana Human Rights Commission has taken serious notice of increasing suicides, violence and mental health problems inside Haryana prisons after findings mentioned in the NCRB Prison Statistics India-2024 report. The commission registered a case on its own and called the matter a serious human rights concern.

A Bench headed by Justice Lalit Batra, along with members Kuldip Jain and Deep Bhatia, sought detailed reports from senior government and prison officials. The commission said prisoners and undertrials also have constitutional rights related to dignity, health and mental well-being under Article 21 of the Constitution.

According to the NCRB report, Haryana recorded 15 unnatural inmate deaths in 2024 and all of them were cases of suicide.

The report also mentioned that Haryana was the only state in the country where firearm-related clashes inside prisons were reported.

The commission raised concerns about stress, depression, overcrowding, violence, addiction-related problems and lack of counselling facilities inside jails.

The Bench said prison authorities are legally responsible for protecting inmates from self-harm, mental trauma and social isolation.

The commission added that suicides inside jails can be reduced through counselling, psychiatric care, emotional support, de-addiction treatment and regular monitoring.

The Bench referred to Haryana Prison Rules, 2022, which mention strict precautions to stop inmates from accessing dangerous tools or poisonous substances.

The rules also say prisoners showing suicidal behaviour should be monitored carefully and sent for counselling.

The commission recalled that during earlier jail inspections, female inmates had complained that psychologists and counsellors visited only once a month.

At that time, directions were issued to increase counselling visits and involve psychology students in rehabilitation programmes.

The commission said the latest NCRB report shows that stronger mental healthcare systems are still needed in Haryana prisons.

It also noted that the situation may violate international human rights standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules related to treatment of prisoners.

The commission has now asked senior officials from Home, Jails, Health and other departments to submit detailed reports on prison suicides, violence, overcrowding and mental health services.

MDU Team Creates Special Jaw Implant Using 3D Printing Technology

Rohtak : A research team from Maharshi Dayanand University has developed a patient-specific jaw implant using advanced PEEK material and a specially designed 3D printer. The project won first prize during the National Technology Day exhibition held at the University Institute of Engineering and Technology.

The research was supervised by Professor Deepak Chhabra from the Mechanical Engineering Department. The project has attracted attention because of its possible use in oral and facial surgeries. Research scholars Ashish Phogat and Akash Ahlawat designed and built the special 3D printer used in the project.

The team said the main problem with titanium implants, which are commonly used today, is that they are very rigid and can damage nearby bones and tissues if the patient gets injured again. The newly used PEEK material acts more like natural bone and absorbs impact instead of passing it inward. It is also bio-compatible and can handle temperatures up to 500 degrees Celsius, making it suitable for sterilisation.

Ashish Phogat said building the printer itself was a major challenge because PEEK requires temperatures above 380 degrees Celsius and a controlled heated chamber, which normal desktop printers cannot han-

dle. Akash Ahlawat explained that every implant is created from the patient's MRI scan and converted into a 3D model using Mimic software. This makes each implant completely customised for the patient. M.Tech student Vipin and B.Tech student Harsh also helped in building the printer and testing the material. Professor Deepak Chhabra said titanium implants are costly and many patients cannot afford them. He added that PEEK implants prepared inside the university cost much less.

He said the team hopes that in future such implants can be printed directly inside hospitals on the same day of surgery. The research team now plans to work with surgeons for further testing before beginning clinical trials.

A research team from Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU) in Rohtak has achieved a significant milestone in medical engineering by developing a patient-specific jaw implant using advanced 3D printing technology. This innovative project, which utilizes high-performance PEEK (Polyether ether ketone) material, was recently awarded the first prize at the National Technology Day exhibition held at the University Institute of Engineering and Technology. The success of this endeavor highlights the growing intersection of mechanical engineering and healthcare, offering a

glimpse into a future where medical implants are both more effective and more accessible to the general public.

The project was conducted under the expert supervision of Professor Deepak Chhabra from the Department of Mechanical Engineering. Professor Chhabra's guidance was instrumental in steering the team toward a solution that addresses the physical and financial limitations of traditional medical implants. By focusing on oral and facial surgeries, the research team targeted a field where precision and biocompatibility are paramount, as traditional reconstructive methods often struggle to perfectly match the unique anatomical structures of individual patients.

The technical core of the project was the creation of a specialized 3D printer, designed and built from scratch by research scholars Ashish Phogat and Akash Ahlawat. Unlike standard consumer-grade 3D printers, which are typically designed for lower-temperature plastics, this custom machine was engineered to handle the extreme thermal requirements of medical-grade polymers. The development of the hardware was just as critical as the material science involved, as the printer serves as the necessary bridge between a digital design and a physical, surgical-ready product.

Haryana To Hold Revenue Lok Adalats For Fast Settlement Of Land Disputes

Chandigarh : The Haryana Government has decided to organise Revenue Lok Adalats across the state for quick settlement of land-related disputes.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini gave these directions while reviewing the Revenue and Disaster Management Department's five-year action plan under Viksit Bharat-2047.

Under the plan, Deputy Commissioners, SDMs and tehsildars will help settle disputes through mutual agreement between both parties.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that a digital court case management system will also be introduced for faster disposal of revenue cases. The Chief Minister directed officers to organise Revenue Lok Adalats in the same way as National Lok Adalats so that land disputes can be solved quickly.

He said people should be informed about these camps through patwaris and district officers should be given targets for settlement of cases. Saini also asked the department to introduce more online services and make government work easier and transparent for citizens.

He directed the government to provide laptops, tablets and high-speed internet facilities to newly appointed patwaris so that services can be delivered digitally. The Chief Minister also ordered the creation of a state-level training centre for patwaris



to train them in modern technology and revenue work. He said stamp sales should move fully to e-stamps and efforts should be made to make the system blockchain-based for transparency. Saini also directed officials to introduce faceless registration services for people living outside the state or abroad who cannot stay physically present during registry work.

Officials informed him that nearly four lakh registrations have already been completed through paperless registration. They also said no registration application older than 15 days is pending in any tehsil of the state. The government further informed that a modern data centre is being built through HARTRON for secure storage of Revenue Department data.

Officials also said land

records are being digitised and geo-tagged across the state with the help of the Agriculture Department. Every land parcel will get a unique number. The Chief Minister directed officials to also upload details of government land belonging to all departments on the portal. During the meeting, disaster management plans were also reviewed. Officials informed the CM about a proposal to create a separate department for disaster, fire and emergency services. The government said the Aapda Mitra Yojana, currently running in eight districts, will soon be expanded to all 23 districts.

Director General of Fire Services Shekhar Vidyarthi informed that AI-based command and control centres are planned in all districts and use of robots in firefighting operations is also being explored.

The Chief Minister directed officials to modernise fire services and improve safety measures for fire department personnel.

The Haryana government has embarked on a comprehensive modernization of its revenue and disaster management systems, spearheaded by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini. A central pillar of this initiative is the establishment of Revenue Lok Adalats, which are designed to mirror the efficiency of National Lok Adalats. These specialized courts aim to accelerate the resolution of long-standing land disputes by fostering mutual agreements between parties, with active mediation provided by Deputy Commissioners, Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs), and Tehsildars.

High Court Orders Haryana To Recall 285 Law Officers To District Courts

Chandigarh : The Punjab and Haryana High Court has directed the Haryana Government to cancel the deputation of 285 law officers posted in departments, boards and corporations and send them back to district courts within one week.

