

# Aryan Age

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## Raj Thackeray Reacts Strongly to Pune Child Rape-Murder Case, Questions Government's Priorities

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray has expressed strong anger over the horrific sexual assault and murder of a three-and-a-half-year-old girl in Nasrapur village of Pune's Bhor taluka. Through a detailed social media post, Thackeray not only demanded the harshest punishment for the accused but also raised broader concerns about rising crimes against women and the changing social environment in Maharashtra. Calling the incident shocking and horrifying, Thackeray said the accused should be "eliminated

without mercy," irrespective of legal technicalities. He questioned why the government fails to show the same urgency against criminals that it allegedly displays while dealing with protesters. Referring to reports of police lathi-charge on demonstrators protesting the incident, he asked why such prompt action is not seen against those involved in crimes against women and children. He also criticized the repeated pattern where public outrage erupts after such incidents, only to fade away after a few days without any long-term corrective



measures. Thackeray stressed that Maharashtra, which once led the country in women's education and empowerment, is now witnessing an alarming increase in crimes

against women. According to him, the growing frequency of such incidents reflects the weakening fear of law in society. In his post, he said Maharashtra's "focus and direction" have become disturbed, adding that an obsession with power and influence has spread across politics, institutions, and society. He argued that this erosion of social accountability has weakened moral discipline and emboldened criminal tendencies. Thackeray also blamed several social factors for the deteriorating situation, including unchecked greed, misuse of

power, excessive exposure to OTT content, obsession with money and land, and constant mobile phone addiction. He said these changes have disrupted traditional social values and community oversight. Warning that Maharashtra is becoming increasingly "wounded" by such incidents, Thackeray urged the government, media, and society to collectively reflect on the deeper causes behind the rise in violent crimes. He added that his party would fully support any genuine efforts aimed at restoring social discipline and preventing such tragedies in the future.

## Nine cyber police personnel suspended in Nagpur over alleged negligence



**Nagpur:** Nine personnel from the Cybercrime Police Station have been placed under suspension over alleged negligence that reportedly enabled cyber fraudsters to escape action, officials said on Tuesday. The suspension orders for the personnel, including Senior Inspector Baliram Sutar, Assistant Police

Inspectors Yogesh Ghare and Vijay Rane, were issued on Monday by Nagpur Police Commissioner Ravindra Singal following a comprehensive internal inquiry into the matter. Earlier, Singal had assigned a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP)-rank officer to investigate the alleged irregularities.

## BJP slams Sanjay Raut for terming WB polls 'Pakistan' style election

**Mumbai:** The BJP strongly condemned Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena Rajya Sabha MP and chief Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut on Tuesday after he lashed out against the Modi government for conducting what he called "Pakistan" style elections in India. "The defeat of the opposition in West Bengal is a wake up call for democracy in India. The ruling party wants to ensure that there are no opposition parties. If this is the case, then opposition parties should stop contesting elections. Such elections are held in Pakistan and Russia. I have seen results announced in Azerbaijan even before the elections. Democracy is on the same path in India as well," Sanjay Raut said. Sanjay Raut said that the BJP, PM Modi and his entire cabinet are in "election mode" for all 365 days in a year. "They do not care about other issues like development, employment, security and women's safety. Their only concern is about how to fight and win elections. There are so many big events going on in the world but the PM devoted two months to elections in five states. The union Home Minister camped in West Bengal for 20 days. All their power and money are used only to win elections. There

can be no discussion about how elections are won or lost. Election results have to be blindly accepted. So opposition parties have to stand up once again and fight for democracy," Sanjay Raut said. "The names of lakhs of voters are cut off in every state and victory is achieved by reducing the number of voters. The Election Commission is involved in this crime. After winning elections in this manner, they celebrate their victory by dancing on the chest of a dead democracy," Sanjay Raut said. "Despite all this, I feel that the future of the INDIA alliance is very good. Before Indira Gandhi was defeated, she had established power in all the states of the country. Just like Indira Gandhi, Modi is also at his highest point today. The defeat of the opposition in West Bengal is the beginning of Modi's downfall. When a lamp is lit, its flame becomes bigger until it dies out," Sanjay Raut said. "After the BJP won in West Bengal, both the rupee and the stock market fell. It is better if they don't talk about their party's founder Shyama Prasad Mukherjee," Sanjay Raut said. However, BJP Maharashtra unit spokesperson Navnath Ban

countered Raut aggressively. "After the BJP won the West Bengal election, Sanjay Raut calls it a wake up call for democracy, but after the Congress won Kerala, he considered it as a victory for democracy. When the opposition won in Tamil



Kerala, but the Congress won. There was an SIR in West Bengal and the BJP won. The people are wise. Please remember that they taught Sanjay Raut's party a lesson," Navnath Ban said. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is on the path of development. We do politics so that people's lives can change. Sanjay Raut should remember this. Rather than seeing whose flame will go out, he should look at how his incense stick got extinguished," Navnath Ban said. "Uddhav Thackeray's party last achieved success in Maharashtra in 2019. Raut must pay attention to the fact that the flame of Uddhav Thackeray's party got extinguished. Prime Minister Narendra Modi serves 140 crore people and no matter how much you curse him, it will not have any effect on him," Navnath Ban said. "Indira Gandhi was once the most popular leader in India, but today, Sanjay Raut's popularity has reached even outer space. There is only one voice in the entire universe, and that is Sanjay Raut's voice. Uddhav Thackeray must be using a handkerchief to conceal his laughter after hearing Sanjay Raut's statements," BJP spokesperson Navnath Ban said, mocking Sanjay Raut.

## No Parole for Predators: Fadnavis Cracks Down After Nasrapur Horror

**Mumbai:** Following the horrific Nasrapur rape and murder case in Pune that has sparked widespread outrage across Maharashtra, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has issued a high-level directive to the Law and Judiciary Department to stop granting parole to sexual assault offenders. The Chief Minister's decision comes in response to data suggesting a high rate of recidivism among

such criminals. CM Fadnavis emphasized that a significant majority—80 to 90 per cent—of individuals arrested in sexual assault cases are repeat offenders who commit similar crimes after being released on parole. The Law and Judiciary Department has been instructed to ensure that those accused or convicted of sexual exploitation do not

receive parole. The CM noted that a similar law existed between 2014 and 2019, but it was eventually struck down by the courts. He has now ordered the drafting of a new, robust law that can withstand legal scrutiny while keeping dangerous offenders behind bars. The decision was triggered by a "soul-shaking" incident in Nasrapur, Bhor taluka: A



65-year-old man allegedly raped the 4-year-old girl and brutally murdered her by crushing her with a stone. The accused, who reportedly has a history of similar sexual offences, was arrested within hours after being identified on CCTV footage. He is currently in police custody.

## Maha Govt Constitutes SIT To Probe Into Birth Certificate Fraud

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra government has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate large-scale birth certificate fraud in Mumbai with more than 87,000 alleged bogus entries, which is presently under probe by the Mumbai Crime Branch, officials said here on Tuesday. "SIT will be led by Inspector General Datta Karale to investigate delayed birth and death certificates, while the Mumbai Crime Branch is probing the city-level fraud," the official further said. A Bombay Municipal

Corporation Health Department probe found 87,347 bogus birth certificate entries made through the discontinued SAP-CPWM system between 2024 and 2026, bypassing the mandatory

Civil Registration System (CRS) portal. This includes 30,507 entries in 2024, 49,705 in 2025, and 7,135 in 2026, against 33,772 official entries on the CRS portal in the same period. The BMC has ordered a citywide audit of birth and death registrations. Four health officers have been suspended, and authorities are preparing to cancel 87,149 documents. Raj Tilak Raushan, deputy commissioner of police, Crime Branch, stated, "During the course of investigation, as well as from other complaints received, it has come to

light that a large number of such birth registration certificates have been obtained through similar fraudulent means." In this regard, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya filed complaints at Azad Maidan and Deonar police stations, alleging certificates were issued illegally to undocumented migrants based on false hospital records. Officials said the irregularities pose a "serious concern from the point of view of national security and administrative management," with 14 "hotspots" now under surveillance statewide. The probe is ongoing.