The court said district courts are facing a serious shortage of prosecutors, which is affecting criminal trials and delaying justice.

The Bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry passed the order while hearing the matter related to shortage of law officers in Haryana courts. The High Court also asked the state government to submit a detailed affidavit mentioning sanctioned posts, current staff strength, vacancies and steps being taken to fill vacant posts.

During the hearing, the court noted that many trained law officers were doing non-court work despite



shortage of prosecutors in courts.

The Bench observed that district courts are suffering due to lack of district attorneys, deputy district attorneys and assistant district attorneys.

According to the court, this

shortage is creating obstacles in the legal process and causing delay in cases and trials.

The judges directed the state government to immediately end the deputation of all 285 law officers and

post them back in courts within a week.

The court noted that out of the total sanctioned strength of 644 law officers, many were either on deputation or not performing court duties.

The state government tried to explain the situation by mentioning ongoing recruitment and advertisements for new posts.

However, the High Court said such explanations cannot solve the immediate shortage affecting daily court work.

The matter has now been adjourned and the state government has been asked to submit another report with district-wise details of vacancies and recruitment steps.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has taken a definitive and stern stance regarding the administrative management of legal personnel within the state of Haryana.

Karnal Launches Massive Cleanliness Drive After Workers End Strike

Karnal : The Karnal Municipal Corporation started a special cleanliness drive after sanitation workers ended their 14-day strike and returned to work. Garbage collection and sweeping work resumed on Thursday evening and continued throughout Friday, giving relief to residents troubled by overflowing garbage on roads and streets. The sanitation workers, working under the Municipal Employees Union, had gone on strike from May 1 demanding regularisation of contractual employees and other pending issues. After receiving assurances from the Haryana government regarding regularisation, the workers ended their strike and resumed duties. To handle the garbage

crisis, the Municipal Corporation launched a large cleaning operation using extra manpower and machines. Five sanitary inspectors, five supervisors and five safari darogas were assigned to monitor the drive. Around 20 tractor-trolleys and JCB machines were also used to remove garbage from different areas. Municipal teams continuously cleaned roadsides, markets and residential colonies across the city. Officials said around 300 tonnes of garbage had already been removed out of nearly 800 tonnes collected during the strike period. Residents had been facing foul smell and unhygienic conditions during the strike, but the situation is now slowly improving.

Children Rescued From Train While Being Taken For Labour Work In Punjab

Ambala : In a joint operation, members of Zila Yuva Vikas Sangathan and Railway Protection Force rescued 15 children from a train at Ambala Cantonment railway station. The children were being taken from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to Punjab for labour work.

The children, aged between 15 and 17 years, were rescued from the Karambhoomi Express on Thursday evening after officials received a secret tip-off. During questioning, the children said they were being sent to different places in Punjab for work.

Ajay Tiwari, programme coordinator of Zila Yuva Vikas Sangathan, said the information was first received by the 'Just Rights for Children Alliance' through its helpline. The information was later shared with Sangathan president Paramjeet Singh, after which a rescue operation was planned. Child Welfare Committee, GRP and RPF officials were also informed.

A joint team searched the train around 7.30 pm and safely rescued all 15 children. Around 10 of them were reportedly being taken to a rice mill in Ludhiana where they were promised a salary of Rs 10,000 per month. The children said they were expected to work



from 8 am to 8 pm and a contractor was waiting for them at Ludhiana railway station.

After the rescue, the children were counselled and presented before the Child Welfare Committee

in Ambala.

They were later shifted to the Open Shelter Home in Ambala

Cantonment for protection. Officials said their parents are being contacted and the children will soon be sent back home.

Tiwari said the children were being taken by Subodh Manjhi to work at a rice mill in Ludhiana. He was also caught during the operation.

Paramjeet Singh said the rescued children belonged to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. He added that the government and social organisations are continuously working against child trafficking and child labour.

Meanwhile, the SHO of GRP Ambala Cantonment said counselling of the children is going on and their ages are being verified. Further action will be taken after receiving a formal complaint.

The recent rescue of fifteen children from a train at the Ambala Cantonment railway station serves as a sobering reminder of the persistent challenges regarding child trafficking and forced labor in the region.

This successful intervention was the result of a meticulously coordinated joint operation between the Railway Protection Force and the Zila Yuva Vikas Sangathan, a dedicated social organization.

HHRC Demands Reports After Two Workers Die In Faridabad Sewer

Chandigarh : The Haryana Human Rights Commission has sought reports from several officials after two workers died while cleaning a sewer in Greater Faridabad.

The commission has asked for reports from the Municipal Corporation Commissioner, Police Commissioner, CEO of Faridabad Metropolitan Development Authority and Deputy Commissioner of Faridabad. The matter reached the commission after Sangrur resident Kamal Anand filed a complaint over the deaths of the two workers. He referred to a newspaper report about the incident and claimed that manual scavenging was being carried out without proper safety equipment.

He alleged that the work violated the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, along with Supreme Court directions.

HHRC member Deep Bhatia heard the matter on May 13 and directed the concerned authorities to submit reports before the next hearing on July 8.

The complainant has demanded strict action against the officials responsible and compensation for the families of the deceased workers.

According to the report, Rajendra and Sunil, residents of Kheri Kalan village, entered a manhole near Puri Pranam Society on May 2 for sewer cleaning work. They reportedly had no safety gear while working. When both workers did not return home, their families started searching for them on May 4. Their bicycle and motorcycle were later found near the manhole.

Police had earlier registered a case against the estate manager of BPTP on a complaint filed by Sunil's brother.

Kamal Anand told the commission that despite strict laws, workers are still being forced to enter dangerous sewers without machines or proper protection. He said the authorities failed to provide oxygen masks and safety gadgets, which is a direct violation of the law.

He also demanded a high-level investigation into the case to identify those responsible for the negligence.

Big Rise In Stubble Burning Cases Worries Air Quality Panel

Gurugram : The Commission for Air Quality Management held an important meeting on Friday to review the sudden increase in stubble-burning cases in Punjab and Haryana during April and May.

The commission directed state governments and agencies to take stricter action to control the problem and reduce air pollution in Delhi-NCR. Officials said Punjab recorded 8,986 stubble-burning incidents between April 1 and May 15 this year. During the same period last year, 6,474 such cases were reported.

Haryana also saw a sharp rise, with 3,290 incidents this year compared to 1,503 cases during the same period in 2025.

During the meeting, the commission also discussed several measures to control pollution in Delhi-NCR and reviewed plans to improve air quality monitoring systems in the region.

Officials said 46 new air quality monitoring stations will be installed across Delhi-NCR. Out of these, 14 stations will come up in Delhi, 16 in Haryana, 15 in Uttar Pradesh and one in Rajasthan. After this expansion, the total number of monitoring stations in the region will increase to 157. The CAQM also reviewed plantation and greening targets for 2026-27. Around 4.6 crore trees, shrubs and bamboo plants are planned to be planted

across the NCR region.

Officials stressed that all departments and state governments must work together seriously to control pollution and successfully implement yearly action plans.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has sounded a high alert following a significant and unexpected surge in stubble-burning incidents across the agricultural heartlands of Punjab and Haryana. During a high-level review meeting held on Friday, the commission expressed deep concern over the atmospheric impact of these fires, which have traditionally been associated with the post-monsoon harvest but are now showing a worrying frequency during the months of April and May. This seasonal shift in agricultural residue burning poses a direct threat to the fragile air quality of the Delhi-NCR region, necessitating an immediate and coordinated response from state authorities and environmental agencies.

The statistical data presented during the session painted a grim picture of the current environmental situation, particularly in the state of Punjab. Official records indicate that Punjab has already documented 8,986 separate incidents of stubble burning between April 1 and May 15 of this year. This represents a staggering increase from the same period in the

previous year, when 6,474 cases were reported. The upward trajectory of these figures suggests that despite ongoing awareness campaigns and technological interventions, a large section of the farming community continues to rely on fire as a primary method for clearing fields for the next cropping cycle.

Haryana has mirrored this concerning trend, showing an even more dramatic percentage increase in fire incidents compared to its previous performance. The state recorded 3,290 incidents during the initial six weeks of the current season, a figure that has more than doubled from the 1,503 cases reported during the same timeframe in 2025. This sharp spike has alarmed the CAQM, as the proximity of Haryana's agricultural hubs to the national capital means that smoke and particulate matter from these fires can migrate into the metropolitan air shed within a matter of hours, significantly spiking PM2.5 and PM10 levels.

In response to these findings, the CAQM has issued stern directives to state governments, demanding more aggressive field-level enforcement to curb the practice of residue burning. The commission emphasized that the current "business as usual" approach is insufficient to meet the stringent air quality targets set for the region.

CBI Says HPGCL Director Received Huge Cash Payments In IDFC Scam

Chandigarh : The Central Bureau of Investigation has claimed that Haryana Power Generation Corporation Limited Director (Finance) Amit Dewan was regularly receiving cash payments ranging from Rs 25 lakh to Rs 50 lakh from the main accused in the IDFC First Bank scam.

According to sources linked to the investigation, former IDFC First Bank branch manager Ribhav Rishi allegedly sent the cash through delivery boys two to three times every month. CBI sources said Rishi's delivery boy Amrit Pal Singh first gave IPL tickets to Dewan in April 2025. From May 2025 onwards, cash deliveries allegedly started regularly.

Special CBI Judge Bhawna Jain sent Dewan to CBI custody till May 18. Businessman Vikram Wadhwa was also sent to CBI custody till May 16.

The CBI told the court that the investigation points towards a larger conspiracy involving several people, many of whom are yet to be identified.

The agency said Dewan may have important information related to transfer of funds from the CREST account to HPGCL accounts maintained with IDFC First Bank and other banks. Investigators also suspect involvement in fake documents, ma-



nipulated bank records and transfer of government funds through shell companies.

The CBI said evidence collected so far shows Dewan's involvement in criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and receiving illegal money.

Dewan's lawyer argued that he had no direct control over bank transactions as authorised signatories handled them. The lawyer also said Dewan had already been questioned in another CBI case.

However, the court rejected the arguments and said the allegations currently relate to Dewan personally receiving large amounts of cash, not his official duties.

The court also refused Dewan's request to use a mo-

mobile phone during custody, saying it could affect the investigation.

In businessman Vikram Wadhwa's case, the CBI claimed around Rs 75 lakh from the defrauded CREST account was transferred into his personal account.

The court allowed fresh CBI custody for Wadhwa after noting that the agency needed to investigate new evidence and trace the money trail.

The investigation is linked to two major frauds worth more than Rs 200 crore involving fake transactions, forged documents, shell companies and hidden bank accounts at the same IDFC First Bank branch in Chandigarh.

The CBI is also probing

cilitated by the primary architect of the fraud, suggesting a deep-seated level of corruption within the financial management of the state's power corporation.

The mechanics of this alleged payoff system involve Ribhav Rishi, the former branch manager of IDFC First Bank, who is believed to have orchestrated the delivery of physical cash to the Director.

Investigative sources claim that these funds were transported via delivery boys who visited Dewan's residence or office two to three times every month. This clandestine logistics network was designed to bypass official financial channels, making the trail of money difficult to detect through traditional auditing methods used by the government.

A key figure in this delivery chain has been identified as Amrit Pal Singh, who reportedly acted as a courier for Rishi. The CBI's timeline suggests that the relationship began with smaller favors; Singh allegedly delivered IPL tickets to Dewan in April 2025 as a gesture of goodwill. However, by May 2025, the nature of the deliveries shifted from luxury items to substantial amounts of liquid cash, marking what investigators believe was the start of a regular and systematic bribery arrangement.

Haryana CM Flags Off Special Train For Hazur Sahib Pilgrimage

Sirsa : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini flagged off a special train carrying devotees from Sirsa to Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib in Nanded on Friday.

Addressing people during the event, the Chief Minister said such religious journeys help young people stay connected with Indian culture and traditions.

Hundreds of devotees boarded the train for the pilgrimage. Saini paid respect to all Sikh Gurus and wished the pilgrims a safe journey.

He said Sirsa has an important place in history and religious pilgrimages help strengthen cultural values and keep future generations connected with their roots.

The Chief Minister also spoke about steps taken by the Central government for preserving religious heritage sites across the country.

Mentioning Sikh heritage, he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Kartarpur Corridor in 2019, fulfilling a long-pending demand of Sikh devotees. He also referred to commemorative coins, postage stamps and a coffee table



book released in honour of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Saini said the Haryana government has signed a special agreement with the Railways Department for the convenience of pilgrims. He said another special train had already been sent to Ayodhya Dham in March, while a train for Somnath Temple will leave on June 8.

According to the Chief Minister, more than 800 devotees from 14 districts are travelling in the special train to Hazur Sahib. He also said the Mukhyamantri Teerth Darshan Yojana was

launched so that financially weaker people could also visit religious places. Under the Swarn Jayanti Sindhu Darshan Scheme, pilgrims are given financial assistance of Rs 10,000 every year. During the visit, representatives of Rashtriya Kisan Manch also submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister demanding cleaning and strengthening of canals, regular water supply, flood canal construction, fertiliser availability, CCTV cameras in towns and sub-division status for Rania. In a significant move to facilitate reli-

gious tourism and preserve cultural heritage, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini flagged off a special train from Sirsa on Friday. This dedicated service is transporting hundreds of devotees to Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib in Nanded, Maharashtra, one of the five Takhts in Sikhism. The event was marked by a large gathering of pilgrims, where the Chief Minister personally interacted with the travelers, paying homage to the Sikh Gurus and wishing the congregation a safe and spiritually fulfilling journey.

Rohtak Starts 'Ayushman Sarathi' To Make Healthcare Easier

Rohtak : The Rohtak district administration has launched the "Ayushman Sarathi" initiative to help eligible citizens get smooth and hassle-free healthcare benefits under Ayushman Bharat and Chirayu Haryana schemes.

Under this initiative, hospitals linked with the Ayushman scheme will not only provide treatment but will also help patients complete necessary formalities and access benefits without delays.

Deputy Commissioner Sachin Gupta held a review meeting with private hospitals and Health Department officials and instructed them to implement the scheme in a citizen-friendly way. He said no eligible person should be denied treatment because of lack of information, paperwork or absence of an Ayushman card during emergencies.

Hospitals have been asked to clearly display details about eligibility rules, treatment packages, patient rights, helpline numbers and helpline information so that people can easily understand their benefits.