## Bangladesh reports 17 measles deaths in single day of outbreak

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh recorded 17 deaths linked to measles and suspected measles-related complications, the highest number reported in a single day since the outbreak of this highly contagious yet preventable disease began in March, media reports said on Tuesday. According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), of the deaths reported by 8 a.m. on Monday, two were confirmed to be related to measles, while the other 15 were classified as suspected cases. Of the

suspected deaths, the highest 10 were recorded in the Dhaka district, the Dhaka Tribune reported. As of the latest reports, the overall count of confirmed fatalities attributed to measles has increased to 52. In addition, the number of suspected deaths related to the disease is currently at 259, with these figures being



recorded since March 15. Around 1,302 suspected measles cases were recorded during the same period, taking the total number of suspected cases to 41,793 since March 15, DGHS officials said. During the same period, 154 new confirmed measles cases were reported, bringing the total number of confirmed infections to 5,467, the Dhaka Tribune reported. As of March 15, there have been 28,832 suspected cases of measles hospitalisation reported. Out of these cases, 25,151 patients have successfully recovered from the illness.

## Minor apprehended in Red Fort stabbing case; linked to second attack near Jama Masjid

**New Delhi:** With the apprehension of a minor accused, the North District Police have solved a blind case of an attempted murder near the Red Fort area, officials said on Tuesday. The victim, a 17-year-old boy from Nangloi, was attacked at Parade Ground. Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Raja Banthia said that a 16-year-old juvenile was apprehended from Haridwar after sustained efforts and technical surveillance. He added that the accused had been living in the Chandni Chowk area and was involved

in another similar attack near Jama Masjid on the same night. Police teams analyzed CCTV footage and gathered local intelligence to identify the suspect, who was eventually traced to Haridwar. A coordinated raid led to his successful apprehension. During questioning, the accused revealed that he fled the city immediately after the attacks and disposed of the weapon and clothes to evade arrest.



## Rahul Gandhi warns of 'threat to democracy' after Bengal, Assam results; urges Opposition unity

**New Delhi:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday cautioned against what he described as "petty political reactions" to the recent Assembly election outcomes in West Bengal and Assam, warning that the developments signaled a deeper challenge to democratic institutions in India. In a post on X, Gandhi took exception to sections within the Congress and other opposition circles who were reacting with satisfaction to the Trinamool Congress's setback in West Bengal. "Some in the Congress, and others, are gloating about TMC's loss," he wrote, urging them to reassess the broader implications of the results. "They need to understand this clearly — the theft of Assam and Bengal's mandate is a big step forward by the BJP in its mission to destroy Indian democracy," Gandhi said, leveling serious allegations against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. He called for unity among opposition parties, adding, "Put petty politics aside. This is not about one party or another. This is about" — trailing off in a message that underscored the gravity he attached to the issue. The remarks come in the wake of closely watched Assembly elections in West Bengal and Assam, where



shifting political equations have triggered sharp reactions across the spectrum. While the BJP has defended its performance and rejected allegations of wrongdoing, opposition parties have raised concerns over the conduct and outcome of the polls. Gandhi's intervention reflects an ongoing push within sections of the Congress leadership to frame the electoral outcomes as part of a larger ideological and institutional battle, rather than isolated state-level contests. His appeal for opposition unity also comes amid renewed efforts to consolidate anti-BJP forces ahead of future electoral challenges. The Congress has had a mixed electoral trajectory in recent years, and its relationship with regional parties such as the All India Trinamool Congress has often been marked by both cooperation and rivalry. Gandhi's latest remarks suggest an attempt to bridge these divides, at least rhetorically, by emphasizing what he termed a collective responsibility to safeguard democratic norms.

## PM Modi condemns UAE drone strike, backs diplomacy and maritime security in West Asia

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday strongly condemned the drone strike on the Fujairah Petroleum Industries Zone in the United Arab Emirates that left three Indian nationals injured, calling the targeting of civilians and critical infrastructure "unacceptable" and reiterating India's support for diplomatic efforts to restore stability in the region. In a statement posted on social media platform X, Modi said, "Strongly condemn the attacks on the UAE that resulted in injuries to three Indian nationals. Targeting civilians and infrastructure is

unacceptable." He added that India "stands in firm solidarity with the UAE" and emphasized the need for "peaceful resolution of all issues through dialogue and diplomacy." The Prime Minister also underscored the strategic importance of ensuring uninterrupted maritime movement through the Strait of Hormuz, stating that "ensuring safe and unimpeded navigation... is vital for enduring regional peace, stability and global energy security." The attack, suspected to have originated from Iran, triggered a fire at the oil facility in Fujairah, a key energy hub on the UAE's eastern coast. While local authorities have



yet to officially attribute responsibility, the incident comes amid heightened tensions in West Asia, where strategic infrastructure has increasingly become a flashpoint.

Echoing the Prime Minister's stance, the Ministry of External Affairs had also issued a statement calling the attack "unacceptable" and urging an "immediate cessation of these hostilities." The ministry stressed that "targeting of civilian infrastructure and innocent civilians" must stop and reaffirmed India's longstanding position that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable path to resolving conflicts in the region. "India continues to stand for dialogue and diplomacy to deal with the situation, so that peace and stability may be restored across West Asia," the statement said,

while also calling for "free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the Strait of Hormuz in keeping with international law." India, which has deep economic and strategic ties with the UAE and depends heavily on energy supplies routed through the Strait of Hormuz, has consistently advocated restraint in the region. The latest incident underscores the fragility of regional security and its potential implications for global oil markets and trade routes, even as New Delhi signals its readiness to support international efforts aimed at de-escalation and peace-building.

## LG Manoj Sinha announces informal 'Parents Brigade' for drug-free J&K campaign in Budgam

**Srinagar:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday announced the formation of an informal "Parents Brigade" across villages and urban areas of Jammu and Kashmir as part of the ongoing drive to make the union Territory drug-free.

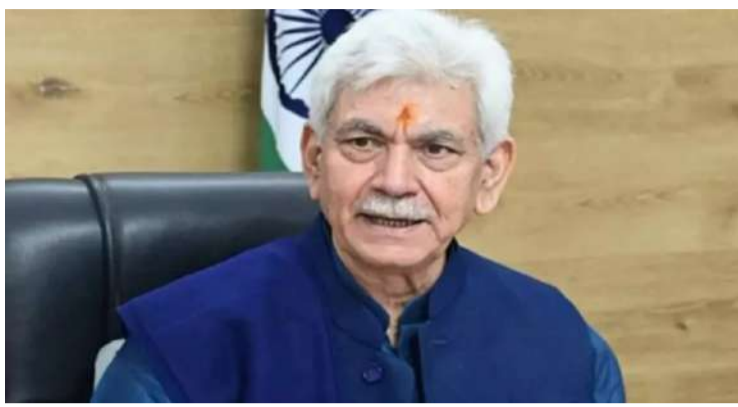
Addressing a gathering in Budgam, the Lieutenant Governor said the initiative aims to build a community-led network of parents, women, and youth to detect early signs of drug abuse and connect affected individuals with timely support and rehabilitation services.

He noted that the brigade would play a crucial role that the brigade would play a crucial role in promptly connecting affected families with available support systems and rehabilitation resources.

Sinha joined a large people's movement in Budgam on Tuesday as part of drug-free J&K campaign and assured the citizens that every arm of administration would act with resolve and unity to confront the issue and ensure that the threat is effectively eliminated.

The Lieutenant Governor appealed to every family, social organization, spiritual and political leaders in Budgam to intensify drug-free J&K campaign across the district and assured them that the administration and its full strength is committed to eradicating drugs.

The Lieutenant Governor also announced an informal 'Parents Brigade' in every village and city, wherever possible. He said the aim is to create a voluntary network of parents, women and youth who will be trained and empowered to identify early signs of drug use in villages or wards, and to immediately



connect families with resources.

The Lieutenant Governor said the entire district of Budgam must stand against the poison of drugs that is destroying the souls of our youth.