A major part of the initia-

tive is real-time eligibility checking at hospitals. Officials said hospitals must immediately verify whether a patient qualifies for the Ayushman scheme.

If an eligible patient does not have an Ayushman card, hospitals must coordinate with authorities and arrange immediate card generation so that treatment is not delayed.

Hospitals have also been instructed to set up dedicated Ayushman Help Desks with trained staff to guide patients properly. The Deputy Commissioner said many claims are rejected because of incomplete paperwork or technical mistakes. Hospitals were directed to maintain proper records and submit accurate claims. Officials from the Health Department, Ayushman nodal officers and private hospital representatives attended the meeting.

The Rohtak district administration has introduced a proactive healthcare model titled "Ayushman Sarathi," designed to eliminate the bureaucratic hurdles that often prevent eligible citizens from accessing life-saving medical care. This initiative

specifically targets the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat and Chirayu Haryana schemes, ensuring that the transition from a medical emergency to professional treatment is as seamless as possible. By repositioning hospitals as facilitators rather than just service providers, the district aims to create a more compassionate and efficient healthcare ecosystem for the underprivileged.

The core philosophy of Ayushman Sarathi, as outlined by Deputy Commissioner Sachin Gupta, is to ensure that no patient is ever turned away due to a lack of documentation or the physical absence of a health card. In the past, many eligible individuals faced delays in treatment because they could not immediately prove their status under the government schemes. Under the new guidelines, hospitals are mandated to prioritize the patient's health and provide treatment while simultaneously resolving any administrative or paperwork-related issues in the background. To achieve this level of efficiency, the administration has

directed all empanelled private and government hospitals to implement real-time eligibility checks. This means that as soon as a patient arrives, the hospital staff must utilize digital databases to verify if the individual qualifies for benefits. This shift toward immediate verification is intended to remove the anxiety often felt by families during hospital admissions, providing them with instant clarity on whether their medical expenses will be covered by the state.

A significant feature of the initiative is the "on-the-spot" generation of Ayushman cards for those who are eligible but have not yet received their physical documentation. If a patient is found to be qualified but lacks a card, the hospital is now responsible for coordinating with health authorities to arrange for the immediate issuance of a digital or temporary card. This ensures that the financial benefits of the Chirayu Haryana and Ayushman Bharat schemes are applied to the current admission, preventing out-of-pocket expenses for the family.



Struggling KKR face must-win battle against rampaging Gujarat Titans

Kolkata: With their playoff hopes hanging by a thread, three-time title holders Kolkata Knight Riders return to Eden Gardens for a crucial clash against an in-form Gujarat Titans side here on Saturday, knowing there is little room left for error in their IPL 2026 campaign.

KKR are back home after spending nearly a month on the road, but the comfort of familiar conditions alone may not be enough to rescue a season that has never really found momentum. The Ajinkya Rahane-led outfit has struggled for consistency throughout the tournament and now face the daunting task of winning their remaining matches while also depending on other results to keep their playoff dreams alive.

For KKR, the season has been marked by uncertainty from the very beginning. The decision to hand the captaincy to veteran Rahane was met with mixed reactions after the team's disappointing eighth-place finish last year, and the campaign has done little to silence the doubts.

The Kolkata side looked unsettled through the opening half of the season. They had to wait until their seventh game to register their first win and repeatedly struggled to put together complete performances. Changes in the batting order, inconsistent team combinations and the inability to close out key moments prevented them from building any sustained rhythm.

There was a brief turnaround when KKR strung together four consecutive victories, beginning with their win over Rajasthan Royals at Eden Gardens on April 19. During that stretch, the side finally began to resemble the balanced unit that had made them such a dangerous team in previous seasons.

However, the momentum did not last long.



Their defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru once again exposed several familiar issues. Poor fielding cost them heavily and Virat Kohli capitalised with a commanding innings that left KKR chasing the game for most of the night.

That loss has left Kolkata in a difficult position. They have only three league matches remaining and can now finish with a maximum of 15 points if they win all of them. Even then, qualification is far from guaranteed because net run rate and other results could still decide the final playoff spots. Another defeat would almost certainly end their campaign and also raise bigger questions about the direction of the team moving forward.

One of the biggest reasons behind KKR's short revival was the return to form of their spin attack. Veteran all-rounder Sunil Narine and mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy once again became central figures in the bowling unit, controlling the middle overs and creating pressure consistently.

But KKR felt the absence of Chakravarthy badly in the defeat against RCB after the spinner missed the match with a fractured

left leg. Without him, the bowling attack lacked its usual control and penetration during the middle overs.

There is some positive

news for the home side though, with head coach Abhishek Nayar indicating that Chakravarthy is expected to return for the clash against Gujarat Titans.

KKR's batting unit, however, continues to remain a concern. Despite a few individual performances, the batting lineup has not clicked consistently as a group. Young batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi has emerged as one of the brighter stories in an otherwise frustrating campaign. The youngster has scored 340 runs at a strike rate of 139.44 and already has four half-centuries to his name this season.

Vice-captain Rinku Singh also produced important contributions with the bat, often stabilising the innings in difficult situations. The left-hander has so far contributed 286 runs at a strike rate close to 149. Both players will once again be crucial for KKR as they prepare for decisive home fixtures against Gujarat Titans, Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals.

While KKR are battling to stay alive, Gujarat Titans arrive in Kolkata with very different objectives. Shubman Gill's side has developed into one of the most complete sides this season. Their five-match winning streak has taken them level on points with table-toppers RCB and firmly strength-

ened their push for a top-two finish. The Titans' success has come from the balance they have managed to build across departments.

Their bowling attack has delivered consistently in recent matches. Kagiso Rabada has produced match-winning spells and claimed two Player-of-the-Match awards during the winning run, while Jason Holder has also played a major role with impactful performances. Perhaps the most significant boost for GT has been the improved form of star spinner Rashid Khan, who appears to have rediscovered his rhythm at the business end of the tournament.

That strong bowling attack has complemented a powerful batting unit led by Gill and opener Sai Sudharsan. After winning the Orange Cap last year with 759 runs, the stylish left-hander has already scored 501 runs this season and remains firmly in contention for the award once again. He has registered five fifties in his last six innings, including a century, underlining the consistency he has brought at the top. Gill has looked equally assured and continues to anchor the innings with confidence, while Washington Sundar has quietly provided stability in the middle order. GT will also hope England wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler can produce a strong finish to the

league stage after a season that has been relatively quiet by his standards.

With league matches against KKR and Chennai Super Kings still to come, Gujarat Titans know that a top-two finish would give them an important advantage heading into the playoffs.

The conditions at Eden Gardens could add another interesting dimension to the contest. Although traditionally known as a batting-friendly venue, the surface in Kolkata has offered assistance to bowlers this season as well. There has been enough help for spinners and bowlers using slower variations, especially during the middle overs.