"I believe that every young person lost to addiction is a loss of strength for our future workforce, and a lost soldier for our police and army. Every family broken by addiction is a crack in the foundation of our society," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor observed that in this war against drugs, society must accept the truth that many boys and girls are in the grip of narcotics. He said there is no harm in accepting this, as they are our own children. They are victims, not criminals, and they need our embrace, compassion and care.

"Furthermore, the public must eliminate the stigma, so that if a family is suffering, they do not have to endure the pain in silence. This tradition must change because today's circumstances are such that silence will not defeat this; the public must raise its voice," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor further stated that drug addiction is not just a health issue; it is also a crisis of national security. He said drugs entering into our society do not only hollow out the aspirations of our youth and damage their self-confidence, but the drug trade is also funding terrorism and radicalization. "The entire world knows that our neighbour, a major patron of terrorism smuggling drugs into Jammu Kashmir. Drug trafficking and terror funding are no longer separate issues—they are two hands of the same enemy. We must remember that when we fight against drugs, we are also fighting against terror. When we protect our youth, we protect our nation," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor said that he launched the Drug-Free Jammu & Kashmir campaign 24 days ago on 11th April in Jammu with the faith that no enemy, no matter how conspiratorial, can stand before a united society. "The law enforcement agencies alone cannot win this war; the administration alone cannot win it. But together, every teacher, par-

ent, spiritual leader, elder, doctor, youth and woman becomes an invincible force, and I have full faith that Budgam will carry this campaign forward with this spirit," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said in this 100-days campaign, people have 76 days left and in these 76 days, we must prove that when society decides to fight against a social evil, every citizen wins.

"I have directed every police station in the Kashmir Valley to gather full information on active drug smugglers and peddlers in their jurisdiction and take decisive action within 30 days. We are monitoring every financial transaction of drug cartels, and action will be ensured not just against small-time peddlers but against major smugglers. The palaces built with drug money will be razed to the ground," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He also urged every citizen to participate actively in the awareness campaign and become the eyes and ears of the police and administration. "If you see any suspicious activity in any corner of Budgam, report it immediately. With your cooperation, it will be ensured that no drug peddler can remain around any village, neighbourhood, or college in Budgam. I want to tell the drug smugglers, elements linked to the narco-terror network, and drug peddlers active in Budgam that your time on the soil of Budgam has ended. Our agencies know who you are. Our administration is coming after you, and today I promise every resident of Budgam that not a single drug smuggler will escape accountability," the Lieutenant Governor said.

## Mehbooba Mufti alleges electoral manipulation a day after Bengal poll results, targets ECI

**Srinagar:** Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of undermining the electoral process, claiming it was acting in coordination with central agencies.

Her remarks came a day after the Bharatiya Janata Party's sweep in the West Bengal polls, which she said as part of a broader concern over the state of India's democratic institutions.

In a post on X, Mufti said that India was once admired globally for its robust electoral system, particularly after reforms introduced by T. N. Seshan, whom she credit-



ed with transforming the ECI into a "fearless guardian of democracy."

"Today, that very institution stands accused of subverting the electoral process, aided by central agencies," she alleged. Calling it a "tragic fall," the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister

said the country may not have achieved the goal of becoming a "Vishwaguru," but has instead "mastered the art of electoral manipulation."

She described the developments in West Bengal as the "latest reminder" of what she termed a disturbing reality.

## Demands for implementing women's reservations intensify before the 2027 elections; BJP should clarify its stand: Akhilesh Yadav

**Lucknow:** Akhilesh Yadav, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and National President of the Samajwadi Party, has intensified his attack on the BJP-led government over the issue of women's reservation, demanding immediate clarity on its implementation ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

Raising the banner of the PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alp-sankhyak) alliance, Akhilesh Yadav said that there is a clear and unified demand that the women's reservation bill passed in Parliament must be implemented in time for the upcoming elections in Uttar Pradesh.

He emphasized that since the bill was passed with the support of the entire opposition, the BJP government must now make its position clear regarding its implementation at the state level.

Questioning the intent of the ruling party, Yadav alleged that any delay or ambiguity would indicate that the BJP and its allies are not genuinely committed to providing reservation for women in legislative bodies.

Taking to social media, the SP chief stated that the issue would remain a central political demand until the government makes a formal and time-bound announcement on its rollout.

He further asserted that the Samajwadi Party will not let the matter fade and will continue to highlight it consistently in public discourse and political campaigns.

According to Yadav, the



party plans to raise the issue at different locations every week, mobilizing public opinion and building pressure on the government for immediate action.

He described women's reservation as a critical issue linked to social justice and the political empowerment of women, stressing that equitable representation is essential in a system.

Highlighting the demographic reality, Yadav said that women constitute nearly half of the population and must be given their rightful share in decision-making institutions.

He argued that meaningful participation of women in politics would lead to more inclusive governance and better policy outcomes for society as a whole.

The remarks come amid an escalating political confrontation between the Samajwadi Party and the BJP over the narrative surrounding women's rights and representation. Meanwhile, Narendra Modi, while addressing party workers in

New Delhi following the BJP's victory in the West Bengal Assembly Elections, launched a sharp attack on the Samajwadi Party.

The Prime Minister alleged that the SP had historically opposed women's reservation and claimed that women voters would not forgive the party for its stance.

He further said that in the coming elections, women would respond politically and "teach the Samajwadi Party a lesson," signaling that the issue could become a major electoral plank.

This exchange highlights how women's reservation is emerging as a key political flashpoint ahead of the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, with both sides attempting to shape the narrative.

As the debate intensifies, the demand for clarity on implementation timelines is likely to remain at the center of political discourse, potentially influencing voter sentiment in one of India's most crucial states.

## CPI calls for state-wide protests on May 6 over fuel price hike and shortages

**Hyderabad:** Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao, Telangana State Secretary of the Communist Party of India and an MLA, has called for a statewide protest on May 6 against rising fuel prices and alleged shortages of essential petroleum products. In a statement issued on Tuesday, the CPI leader urged party cadres and the general public to actively participate in the agitation, stressing the need for a united response to what he described as growing economic distress among common people. He particularly highlighted the difficulties faced by farmers, claiming that the unavailability of diesel during the crucial harvest season has disrupted agricultural activities and increased operational costs. According to him, farmers are being forced to wait in long queues at fuel stations, affecting time-sensitive harvesting

work and adding to their financial burden. Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao also accused the government of downplaying the situation by denying any shortages, despite visible challenges being experienced by citizens on the ground. He alleged that the gap between official claims and public experience has created frustration and uncertainty among people across both rural and urban areas. The CPI leader further criticised the recent increase in prices of commercial LPG cylinders, stating that it would adversely affect small businesses such as hotels, eateries, and street vendors. He warned that any further hike in petrol and diesel prices would have a cascading effect on the economy, leading to increased transportation costs and a rise in the prices of essential commodities.

## Ramchander Rao calls for grand success of Modi's May 10 rally, targets opposition

**Hyderabad:** N Ramchander Rao, President of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Telangana, on Tuesday called upon the public to make Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming public meeting in Secunderabad a grand success, while also launching a strong attack on opposition parties.

The appeal comes as preparations gather pace for the Prime Minister's visit to the Parade Grounds on May 10, which is expected to draw a large crowd from across the state.

As part of the mobilisation efforts, Ramchander Rao took part in a wall-writing campaign in Tamaka, where he personally painted the BJP's lotus symbol, signalling the party's grassroots outreach push ahead of the high-profile rally.

The campaign also saw participation from several

senior party leaders, including former Mayor Banda Karthika Reddy, along with local BJP workers and supporters.

Addressing the media during the event, Ramchander



Rao highlighted the significance of the rally, noting that it would be Prime Minister Modi's first visit to Telangana after assuming office for a third consecutive term.

He urged citizens from all sections of society to attend the public meeting in large numbers, describing it as an opportunity to welcome the Prime Minister and demonstrate public support.

The BJP leader said that party workers across Telangana have been actively involved in extensive outreach efforts, including putting up posters, flex banners, and conducting wall-writing campaigns to mobilise people.

He added that these activities reflect the enthusiasm within the party cadre and their commitment to ensuring the success of the Prime Minister's visit. Highlighting Modi's leadership, Ramchander Rao said that at a time when the global economy is facing multiple challenges, India under Modi is progressing rapidly on the path of development. He asserted that Telangana should extend a warm and enthusiastic welcome to the Prime Minister, acknowledging the Centre's role in driving national growth and infrastructure development.

## 'Jeevika Didis,' pillars of women empowerment, extend support to domestic violence victims

**Patna:** Women associated with the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society, widely known as "Jeevika Didis," are increasingly emerging as a powerful force not only in livelihood generation but also in advancing women's empowerment and social justice across rural Bihar.

Traditionally engaged in economic activities through self-help groups, these grassroots women are now stepping into more proactive social roles, extending support to victims of domestic violence and other forms of abuse.

Their expanding role reflects a shift from purely financial empowerment to a more holistic approach that includes safeguarding the rights, dignity, and safety of women and girls in rural communities.

According to official sources, several recent instances highlight how Jeevika Didis have intervened in difficult situations, offering timely assistance and ensuring the protection and rehabilitation of victims.

The network is vast, with nearly 1.5 crore women linked to around 11 lakh self-help groups across Bihar, making it one of the largest grassroots women's collectives in the country.

These women operate through dedicated platforms such as "Didi Adhikar Kendras" and "Didi Ki Awaaz Kendras," which have become important local support systems for addressing



issues related to violence, exploitation, and social injustice.

At these centres, women can report cases, seek guidance, and access immediate help, creating a trusted and accessible mechanism within their own communities.

In one notable case from Kahalganj block in Bhagalpur district, Ruby Kumari, a coordinator at a Didi Adhikar Kendra, demonstrated the effectiveness of this grassroots network.

After being informed by a distressed mother about her missing 11-year-old daughter, Ruby Kumari quickly initiated a search operation.

Her efforts revealed that the child had boarded a train to Malda, prompting swift coordination with the Railway Protection Force.

With timely intervention from the RPF, the girl was safely rescued, presented before a magistrate, and subsequently reunited with her family, ensuring her safety and well-being.

In another instance from Warisnagar in Samastipur district, Indu Devi, a member of a Jeevika self-help group, came to the aid of a woman who had fled her

home after being severely assaulted by her husband.

Indu Devi coordinated with local authorities, including the women's police station and the Didi Adhikar Kendra, to provide immediate protection and support to the victim.

A community-level was later convened, bringing together local representatives and residents to address the issue collectively.

During the meeting, the husband issued a written assurance committing to refrain from any further violence, reflecting the role of community mediation in resolving such cases.

The survivor was not only able to return to a safe environment but was also supported in becoming economically self-reliant, highlighting the dual focus on safety and empowerment.

Such interventions underscore the growing influence of Jeevika Didis as agents of change who are addressing deeply rooted social issues at the grassroots level. Their work is helping build safer, more inclusive rural communities where women feel empowered to speak out and seek help without fear.

## Odisha Vigilance nabs Rajkanika ASI taking bribe for favourable land dispute report

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha Vigilance has apprehended Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Prasanta Pradhan of Rajkanika Police Station for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 2,000 in connection with a land dispute case.

According to Vigilance sources, the accused officer was caught red-handed while taking the bribe from a complainant in exchange for submitting a favourable inquiry report.

The case pertains to a joint land ownership dispute in which the complainant alleged that the opposing party

had started construction on shared property without consent.

Seeking legal remedy, the complainant approached the court to halt the construction work and resolve the dispute through proper legal channels. Following the court's directive, the Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) of Rajkanika Police Station was instructed to submit an inquiry report within three days.

The responsibility for conducting the inquiry was subsequently assigned to ASI Prasanta Pradhan, placing him in a key position to

influence the outcome of the report.

When the complainant approached the ASI regarding progress on the inquiry, Pradhan allegedly demanded a bribe of Rs 2,000 to submit a report in the complainant's favour. Unwilling to comply with the illegal demand, the complainant reported the matter to Odisha Vigilance authorities, seeking action against the officer.

Acting swiftly on the complaint, Vigilance officials planned and executed a trap operation to catch the accused in the act.

During the operation,

the ASI was apprehended while allegedly accepting the bribe amount, confirming the allegations against him.

Officials recovered the entire tainted money from his possession, which was subsequently seized as material evidence in the case.

Following the arrest, Vigilance teams launched simultaneous searches at two locations linked to the accused to probe possible disproportionate assets.

The searches are aimed at determining whether the ASI possessed assets beyond his known sources of in-

come, which could indicate a pattern of corrupt practices.

Meanwhile, Cuttack Vigilance authorities have registered a case against the accused under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act.

Further investigation is currently underway to gather additional evidence and examine the full extent of the alleged misconduct.

The incident highlights continued efforts by Odisha Vigilance to crack down on corruption within public services and ensure accountability among law enforcement personnel.

## BJP's electoral gains reflect public rejection of TMC rule in Bengal: Dharmendra Pradhan

**Bhubaneswar:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has described the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections as a historic mandate by the people against the alleged injustice, oppression, and arrogance of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government led by Mamata Banerjee. Pradhan said the verdict reflected the aspirations of the people of Bengal, who, according to him, had chosen BJP's governance model over what he termed years of misrule by the ruling dispensation. He expressed gratitude to the people of West Bengal and BJP workers for securing the party's first-ever victory in the state



and thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union Home Minister Amit Shah, and the party's national leadership for guiding the campaign. Highlighting women's issues, Pradhan claimed that women voters in Bengal had strongly opposed the alleged atrocities and insensitive remarks by leaders of the ruling party. He ac-

cused the Mamata Banerjee-led government of failing to safeguard women's dignity and welfare. The union minister further alleged that the TMC government had neglected tribal communities, deprived farmers of central welfare benefits, and failed to address unemployment among the youth. He said the people's verdict was a decisive rejection of these policies and a vote of confidence in Prime Minister Modi's leadership. Pradhan asserted that the victory would strengthen efforts to fulfill Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee's vision of "Sonar Bangla." Referring to Assam, Pradhan thanked the electorate for handing BJP a decisive mandate for a third

consecutive term. He said the people of Assam had rejected what he called Congress's divisive politics and reaffirmed their support for the development agenda of the BJP-led double-engine government under Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. He also expressed gratitude to the people of Tamil Nadu for extending support to BJP and congratulated TVK for its electoral performance. Additionally, he congratulated Puducherry Chief Minister N. Rangasamy on the NDA's victory, stating that it underscored public confidence in Prime Minister Modi's development-oriented governance.

## New Safety Trains Tested in Uttar Pradesh Before Mumbai Launch

Mumbai: New local trains with automatic doors are being tested on quiet tracks in Uttar Pradesh before they are brought to Mumbai. Railway officials chose to do the tests far away so they wouldn't interfere with Mumbai's busy schedule. These trains are designed to be much safer and could help stop accidents where people fall from moving trains.

The new trains are not air-conditioned but have special fans and large windows to keep passengers cool. One major safety feature is that the train will not move unless all the doors are completely shut. While the technology looks great, commuters are frustrated by the wait and wonder if the new fans will be enough to keep them cool during the hot and crowded peak hours.



The Mumbai suburban railway network is on the verge of a significant safety overhaul, as a new generation of non-air-conditioned local trains equipped with automatic doors undergoes rigorous trials. In a strategic

move to ensure these tests do not paralyze the city's already strained transit schedule, railway officials have opted to conduct the initial trial runs on secluded, "quiet" tracks within Uttar Pradesh.

This remote testing phase allows engineers to push the mechanical and electronic systems to their limits without the risk of causing the massive delays that would inevitably occur on the high-frequency lines

of the Mumbai metropolis.

The primary impetus behind this technological shift is the urgent need to address one of the most tragic aspects of Mumbai's daily commute: passengers falling from moving or overcrowded trains.

Historically, the open-door policy of local trains has led to thousands of accidents annually, as commuters often hang from the edges during peak hours. By introducing automatic sliding doors, the railways are effectively closing the gap between convenience and survival, aiming to transform the "Life Line" of the city into a much safer environment for the millions who rely on it every day.

Architecturally, these new rakes represent a hybrid approach to passenger comfort and safety.