Historically, though, Gujarat Titans have enjoyed the upper hand in this rivalry. The two teams have faced each other six times in the IPL so far, with GT winning four matches. KKR have managed just one victory, while one game ended without a result. Squads: Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell, Rahul Tripathi. Finn Allen, Tejasvi Singh, Tim Seifert, Sunil Narine, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Cameron Green, Sarthak Ranjan, Daksh Kamra, Rachin Ravindra, Navdeep Saini, Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Matheesha Pathirana, Kartik Tyagi, Akash Deep, Varun Chakravarthy, Prashant Solanki. Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), Anuj Rawat, Arshad Khan, Ashok Sharma, Jos Buttler, Connor Esterhuizen, Gurnoor Brar, Jason Holder, Kulwant Khejroliya, Kumar Kushagra, Mohammed Siraj, Glenn Phillips, Prasad Krishna, Kagiso Rabada, Rashid Khan, Sai Kishore, Sai Sudharsan, Shahrulkh Khan, Ishant Sharma, Nishant Sindhu, Manav Suthar, Rahul Tewatia, Washington Sundar, Luke Wood, Jayant Yadav.

Thailand Open: Sat-Chi advance, Sindhu crashes out

Bangkok: India's top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty stormed into the semifinals of the Thailand Open with a commanding straight-game win in here on Friday, while two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu bowed out after a hard-fought quarterfinal defeat against old nemesis Akane Yamaguchi of Japan.

Later today, Lakshya Sen will be in action as he faces defending champion and home favourite Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the men's singles quarterfinals.

Top seeds Satwik and Chirag delivered a dominant performance against Japan's Takumi Nomura and Yuichi Shimogami, registering a comfortable 21-12, 21-13 victory in just 41 minutes.

The win marked the Indian duo's first semifinal appearance at a BWF World Tour event in 2026.

Facing the world No. 34 Japanese pair for the first time, Satwik and Chirag took complete control right from the beginning. The Indians raced to a stunning 10-0 lead in the opening game before their opponents finally managed to get on the scoreboard.

Although the sixth-seeded Japanese combination attempted a brief comeback after the mid-game interval and reduced the deficit to four points at 10-14, the Indian pair quickly regained momentum and comfortably closed out the first game.

The second game was more competitive in the early stages, with Nomura and

Shimogami staying within touching distance for much of the first half. However, Satwik and Chirag maintained their composure, gradually extended the lead and wrapped up the match in convincing fashion.

The world No. 4 Indian pair, chasing their first title since winning the Thailand Open in 2024, will next face either Malaysia's third-seeded duo Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin or Scotland's brothers Christopher Grimley and Matthew Grimley in the semifinals.

Earlier in the day, Sindhu's campaign came to an end after she suffered a 21-19, 18-21, 15-21 defeat against top seed and world No. 3 Yamaguchi in an intense women's singles quarterfinal clash.

Sangram set to become first Indian to fight for Asia Championship title

Kuala Lumpur: Commonwealth Heavyweight Champion Sangram Singh, will soon be seen in his fourth MMA fight, this time competing for the Asia Championship title.

In doing so, Singh will become the first Indian to fight for the Asia Championship title. The fight is scheduled to take place on July 19, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he will face experienced Pakistani fighter Abid Ali.

The organizers of the Malaysia Strike MMA Championship, led by Muhammad Lukman Hakim Bin Abdullah, have officially invited Sangram Singh and his coach Bhupesh Kumar for the event.

Sangram has accepted the invitation. In the official communication.

Sangram Singh, who is also the Brand Ambassador of the Ministry of Sports' Fit India Movement, is very excited about the upcoming clash.

Interestingly, he had also begun his MMA career against a Pakistani fighter, Ali Raza Nasir, in Tbilisi, Georgia. In that bout, under the Gamma International Fighting Championship, Sangram secured a dominant victory in the second round. Now, his fourth MMA fight will once again see him face a Pakistani opponent. Between these two contests, Sangram Singh defeated Tunisian fighter Hakim Trabelsi in the Netherlands without allowing the fight to reach the second round. More recently, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he created history by defeating Florian Caudier in just 1 minute and 45 seconds. With that victory, Sangram became the first Indian to win an



MMA fight in Argentina.

At 42 years of age, Sangram Singh frequently competes against fighters who are significantly younger than him. Speaking about Abid Ali, Sangram said that he currently does not know his exact age, but acknowledged him as a highly experienced fighter with multiple MMA victories to his name.

Sangram Singh stated that he will compete this time in the 83 to 89 kg weight category. He admitted that facing a Pakistani fighter brings an added layer of pressure because sports fans from both nations never take defeat lightly against each other. However, he also described this bout as one of the biggest and most exciting challenges of his career. It is worth noting that Sangram Singh is a Fit India Icon and Brand Ambassador for the Government of India's Fit India Movement. He is also India's first Commonwealth Heavyweight Champion. Before entering MMA, Sangram represented India internationally in Greco-Roman wrestling and spent many years in the national camp.

Sports minister assesses India's preparations for CWG 2026

New Delhi: Sports Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya chaired a high-level review meeting to assess India's preparations for the Commonwealth Games 2026 scheduled to be held in Glasgow, Scotland.

The meeting focused on ensuring seamless coordination among all stakeholders and strengthening the support system for Indian athletes preparing for CWG 2026.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, representatives from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), including the Chef de Mission for CWG 2026, who shared updates on operational planning, athlete preparation and

coordination mechanisms for the Games, along with officials from the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

The Sports Minister reviewed athlete preparation, training, logistics, welfare and coordination for India's CWG 2026 campaign.

Dr. Mandaviya emphasised that the government remains committed to providing every possible support to Indian athletes to help them perform at their highest level at the CWG.

He highlighted the importance of timely planning, coordination among agencies and athlete-centric preparation to ensure a successful campaign for the country.

The meeting further discussed preparations related

to the closing ceremony of the CWG 2026, during which India will officially be handed over the baton as the host of the Commonwealth Games 2030 to be held in Amdavad, Gujarat.

In view of this, Harsh Sanghavi, Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat and other senior representatives from the Government of Gujarat also discussed and participated in the review meeting.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of inter-ministerial coordination efforts being undertaken by the Secretary (Sports) with representatives of various Ministries and departments regarding the operational and logistical preparations for Glasgow 2026.

Discussions focused on inter-ministerial coordination, facilitation mechanisms and ensuring smooth execution of all arrangements related to the Indian contingent.

Officials from SAI and the Ministry briefed the gathering on the roadmap being prepared for the Games, including competition exposure, training schedules, support staff deployment and contingency planning. The review meeting reaffirmed the collective commitment of the Ministry, IOA, SAI, Gujarat Government and associated stakeholders towards ensuring comprehensive preparations for India's campaign at the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow.

Coach Marijne stresses on discipline and high intensity Hockey

New Delhi: Head coach of women's National Hockey team Sjoerd Marijne, sharing his vision for the team said that he prioritises discipline, team spirit and wants his wards to play high intensity hockey.

Speaking to media persons in an online interaction organised by the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the Dutchman laid out his priorities as a Coach.

"For me the most important thing is behaviour, having a good culture, and structure leads to winning results. The focus is on building a strong team culture and a side where every player has clarity about her role. I also try to make sure that everyone enjoys the journey; that is very important."

Marijne, who was appointed as head coach in January this year, emphasised that the players need to execute everything at high speed for them to be successful against the top teams of the world.

"During the last two matches

against Argentina, they played exactly the way I wanted them to play. They ran hard and did everything while sprinting. That is what we need to continue in Australia and the Nation's Cup. We have to do that consistently every time."

Marijne's first assignment with the national team was a four match bilateral series in Argentina last month. The Indian women's hockey team drew the series 2-2 in Buenos Aires after a remarkable comeback. After losing the first two matches (4-2 and 2-1), the Navneet Kaur-led side rallied to win the third match (2-1) and the final match on penalties (0-0, 3-2 shootout), showcasing immense resilience against the World number 2 ranked team.

The 52-year-old pointed out some of the areas where he is currently focusing on for improvement.

"All round improvement is required but counter control and high press are two areas which were lacking during the Argentina tour. These things will take

time, and we need to perfect one area before going on to the next one."

The former Den Bosch player explained that women's hockey is very competitive and evolving all the time.

"The top seven-eight teams like the Netherlands, Argentina, Belgium -- they are dynamic, and improving all the time. If we look, till even a few years back, around 2020, not many teams played the high ball; now everyone is playing it."

Marijne, who also had a stint as Indian team coach from 2017-2021, applauded Hockey India for the support that he is getting. "This time around I have a bigger support staff. I have three strength and conditioning coaches, two masseurs and a video analyst. Right now I am in the Hockey India office. The last time around it was being constructed. Everything we ask for we are getting almost the very next day. The process between asking and getting is much faster than earlier."

Wish to carry on: Kohli on 2027 World Cup plans

New Delhi: Former India skipper Virat Kohli has said his desire to continue playing ODI cricket and potentially feature in the 2027 ICC World Cup comes from his love for the game, while making it clear that he does not want to be in a position where he constantly has to prove his worth to remain in the Indian team.

Speaking on the Royal Challengers Bengaluru podcast, Kohli spoke openly about his mindset regarding his future with the Indian ODI team. The talismanic right-hander said he still feels deeply connected to the game and remains ready to contribute as long as the team believes he can add value to the environment.

"My perspective is very clear. If I can add value to the environment that I'm a part of and the environment feels like I can add value, I'll be seen," Kohli said.

"If I'm made to feel like I need to prove my worth and my value, I'm not in that space. And because I'm being honest to my preparation, I'm being honest to how I approach the game."

"I put my head down, I work hard. I'm very thankful to God for giving me everything that I've been given in my cricketing career. And I feel very blessed and grateful for the opportunity. And I play the game in the right way. You want me to run boundary to boundary for 40 overs in an ODI game, I will do that without a complaint."

"Because I prepare accordingly. I prepare for the fact that I will field 50 overs every ball like it's the last ball I'm going to play in my career. And I will bat that way. And I will run between the wickets that way. And I will do everything possible for the team."

"After operating like

this, if I have to be in a place where I have to prove my worth and value, that place is not meant to be for me," Kohli added.

"And I am very clear in my head from that perspective. That's why when I went back to play, I was very clear in my head, I'm not going out there to prove anything to anyone. I'm going to play because I love playing the game," he further said.

Kohli has already stepped away from Test cricket and T20 internationals, which has naturally increased

speculation around how long he plans to continue in the ODI format. Despite that uncertainty, his performances in one-day cricket over the last two years have remained exceptionally strong.

The veteran batter has scored three ODI centuries in 2025 and is averaging 65.10 in the format this year.

In his three ODI appearances this season, Kohli has averaged 80, continuing to show the consistency that has defined his career.

His commitment to stay-



ingly prepared for international cricket also took him back to the domestic circuit earlier this year. Kohli made a rare appearance for Delhi in the 2025/26 Vijay Hazare Trophy and impressed immedi-

ately by scoring 131 and 77 in two matches.

Reflecting on that experience, Kohli said reconnecting with the simple joy of batting helped him rediscov-

er the excitement he felt as a young cricketer. "That's how I played Vijay Hazare as well. It was amazing," Kohli says. "There was not a person in the COE (Centre of Excellence).

"First, I thought, 'I've played for so long and will it be motivating enough?' But the moment my intention switched to 'I want to play because I love playing. I just love batting. And I just want to focus on that'."

"And I could not care. It's not like I didn't field. I fielded the whole game and I was diving around and I felt like a child again. I was like, this is not about anyone else. This is about me and the game and that's what it's going to be. And the moment I feel like people are trying to complicate it for me and be like, 'Oh, but this and that'... Either be clear, honest and upfront or be quiet and let me play."

"Look, if you go to your workplace, right? And if people say, we believe in your abilities."

"And then a week later, they start questioning the way you operate. It's like,

why? Either tell me on day one, I'm not good enough or I'm not needed. Or if you said I'm good enough and you say, we're not even thinking otherwise, then be quiet. If you start operating up and down because of results, you can never have a consistent stance. And I'm not someone who behaves like that," he added.

The former India captain admitted that playing the 2027 ODI World Cup would be special, but reiterated that it would only make sense if the trust and belief from both sides remained intact.

"As I said, when I come to play, I know what I can deliver in terms of effort. Performance: no one can guarantee performance in any space. But in terms of effort and commitment, I know what I can deliver because I literally live my life like that."

"It's not like I prepare for a series to suddenly start

working hard two or three weeks before. I'm like that through the year. So, if you call me to play and if you say there's a series coming up: I'm ready."

"I'm always ready because that's my daily life. I work out, we eat well at home. It's because I like living that way. It's not only to play cricket. So, that's where I am. I mean, this 27 (2027 World Cup) chat and all that, honestly, for me, it's like we're at like mid-2026."

"But I've been asked so many times, do you want to play 2027? Like, why would I leave my home, get my stuff over and be like, 'I don't know what I want'. Of course, if I'm playing, I want to play cricket. I want to carry on. Playing a World Cup for India is amazing."

"But as I said, the value has to be two-sided," the two-time World Cup winner said.



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
75,237.99	-0.21%	23,643.50	-0.19%	22,531.15	-0.36%	22,531.15	-0.36%	24,572.15	-0.33%	53,710.35	-0.77%	60,567.15	-0.45%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
75,398.72	75,497.10	23,689.60	23,731.40	22,613.10	22,664.40	22,613.10	22,664.40	24,654.40	24,654.40	54,128.95	54,207.75	60,839.70	61,033.85
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
75,870.36	75,139.41	23,839.30	23,610.30	22,710.85	22,502.60	22,710.85	22,502.60	24,775.10	24,540.40	54,325.45	53,628.30	61,047.15	60,473.05

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
TMPV	356.55	5.25
Dr Reddys Labs	1,336.70	2.54
Infosys	1,119.00	2.19
Tech Mahindra	1,370.50	2.02
Coal India	462.20	1.79

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Hindalco	1,067.50	-3.24
Nestle	1,430.50	-1.99
Tata Steel	216.84	-1.94
Eternal	241.18	-1.89
Reliance	1,336.40	-1.87

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	159,077.00	-2,901.00 -1.79
Silver Jul 03	270,876.00	-20,226.00 -6.95
Crudeoil May 18	9,975.00	251.00 2.58
Naturalgas May 26	282.50	5.10 1.84

Stock markets end in red, rupee hits record low

Mumbai : Indian equity markets ended lower on Friday as weak global cues, heavy selling in select sectors, and continued pressure on the Indian rupee dampened investor sentiment throughout the trading session. The benchmark indices witnessed volatility during the day before settling in negative territory, reflecting cautious mood among investors amid concerns over currency weakness, rising crude oil prices, and uncertain global economic conditions.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 160.73 points, or 0.21 per cent, to close at 75,237.99. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty 50 fell by 46.10 points, or 0.19 per cent, to settle at 23,643.50. Market participants remained cautious amid persistent selling pressure in sectors linked to commodities, oil and gas, and banking.