## Mentally Ill Man Causes Train Delays After Climbing on Roof

Kalyan: Train services in Mumbai were delayed by about 45 minutes on Monday afternoon after a young man climbed onto the roof of an AC local train. The incident started at Vitthalwadi station, where police tried to get him down, but he refused and the train moved toward Kalyan. At Kalyan station, railway staff and porters had to chase the man across the top of the train. They eventually caught him and brought him down safely. Reports say the man appears to be mentally ill. He was taken into custody by the Railway Police around 2:50 PM. A video of the chase went viral on social media.

The rhythmic pulse of Mumbai's suburban rail network was abruptly interrupted on Monday afternoon when a high-stakes pursuit unfolded not on the platforms, but atop a moving AC local train. The incident, which centered around a young man believed to be

suffering from mental health issues, caused significant disruption to the Central Line, leading to a cumulative delay of approximately 45 minutes for thousands of commuters. What began as a localized disturbance at Vitthalwadi station quickly escalated into a daring chase across the rooftops of several coaches, highlighting the immense challenges faced by railway security in managing erratic public behavior within the city's high-voltage transit environment. The ordeal commenced at Vitthalwadi station, where the individual was first spotted scaling the side of an air-conditioned rake. Local security personnel and commuters immediately attempted to intervene, pleading with the man to descend for his own safety. However, the individual reportedly remained unresponsive to verbal commands, and in a tense sequence of events, the train began its scheduled de-

parture toward Kalyan with the man still perched on the roof. This created a perilous situation, as the overhead equipment (OHE) lines carry high-voltage electricity capable of causing fatal injuries to anyone in such close proximity.

As the train pulled into the bustling Kalyan station, the gravity of the situation prompted a coordinated emergency response from the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Government Railway Police (GRP), and local station staff. In a scene that appeared more like a choreographed action sequence than a standard security operation, porters and railway employees were forced to climb the stationary train to apprehend the individual. A viral video captured the frantic moments as staff members chased the man across the curved metal roofs of the coaches, eventually cornering him and bringing him to the platform safely.

## Apollo Hospital Reaches Major Milestone in Liver Transplants

Navi Mumbai: Apollo Hospital in Navi Mumbai has successfully completed more than 250 liver transplants. Doctors reported that over 90% of these patients have survived and are doing well. This is a big achievement for the hospital, which started its transplant program in 2017.

The hospital has handled many difficult cases, including emergency transplants and surgeries for very young babies. In some instances, they were able to find a donor and complete the surgery within just 24 hours. The medical team says their goal is to keep providing advanced care and reducing the time patients have to wait for

life-saving surgeries. Apollo Hospital in Navi Mumbai has reached a significant clinical landmark, successfully performing over 250 liver transplants since the inception of its multi-organ transplant program in 2017. This achievement underscores the facility's emergence as a premier hub for complex hepato-

biliary surgery in Western India. Beyond the sheer volume of surgeries, the hospital has maintained a commendable survival rate of over 90%, a statistic that rivals international benchmarks for transplant success and patient outcomes. The journey to this milestone has been defined by the medical team's abil-

ity to navigate high-risk and technically demanding scenarios. The program's versatility is evidenced by its success in both adult and pediatric cases, including delicate procedures on infants weighing very little. The hospital has also demonstrated exceptional logistical efficiency in "acute-on-chronic" liver

failure cases, where the window for intervention is narrow. In several life-critical emergencies, the transplant team managed to coordinate donor logistics and execute the entire surgical process within a 24-hour timeframe, a feat that requires seamless synchronization between the blood bank, intensive care units, and surgical the-

aters. It is truly impressive to see a transplant program mature so quickly since 2017. Maintaining a 90% survival rate while taking on "emergency" cases is a tightrope walk—it requires not just steady hands in the OR, but an incredible support system in the ICU. The ability to pull off a trans-

plant in 24 hours is essentially the medical equivalent of a perfectly executed pit stop in Formula 1.

## Navi Mumbai to Study Causes of Death to Improve Healthcare

Navi Mumbai: The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has announced it will start a "death audit" to understand why people in the city are dying. By studying these cases, officials hope to find ways to improve medical treatments and prevent deaths that could have been avoided.

Commissioner Kailash Shinde said every case will be looked at carefully to strengthen the public health system. The plan also includes better monitoring of local health centers and organizing more vaccination drives and health camps. While residents welcome the news, they are waiting to see if these audits lead to real improvements in local hospitals. In a major strategic shift toward data-driven governance, the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has officially greenlit an intensive "death audit" program



designed to meticulously analyze mortality trends across the satellite city. This initiative marks a significant departure from standard administrative record-keeping, as it moves beyond simply

counting fatalities to actively investigating the underlying medical, social, and systemic factors that contribute to them. By dissecting individual cases, municipal health officials aim to identify

recurring patterns—such as delayed diagnoses, gaps in emergency response, or specific lifestyle-related health crises—that can be addressed through targeted policy interventions. The initiative is being spearheaded by NMMC Commissioner Kailash Shinde, who has emphasized that the primary goal of these audits is not to assign blame, but to fortify the existing public health

infrastructure. Under this new framework, specialized committees consisting of senior medical professionals and public health experts will review clinical records from both government and private healthcare facilities. The focus will be on "preventable mortality," or deaths that could have been avoided with timely medical intervention or better preventive care. This rigorous scrutiny is intended to provide the city with a roadmap for upgrading its hospital equipment, refining surgical protocols, and enhancing the training of its frontline medical staff.

Beyond the clinical analysis of hospital deaths, the NMMC's plan involves a holistic expansion of community-level healthcare services. Commissioner Shinde has directed that the findings from the death audits be used to optimize the functioning of local primary health centers (PHCs).

## Panvel Residents Threaten Protest as Water Shortages Continue

Panvel: People living in Panvel are planning a protest because they are tired of not having enough water. For a long time, residents have dealt with irregular water supply and low pressure, forcing them to buy water from expensive tankers.

There is currently a disagreement between different government de-

partments (CIDCO and NMMC) about who is responsible for the water supply. While officials argue, residents are losing patience. For daily commuters, the crisis makes mornings even harder, as they have to store water before heading to work. Many hope that these basic needs will soon be met without having to go out on the

streets to protest. The residents of Panvel are reaching a breaking point as a chronic water crisis continues to disrupt daily life, pushing the community toward a massive public demonstration. For months, households across the region have been plagued by a highly erratic supply schedule and water pressure so low that basic plumbing

often fails to function. This systemic failure has created a burgeoning market for private water tankers, forcing middle-class families to pay exorbitant sums for a resource that should be a basic municipal right. What was once an occasional inconvenience has now become a permanent logistical hurdle, particularly for the thousands of daily

commuters who must wake up hours earlier to manually store water before catching their trains or buses to Mumbai.

The situation is further complicated by a tangled web of administrative friction between the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) and the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC).

## Plans to Speed Up Construction of Vasai-Umroli Bridge

Vasai: Renewed urgency has been injected into the long-pending Vasai-Umroli railway overbridge project following a recent on-site inspection by local officials along with MLA Sneha Dube Pandit. The visit has once again brought the spotlight on the delays that have plagued the project for years, causing significant inconvenience to daily commuters. The overbridge is considered a crucial infrastructure development aimed at easing the persistent traffic congestion at busy railway crossings, where long queues of vehicles often lead to extended waiting times, especially during peak hours.

During the inspection, officials reviewed the current status of construction and held discussions with engineers and contractors. Clear instructions were issued to streamline

coordination among different agencies involved in the project and to eliminate bottlenecks that have slowed progress so far. Authorities emphasized the need for a time-bound approach and urged construction teams to accelerate work without compromising on safety and quality standards. Once completed, the overbridge is expected to significantly improve traffic flow in the region by providing uninterrupted movement across the railway line. This would not only reduce travel time for thousands of commuters but also enhance road safety by minimizing the risks associated with crowded level crossings. The project is also anticipated to support local economic activity by ensuring smoother connectivity between key areas.

Despite these assurances, residents and daily commuters remain cautiously

optimistic. Having witnessed repeated delays and missed deadlines in the past, many are hopeful but skeptical about whether the renewed push will translate into tangible progress on the ground. For now, all eyes are on the authorities and construction agencies to deliver on their promises and bring long-awaited relief to the people of Vasai and surrounding areas.

Officials also indicated that efforts are being made to resolve pending administrative and logistical challenges, including land-related issues and utility shifting, which have contributed to the slowdown. Coordination with railway authorities is being strengthened to ensure that technical clearances and safety protocols are adhered to without causing further delays. Meanwhile, local residents have

urged authorities to maintain transparency regarding project timelines and provide regular updates on progress. Many believe that consistent monitoring and accountability will be key to ensuring that the project does not face further setbacks and is completed within the revised schedule.

## Editorial

### Kim Ju Ae: Fashion and the Legacy of Power

In a system as enigmatic and hermetically sealed as North Korea's, every movement carries distinct political significance. Here, it is not merely official declarations or military might—but also public image, demeanor, and even attire—that serve to convey messages of power. Against this backdrop, the growing public presence of Kim Jong Un's daughter, Kim Ju Ae, and the discourse surrounding her fashion choices have become a subject of global discussion. While ostensibly limited to the personal style of a teenage girl, this topic is, in reality, an integral part of North Korea's succession politics, image-building, and the strategic planning of its future leadership. Every public appearance by Kim Ju Ae is no mere coincidence; rather, it constitutes a meticulously crafted political message. At a time when ordinary citizens face severe restrictions on Western cultural influences, her luxurious attire starkly highlights the deliber-

ately constructed chasm between the ruling elite—embodying power and privilege—and the general populace.

To truly comprehend the internal dynamics of the power center within a nation as isolated and enigmatic as North Korea, one cannot rely solely on official announcements or military parades. The regime employs a subtle semiotics—a language of symbols, imagery, and public conduct—that demands meticulous analysis to be deciphered. The global conversation sparked by the recent, heightened public profile and sartorial choices of Kim Ju Ae—daughter of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un—extends far beyond the realm of mere "fashion." What appears, on the surface, to be simply a teenager's choice of clothing is, in reality, inextricably linked to the politics of succession, strategic messaging, and the image-building efforts of an authoritarian regime. It is becoming increasingly evident that Kim Ju Ae's growing influence within the corridors of power in Pyongyang constitutes a calculated and highly strategic component of the foundational groundwork for the nation's future leadership. In North Korea, Western culture and lifestyles are viewed as "subversive." Under the "Reactionary Ideology and Culture Rejection Act," enacted in 2020, extremely stringent restrictions have been imposed on foreign attire, hairstyles, and cultural influences. For ordinary citizens, wearing jeans, leather jackets, or Western-style clothing is not only a rarity but is also considered a legal offense.

Amidst this atmosphere of extreme restrictions, the fact that Kim Ju Ae is frequently seen in public sporting expensive leather jackets, coats from luxury brands, or Western-style hairstyles constitutes, in itself, a bold political statement. This serves as a form of "sign language" that underscores a crucial point: what is forbidden for the common citizen is not merely accessible to the ruling family, but is regarded as their birthright—a distinct "privilege." Through this, the colossal chasm between the ruling power and the general populace is deliberately highlighted. Born in 2013, Kim Ju Ae made her first public appearance before the world in 2022, when she was seen walking alongside her father in front of a massive intercontinental ballistic missile. This appearance was not a mere familial or emotional moment; rather, it was a meticulously orchestrated political tableau crafted by North Korea's propaganda machinery. Presenting a young girl to the world under the shadow of nuclear weaponry marked the commencement of a process designed to groom her as the natural heir to power. In the early stages of his own leadership, Kim Jong Un similarly consolidated his hold on the public imagination by emulating the image—including the mannerisms and attire—of his grandfather and father. In the context of North Korean politics, this practice is referred to as "image replication." Now, precisely this same strategy is being employed in the case of Kim Ju Ae. Experts opine that her attire—and the 'elite' image it projects—serves to psychologically prepare the public to accept her as the future supreme leader. In this entire process, the role played by her mother, Ri Sol-ju, is equally significant. Ri Sol-ju herself is renowned for her sophisticated, Western-style attire, and through her, the image of a 'style icon' has been cultivated within North Korea. Presenting Kim Ju Ae in similar luxurious ensembles—following directly in her mother's footsteps—is regarded as a symbol of the continuity of power. When Kim Ju Ae appears wearing a jacket from a global luxury brand like Christian Dior, it transcends being merely a fashion choice; it becomes a visible emblem of power and prestige. Although foreign influences are officially banned in North Korea, awareness of global fashion is nonetheless trickling down to the populace through smuggling channels and digital media. In this context, Kim Ju Ae's emergence as a 'style icon' serves as a tool of cultural control wielded by the ruling regime. The propaganda machinery of the Workers' Party of Korea works tirelessly to portray Kim Ju Ae as a figure entirely distinct from—and far more influential than—the average citizen. The resulting 'aura of privilege' is sufficient to convey to the masses that, within this dictatorial system, rules apply only to those at the lower echelons—not to those seated at the very pinnacle of power. This 'double standard' is not merely a symptom of social inequality; it is an indicator of the absolute centralization of power. Kim Ju Ae's growing self-assurance in her public interactions—and indeed, every public action she takes—represents a subtle, calculated step in the politics of future succession. Within North Korea's closed system, the image of power takes precedence over individual expression. Consequently, Kim Ju Ae is not merely being fashioned into a 'fashion icon'; she is being molded into a living symbol of the regime's future power.

To view Kim Ju Ae's fashion or attire merely as a sign of "Western influence" or simply as the personal preference of a teenage girl would be a major strategic misconception. It is, in fact, a meticulously orchestrated, politically motivated, and state-controlled process of image-building. In a closed and heavily militarized system like North Korea's, even the simplest of matters carry political dimensions. Through Kim Ju Ae, a new heir to power is not merely being selected; rather, she is being indelibly imprinted upon the public consciousness. Through this intricate interplay of image, power, succession, and control, North Korea is presenting its future leadership—to the world and to its own people. This once again underscores the fact that, in this context, fashion is not a form of individual self-expression, but rather a potent instrument of power. Thus, these fashion signals emerging from behind the fortified walls of Pyongyang bear witness to a significant political transition on the horizon.

## Jammu Directly Linked with Kashmir via Passenger Train for the First Time

For decades, the idea of stepping onto a train in Jammu and arriving directly in Srinagar belonged to the realm of ambition rather than reality. That ambition became history today. Union Minister for Railways Shri Ashwini Vaishnav flagged off the extended Srinagar-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Vande Bharat Express service up to Jammu Tawi Railway Station, directly linking Jammu and Kashmir by passenger train for the very first time. A single seamless rail corridor now connects two of the region's most iconic destinations, promising not just faster journeys but a transformation in how people, commerce, and tourism flow across this breathtaking landscape.

Jammu Tawi stands as one of the most important railway stations in northern India, serving as a crucial gateway that connects the Union Territory with the rest of the country. With extensive rail links to major destinations such as Kanyakumari, Howrah, Mumbai and other metropolitan hubs, the station plays a vital role in ensuring seamless mobility across regions.

Highlighting the significance of the development, Shri Vaishnav during his address at the flagging-off event said that a major milestone has been achieved with the expansion of rail connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir.

With the train now reaching Jammu Tawi, travel to key pilgrimage destinations such as Shri Mata Vaishno Devi and Shri Amarnath will become more convenient and accessible for passengers across the country.

The Railway Minister highlighted that the Vande Bharat service has witnessed full occupancy since its launch, reflecting its growing popularity among passengers, underlining its importance as a lifeline for Jammu and Kashmir as well as for the rest of the country. He added that today, the 20-coach Vande Bharat Express service between Jammu and Srinagar has been launched, marking a significant enhancement in passenger capacity on this vital route.