Broader markets also ended in the red, indicating weakness beyond headline indices. The BSE 150 Midcap index slipped 0.48 per cent, while the

BSE 250 Smallcap index declined 0.37 per cent. Analysts noted that investors continued to book profits in midcap and smallcap counters following recent gains, especially amid rising uncertainty in global markets.

Among the Nifty constituents, information technology stocks provided some support to the market. Shares of Infosys, Tech Mahindra and Power Grid Corporation of India emerged as the top gainers during the session. Buying interest in IT stocks was largely supported by expectations of stable global technology demand and defensive positioning by investors.

On the other hand, metal and energy stocks witnessed heavy selling pressure. Shares of Tata Steel, Reliance Industries and Eternal were among the biggest laggards on the Nifty index. Weakness in commodity-linked sectors and concerns over rising input costs weighed significantly on investor sentiment.

Sector-wise, most indices



ended the week in negative territory, highlighting broad-based weakness across the market. Out of the 16 major sectoral indices, 13 registered weekly losses. The Metal, Oil & Gas, PSU Bank, Realty, Energy, and Commodities sectors declined more than one per cent each during the week as investors reduced exposure to economically sensitive sectors.

However, the information technology sector emerged as a notable outperformer during the week, with IT stocks gain-

ing over one per cent. Market experts attributed the resilience in technology shares to expectations that Indian IT companies may benefit from a stable demand environment in overseas markets despite global economic concerns.

Currency market developments also played a major role in influencing investor sentiment. The Indian rupee depreciated sharply during the week and hit a record low against the US dollar. The domestic currency reportedly weakened by more than Rs 1.60 against the

greenback, triggering concerns over imported inflation and increasing costs for sectors dependent on foreign imports.

The sharp depreciation in the rupee raised concerns among investors regarding the broader macroeconomic outlook. A weaker rupee generally increases the cost of crude oil imports and can adversely impact companies dependent on imported raw materials. At the same time, export-oriented sectors such as information technology tend to benefit from currency weakness, which partly explains the relative strength in IT shares.

Among individual stocks, Adani Enterprises emerged as one of the top performers of the week, rising 8.4 per cent. Shares of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation also gained significantly, advancing 7.2 per cent during the week amid movements in global crude oil prices and energy-related developments.

Meanwhile, shares of oil marketing companies remained under pressure as in-

ternational crude oil prices surged sharply. Brent crude reportedly climbed over 3 per cent to USD 109.09 per barrel, increasing concerns over higher fuel import costs and pressure on refining margins for domestic oil retailers.

Shares of Indian Oil Corporation declined 4.12 per cent, while Hindustan Petroleum Corporation fell 2.95 per cent. Bharat Petroleum Corporation also slipped 3.58 per cent as rising crude prices negatively affected sentiment in the oil marketing segment.

The overall market performance for the week remained weak, with both benchmark indices ending their two-week winning streak. The Nifty 50 closed the week with losses of 2.22 per cent, while the Sensex registered a steeper decline of 2.65 per cent. Analysts said investors preferred a cautious approach amid rising geopolitical and economic uncertainties globally. Global market trends also remained negative and influenced domestic equities.

Vijay meets top industrial honchos to promote industrial growth, discusses expansion plans, promises full govt support

Chennai: Pitching Tamil Nadu as the most preferred EV, investment hubs, Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Friday held meetings with top honchos of the industrial firms and a delegation of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in promoting industrial development, investment promotion and expansion plans of various firms and promised full support from his government, including faster clearances and ease of doing businesses.

In this industry outreach, Vijay met leaders of leading auto firms like BMW, TAFE and India Yamaha Motor (IYM) Limited and other firms at the State Secretariat and discussed about their present operational facilities, exports and their future expansion plans in the state.

During the high-level consultations with leading

industrialists and automobile sector executives, the discussions focused on improving ease of doing business, accelerating Electric Vehicle (EV) manufacturing and attracting fresh investments into Tamil Nadu.

After hearing their expansion and future investment plans in the State, Vijay assured all of them the fullest support from the government for promoting industrial growth across the state and make TN the preferred destination in all emerging sectors.

The meetings assumed significance amid the State government's efforts to strengthen Tamil Nadu's position as a preferred destination for manufacturing and next-generation mobility projects.

During an interaction with TAFE Chairman and Managing Director Ms Mal-

lika Srinivasan and Vice-Chairman Lakshmi Venu, top executives of the BMW Group, IYM and CII members, the Chief Minister discussed industrial growth, export expansion and enhancement of manufacturing capabilities, besides issues relating to industrial expansion, policy facilitation, employment generation and infrastructure in detail.

Officials said the consultations largely revolved around simplifying procedures for industries, ensuring faster clearances, improving investor facilitation mechanisms and creating a more industry-friendly ecosystem to support long-term growth. The discussions also covered expansion of EV manufacturing capacities, establishment of new production facilities and measures to reinforce Tamil Na-

du's automobile and manufacturing ecosystem. Employment creation and opportunities for skilled youth were also among the key issues deliberated upon.

During his meeting with BMW Group India Managing Director Thomas Dose, the Chief Minister reviewed the company's existing operations in Tamil Nadu, its progress in electric mobility and prospects for expanding its presence in the State.

Vijay also met a CII delegation led by southern region chairman B Ravichandran and Tamil Nadu chairman C Devarajan. The industry body underlined the importance of policy stability, sustained government-industry collaboration and further reforms aimed at improving ease of doing business and sustaining Tamil Nadu's industrial growth momentum.

Wheels India FY26 Net profit up at Rs. 139 cr, Revenues cross Rs.5,000 cr milestone

Chennai: Wheels India has achieved a major financial milestone in FY26, with its annual revenues crossing the Rs 5,000 crore mark for the first time, driven by strong domestic demand across automobile segments and improved export performance. The company reported robust growth in both revenue and profitability during the financial year ended March 31, 2026, reflecting sustained momentum in the automotive and industrial sectors.

According to the company's financial results, Wheels India posted a revenue of Rs 5,124 crore in FY26, registering a growth of 16 per cent compared to Rs 4,425 crore recorded in the previous financial year ended March 31, 2025. The increase in revenues was supported by healthy demand from passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, tractors, and export-oriented segments.

The company also reported a significant rise in its annual net profit. Profit after tax for FY26 stood at Rs 139 crore, compared to Rs 106 crore recorded during the corresponding period of the previous year. The improvement in profitability was attributed to higher

sales volumes, better operational performance, and growth across multiple business verticals.

Wheels India delivered particularly strong performance during the fourth quarter of FY26. For the quarter ended March 31, 2026, the company reported a net profit of Rs 52 crore, marking a substantial increase from Rs 36 crore recorded during the same quarter of the previous financial year. The rise in quarterly profit reflected strong business momentum and improved market demand during the period. Revenue performance during the fourth quarter also remained impressive. The company's Q4 revenues rose by 23 per cent to Rs 1,471 crore compared to Rs 1,195 crore registered in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The growth indicated strong demand conditions across domestic and export markets during the final quarter of the financial year. Speaking to reporters virtually on Friday, Srivats Ram described the fourth quarter as a record period for the company in terms of sales performance. He stated that strong domestic demand across car, truck, and tractor segments played a

crucial role in driving the company's growth momentum.