The Union Railway Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnav stated that this development comes less than a year after the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Jammu-Srinagar rail link on 6th June last year, which laid the



foundation for seamless rail connectivity in the region. The introduction of the expanded Vande Bharat service further strengthens this historic corridor, improving travel comfort, meeting rising passenger demand, and reinforcing all-weather connectivity between Jammu and Srinagar. He emphasized that the train has been designed specifically for operations in the region's challenging climatic conditions, including sub-zero temperatures, with specialized systems ensuring uninterrupted functionality of onboard equipment.

Shri Vaishnav further highlighted that the train incorporates advanced electronics and high-end semiconductor-based systems, making it a highly modern and technologically sophisticated mode of transport. He also pointed out that efforts have been made to integrate regional culture into the passenger experience by introducing Dogri cuisine onboard. Shri Vaishnav said that passengers travelling on this route will get exposure to the culture of Jammu & Kashmir, including its landscapes, language, music and culinary traditions, making the journey more immersive.

Jammu and Kashmir: Paradise on Earth. Jammu and Kashmir, often described as the "Paradise on Earth," is renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty, snow-capped mountains, lush valleys and serene lakes. The region is home to warm and resilient communities whose rich cultural heritage adds to its unique identity. Improved rail connectivity is expected to further boost tourism, enabling

more people from across the country to experience the region's scenic charm and cultural vibrancy.

The Union Minister observed that enhanced rail infrastructure is also facilitating economic growth by enabling smoother transportation of local produce. Jammu and Kashmir is known for its premium dry fruits, exquisite Pashmina shawls, apples and traditional hand-woven carpets (kaleen), which are in demand across India. With better rail connectivity, the movement of these goods to markets nationwide is becoming faster and more efficient, thereby supporting local livelihoods and expanding trade opportunities.

Boost to Trade and Cultural Linkages. Shri Vaishnav stated that this is India's first experience with railway operations at such high altitudes, and the learnings gained will guide future infrastructure developments. He added that the railway line has significantly improved cargo movement in the region, reducing transportation costs and ensuring smoother logistics for essential goods such as fertilizers and dairy products like milk. Agricultural produce, including cherries, is also being transported through parcel services, enhancing market access for local farmers.

He further noted that the rail network has simplified logistics and contributed to economic activity in the region. Looking ahead, the focus will be on strengthening maintenance systems and deploying advanced technologies for bridges and tunnels to ensure safety and reliability.

ability in the Himalayan terrain.

Rail Freight Integration & Economic Linkages in Kashmir Valley.

The completion of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) has seamlessly connected the Kashmir Valley with the rest of India's rail network. It has not only benefited passengers but also boosted the region's business and economic activity. The commissioning of engineering landmarks such as the Chenab Rail Bridge, the world's highest railway bridge, and the Anji Khad Bridge has enabled uninterrupted, all-weather rail connectivity to the region. This transformative infrastructure has paved the way for regular freight movement, significantly reducing transit time, improving reliability, and integrating the Valley more closely with national supply chains.

The Railway Minister boarded the Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express from Jammu and travelled up to Katra. Speaking to media persons onboard the train, he highlighted that nearly 2 crore kilograms of apples have already been transported from Srinagar to the rest of the country through the railway network.

Shri Vaishnav later conducted an inspection of the Anji Khad Bridge and the Chenab Rail Bridge.

The Minister highlighted that strengthened rail connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir has significantly improved freight operations and helped reduce the cost of essential commodities. He noted that improved logistics efficiency has contribut-

ed to making goods more affordable, including cement, which is now being transported at lower costs, with prices falling below ₹50 per bag, reflecting the positive impact of rail-based supply chain improvements in the region.

Earlier this month, the Ahmedabad Division of Western Railway dispatched its first cargo rake carrying dairy products to Jammu and Kashmir, marking a new chapter in long-distance freight connectivity. Also, e-commerce major Amazon commenced operations in the Valley, establishing daily cargo movement between Adarsh Nagar and Budgam, enabling two-way logistics in under 30 hours. Further strengthening supply chains, the Jammu Division facilitated the arrival of the first wagon of vermicompost fertilizer from Ambala to Anantnag.

Earlier, in January this year, the first full rake of 42 wagons carrying 2,768 metric tonnes of rice reached Anantnag. In December last year, the first Food Corporation of India freight train carrying approximately 1,384 tonnes of foodgrains arrived at the Anantnag Goods Terminal. Additionally, in October last year, the first rail consignment of 1,350 tonnes of industrial salt from Kharaghoda in Gujarat reached Anantnag, highlighting the expanding freight footprint in the region.

Future Expansion and Infrastructure Development. Shri Vaishnav stated that the redevelopment of Jammu Tawi station is progressing rapidly, with expansion of platforms, additional entry points and improved

passenger amenities to handle increasing traffic. He added that broader infrastructure initiatives, including line doubling and capacity enhancement on key routes, will further strengthen connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir and the rest of the country.

Shri Vaishnav said that doubling work on the Jalandhar-Jammu section has been completed, while the Delhi-Ambala section is being upgraded to four lines, which has recently been approved by the Cabinet. He further stated that work is underway for doubling of the railway line between Qazigund and Baramulla to enhance capacity. He informed that projects such as the Poonch-Rajouri rail link and the Uri-Baramulla extension are under planning and Detailed Project Report stages.

The Qazigund-Baramulla line doubling will increase freight and passenger capacity through the Kashmir Valley, easing congestion, cutting travel times, and enabling smoother movement of goods and tourists. The Poonch-Rajouri rail link will integrate two historically underserved districts into the national rail network for the first time, catalysing local industries and improving access to healthcare and education. The Uri-Baramulla extension will push rail access deeper toward the border, opening remote areas to tourism and trade while strengthening civilian resilience.

Together, these projects will reduce the region's heavy dependence on road transport, which remains highly susceptible to seasonal disruptions from landslides, snowfall, and harsh winters, while stimulating investment, generating employment, and fostering a stronger sense of social and economic inclusion for communities across the region.

The extension of the Srinagar-Katra Vande Bharat Express to Jammu Tawi marks another step towards integrating the region more closely with the national rail network, boosting tourism, facilitating trade and enhancing overall connectivity. With a convenient interchange at Jammu, passengers from across the country can now seamlessly access the Kashmir Valley, as Jammu is well connected with all major centres of India in every direction. This development is paving the way for greater people-to-people connect and deeper economic integration of Kashmir with the rest of the country.

## Workshop on Atmanirbhar Panchayat

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is set to organize an outreach workshop on the Atmanirbhar Panchayat Programme on May 2, 2026, at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR) in Rajendra Nagar, Hyderabad. The initiative marks a significant step toward strengthening grassroots governance and promoting financial self-reliance among Panchayats.

The workshop will be inaugurated by Vivek Bharadwaj, Secretary of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in the presence of Mukta Shekhar and M. Dana Kishore. Senior officials from the Telangana government and representatives from key institutions will also attend the event.

Participants will include faculty members of NIRD&PR, senior officials from Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, along with Panchayat representatives and grassroots functionaries from across Telangana. The diverse participation is expected to enrich discussions and knowledge-sharing.

The outreach workshop aims to familiarize stakeholders with the vision, objectives, and operational framework of the Atmanirbhar Panchayat Programme. This initiative is a forward-looking component under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, focusing



on empowering local governance institutions.

In his keynote address, Vivek Bharadwaj will outline the broader vision of building financially independent Panchayats. His address will set the tone for discussions on strengthening grassroots democracy through economic empowerment and sustainable governance practices.

A detailed presentation during the workshop will cover national policy objectives, technical roadmaps, and expected outcomes of the programme. This will help participants understand how the initiative aligns with India's

broader rural development goals.

One of the highlights of the event will be a live, end-to-end demonstration of the Atmanirbhar Panchayat Portal.

The demonstration will showcase the application workflow and digital dashboards designed to simplify processes and enhance transparency.

The digital platform is expected to make participation accessible for Panchayats at all levels. By integrating technology into governance, the programme seeks to streamline project planning, monitoring, and financial management.

An interactive question-and-answer session will follow, allowing stakeholders to directly engage with ministry officials. This session will provide clarity on implementation processes and encourage active participation from Panchayat representatives.

The Government of Telangana will also present its priorities and commitment under the programme.