Srivats Ram attributed the rise in domestic demand partly to the implementation of GST 2.0 reforms, which he said had positively impacted the automobile industry and related sectors. According to him, improved business activity and stronger customer demand across vehicle categories contributed significantly to the company's revenue growth during the quarter. He further highlighted the performance of the company's air suspension division, which also registered strong growth during the quarter. The division benefited from increasing demand in commercial vehicle applications and continued expansion in the transportation and logistics sectors. On the export front, the company witnessed healthy growth led by rising demand for earthmover wheels in international markets. Srivats Ram stated that export demand for wheels used in construction and heavy equipment machinery emerged as a major driver of growth, helping strengthen the company's overseas business performance.

Sigma Advanced Systems bags Rs 107cr export order for artillery shell fuzes

Hyderabad: Sigma Advanced Systems on Friday announced that it has secured an export order worth USD 11.4 million (approximately Rs 107 crore) from a North American customer for the supply of 90,000 filled fuzes for 155 mm artillery shells.

In a statement, the company said the contract would be executed over a period of ten months, with deliveries scheduled to be completed within the stipulated timeframe.

The company stated that the order marks a significant milestone in its growth journey and further strengthens its presence in the global defence manufacturing ecosystem.

It added that the order would be executed

entirely through its in-house capabilities.

According to the company, the product has been developed using its long-standing Build-to-Spec expertise acquired through decades of experience in serving Indian defence customers.

The company further stated that manufacturing would be carried out in India in compliance with all applicable defence export regulations and norms.

The statement added that the order reflects growing global confidence in India's defence manufacturing capabilities and highlights the increasing role of Indian companies in international defence supply chains.

Fuel prices hike to add to inflation concerns, impact transportation costs

New Delhi: The central government on Friday increased the retail selling prices of petrol and diesel, effective from Friday. The move is coming first in four years for retail consumers. Further, the price of CNG has also been raised by Rs 2.

CNG price in Delhi has been raised from Rs 77.09 per kg to Rs 79.09 per kg. A day earlier, the CNG price was also raised in Mumbai by Rs 2 per kg.

Amid the Iran War crisis, the prices of premium petrol were raised in March,

with all three major oil companies, including Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), having raised the prices.

Economists believe that the hike in fuel prices is set to raise inflation concerns and impact transportation and consumption costs.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said, "The Rs 3 hike in

petrol and diesel prices reflects the pressure of elevated global crude oil prices and rising import costs on the government's fiscal position. While the increase may temporarily add to inflation concerns and impact transportation and consumption costs, it also indicates the government's focus on managing fuel subsidies and protecting forex reserves amid ongoing global uncertainty. In the longer term, such moves may further accelerate the push towards EV adoption

and reduced dependence on imported fuel."

Prashant Vasisht, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head, Corporate Ratings. ICRA Ltd said, "The modest hike in retail price of Rs 3 per litre for petrol and diesel provides limited relief to the oil marketing companies. ICRA estimates that at a crude price of USD 105-110 per barrel and considering the past 10-year average crack spreads of auto fuels, oil marketing companies incur a loss of about Rs 500 crore daily on the sale of

auto fuels and domestic LPG, even after factoring in the fuel price hike. Accordingly, the oil marketing companies would need to relook at the retail prices in case elevated crude oil prices persist."

Reacting to the price hike, the shares of state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) declined.

Shares of HPCL fell 2.65 per cent to hit an intraday low of Rs 367.10, BPCL declined 2 pc to Rs 289.05, while IOCL slipped 0.6 pc to its day's low of Rs 139.35.

Financial conditions likely to remain under pressure as West Asia conflict impacts economy: Crisil

New Delhi: Financial conditions are likely to remain tight in the coming months, as the West Asia conflict poses considerable pressure on the economy, said Crisil Macroeconomics First Cut, released here on Friday.

India's premier credit rating agency, Crisil, said that financial conditions remained under pressure in April, with the Crisil Financial Condition Index (FCI) standing at - (negative) 1.2.

April's performance is good compared to March, when the indicator was at - (negative) 1.4.

A negative FCI value refers to one that falls outside the comfort band of standard deviation. It shows that financial conditions are sig-

nificantly tighter than the long-period average.

On the other hand, a higher FCI value indicates easier conditions compared to the previous month.

Crisil noted that the West Asia crisis continued to adversely impact foreign portfolio investor (FPI) inflows, the rupee, and the ten-year government security (G-sec) yield in April.

"FPIs continued withdrawing from Indian markets, resulting in net outflows of USD 7.6 billion in April, driven by surging crude prices and apprehension stemming from the conflict. In addition, hardening US yields further dampened FPI sentiment for debt," Crisil said.

The report noted that the

rupee continued to depreciate, reaching an all-time low of 95 per dollar at the end of April.

West Asia conflict also posed fiscal concerns, leading to a sharp rise in ten-year G-sec yield, which rose 20 basis points (bps) on-month to an average of 6.96pc.

G-sec yield also faced pressure from rising FPI outflows in debt and surging crude oil prices.

The FCI exhibited a mild improvement, driven by a rise in banking liquidity surplus (which led to softening of some money market rates) and mild gains in equity markets.

"FPIs recorded net outflows of USD 7.6 billion during the month, which was lower than the USD 13.6 bil-

lion net outflow seen in March but significantly above the 12-month average net outflow of USD 1.4 billion."

Equity markets witnessed net outflows of USD



6.5 billion, which was USD 12.7 billion in March. Additionally, outflows from the debt market surged USD 1.2 billion, which was USD 0.9

billion in the last month.

The report noted depreciation in the rupee of April, with the average value falling to 93.6 per dollar, down from 92.8 in March.

"The yield on the 10-

West Asia conflict, rising FPI outflows in the debt market, and surging crude oil prices."

"Brent crude prices reached their highest monthly average in more than a decade, at USD 120.4 per barrel in April, registering a 16.1pc on-month increase," the report said on surging crude oil prices.

Bank credit growth remained robust at 16pc in April, mirroring the 16.1pc growth recorded in March.

"Systemic liquidity surplus reached a four-year high of Rs 5 lakh crore in mid-April, driven by a surge in government spending and the maturity of G-secs."

This increase in systemic liquidity is driven by a decline in money market rates.

The stock market remained volatile through April with highs and lows.

"Equity markets saw mild gains on average in April, as S&P BSE Sensex gains (on-month average, percentage) 1.7. Investor sentiment improved intermittently on expectations of de-escalation in geopolitical tensions and periodic softness in crude oil prices." Even if the conflict ends, crude oil prices are expected to remain high for the rest of the year. "We expect crude oil to average USD 90-95/US dollar in the current fiscal year," it predicted. Crisil said that higher inflation domestically will shrink monetary space this fiscal. "We expect retail inflation to rise to 5.1pc this fiscal, compared with 2pc

last fiscal, due to expectations of a below-normal monsoon and higher commodity prices."

"We expect gross domestic product growth to weaken to 6.6pc from 7.6pc, weighed down by higher commodity prices, an unfavourable monsoon, softer global growth and higher inflation, creating a challenging growth-inflation mix."

Monetary space has also shrunk globally. S&P Global expects the European Central Bank to hike rates twice by 25 bps each between the second and third quarters of 2026. It expects the US Federal Reserve to hold rates steady for the remainder of 2026 compared with the earlier forecast of a rate cut, the report added.