This reflects a collaborative approach between the Centre and the State to ensure successful implementation at the grassroots level. Public sector organizations like HUDCO and NABARD are

playing a crucial role in supporting the initiative. Their expertise in rural infrastructure development and financial systems will help Panchayats design viable and sustainable projects.

The Atmanirbhar Panchayat Programme is designed to enable Gram Panchayats and Block Panchayats to develop financially viable, bankable projects. These projects aim to strengthen Own Source Revenue (OSR), reducing dependence on external funding.

Under a transparent national challenge process, selected proposals will receive technical assistance from project development to financial closure. This includes support for Public-Private Partnerships, CSR funding, and access to bank finance.

Community participation is a key pillar of the programme, with mandatory consent from Gram Sabhas ensuring inclusivity in planning.

The initiative emphasizes that ideas originate from Panchayats, while technical expertise helps convert them into implementable projects. Over its four-year implementation period, the programme aims to create a new generation of self-reliant Panchayats. The Ministry believes that financially independent local bodies are fundamental to achieving the vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat, reinforcing the link between economic autonomy and effective local governance.

## Major Reshuffle Likely in Shiv Sena Shinde Faction Soon, Claims Minister Sanjay Shirsat

Mumbai, May 5 (UNI) Maharashtra minister Sanjay Shirsat has claimed that Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is preparing to take major decisions soon, including a reshuffle in the state cabinet as well as within the party organization.

Speaking to reporters, Shirsat said that new faces may be given opportunities in place of ministers who failed to contribute effectively to the party's growth or could not make a strong impact through their work as ministers.

According to Shirsat, the reshuffle could take place either before Diwali or immediately after the festival. He also hinted that "Operation Tiger" could be implemented at any moment. He said only Eknath Shinde knows the right timing for such decisions and will act accordingly.

Shirsat further claimed that



the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) no longer has any real strength left and that several leaders and party workers from the faction

are constantly in touch with the Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

Referring to Satara MLA Mahesh Shinde, who is reportedly up-

set, Shirsat said he has been advised to seek an appointment with Eknath Shinde and personally express his concerns. However, he added that the key question remains whether the Deputy Chief Minister will grant him time for a meeting.

Shirsat also expressed confidence that the party symbol would remain with the Shinde faction after the upcoming hearing in the Supreme Court of India regarding the party and election symbol dispute. He said that regardless of who meets whom politically, the party symbol would continue to remain with their faction.

Commenting on the rising incidents of crimes against women, Shirsat said strict action is necessary and added that even as a minister, he feels such offenders should be punished publicly in town squares.

## Pratibha Chakankar Questioned by ED for Eight Hours in Alleged Fake Accounts Case

Mumbai: Former Maharashtra State Women's Commission chairperson Rupali Chakankar's sister Pratibha Chakankar was questioned for nearly eight hours by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday in connection with the alleged money laundering and fake bank accounts case linked to self-styled godman Ashok Kharat.

During the questioning, Pratibha Chakankar reportedly made a sensational claim, stating that she had shared her and her son Tanmay Chakankar's Aadhaar and PAN card details with Kharat only for "religious work." She alleged that the documents were later misused to open bogus bank accounts without her knowledge.

According to investigators, over 230 phone calls and more than 200 messages were exchanged between Pratibha Chakankar and Ashok Kharat between 2025 and 2026. The ED is currently verifying the nature of these communications as part of the ongoing probe.

The investigation is linked to suspicious financial transactions in the Samata Nagari Sahakari Patsanstha case, where multiple fake or proxy accounts are suspected to have been created.

Officials believe four accounts found in the names of Pratibha Chakankar and her son may be connected to a wider network of 134 suspicious accounts under scrutiny.

Investigators have also found that some of the accounts allegedly listed Ashok Kharat as a nominee, while his mobile number was reportedly used during the account-opening process. Financial records under examination further indicate that around rupees 26 lakh deposited in 2021 allegedly generated returns nearing rupees 40 lakh by 2024, raising questions about the source and movement of funds.

Following the lengthy questioning session, the ED has now issued a summons to Tanmay Chakankar as well. Sources indicate that Pratibha Chakankar may be called again for further questioning as the probe progresses and additional details emerge.

## HC Set Aside FIR by Lilavati Trust Against HDFC CEO

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Tuesday set aside the First Information Report (FIR) filed by Lilavati Kirtilal Mehta Medical Trust against HDFC Bank Managing Director and CEO Sashidhar Jagdishan over alleged bribery.

A division bench of Justice Makarand Karnik and Justice Nitin Borkar pronounced the operative order while the detailed reasoning would be made available later.

The bench passed the order on a plea moved by Jagdishan challenging the FIR filed against him on a complaint by Lilavati Trust, which owns the Lilavati Hospital, a prominent healthcare institution in Mumbai.

The FIR, lodged few months back has levelled serious allegations against Jagdishan, accusing him of accepting a 2.05 crore bribe to aid the Chetan Mehta Group in allegedly retaining illegal control over the Trust.

The complaint claims that the money was paid in exchange for financial and



strategic advice to manipulate Trust affairs, which the Trust characterizes as a misuse of authority by the HDFC Bank CEO.

Senior Advocate Amit Desai, representing Jagdishan, had earlier denied the allegations, calling them "one of the most absurd" claims.

"It's one of the most absurd allegations that he received money from trustees. The absurdity of the allegation is that he allegedly received ₹2 crore to harass HDFC Bank borrowers," Desai had submitted.

According to Desai the FIR is a retaliatory move stemming from HDFC Bank's recovery proceed-

ings against Splendour Gems Limited — a company owned by the Mehta family — which has defaulted on loans amounting to ₹65.22 crore as of May 31.

Desai stated that "these actions follow recovery proceedings initiated by the bank against a company owned by the father of one of the trustees."

He said that the complaint was filed only after the Trust had failed to secure any favourable response from the union Finance Minister, the Reserve Bank of India and the Anti-Corruption Bureau. "They now use the facade of Lilavati Trust to take action against us," he had contended earlier.

## Woman Killed, Husband Seriously Injured in Talegaon Ambi Road Accident

Pune: A somber wave of grief and concern has swept across the Pune district following two separate, horrific road accidents that claimed lives under tragic circumstances. The first incident, which occurred in the Talegaon Ambi area, involved a young couple traveling on a two-wheeler, ending in a fatal collision that has once again put the spotlight on the region's deteriorating road safety. According to preliminary reports, the couple was navigating their motorcycle along a local stretch when a speeding tempo, approaching rapidly from behind, lost control. The heavy vehicle rammed into the rear of the two-wheeler with immense force, catching the riders completely off guard and leaving them with no time to react or maneuver to safety.

The brutality of the crash was further exacerbated when the tempo, unable to stop immediately, reportedly ran over the couple following the initial impact. The woman, who was riding pillion, sustained catastrophic injuries and tragically died on the spot. Her husband was

also dragged and crushed, leaving him in a critical condition as onlookers rushed to provide assistance.

The entire horrifying sequence of events was captured on CCTV cameras installed in the vicinity. The footage, which has since been reviewed by authorities, reportedly shows the sheer speed of the tempo and the helplessness of the victims, providing undeniable evidence of the driver's negligence and the violent nature of the accident.

Emergency services were alerted immediately, and the husband was transported to a nearby hospital with severe internal and external injuries. Medical professionals are currently working to stabilize him, though his condition remains guarded. Meanwhile, the body of the deceased woman was shifted for a post-mortem examination.

This specific corridor in Talegaon Ambi has long been a source of anxiety for local residents. The latest fatality has reignited a firestorm of criticism against local authorities, with cit-

izens pointing out that the stretch has witnessed several similar accidents in the past due to a lack of speed breakers, poor lighting, and unregulated heavy vehicle movement.

The Ambi MIDC Police have taken formal cognizance of the tragedy and registered a case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. An investigation is currently underway to track down the tempo driver and determine if mechanical failure or human error—such as distracted driving or intoxication—played a role in the crash.

In a separate and equally harrowing incident on the old Pune-Mumbai Highway, a motorist met a gruesome end on the Vadgaon Maval flyover. This accident, which occurred in the dead of night around 1:30 am, involved a speeding four-wheeler that suddenly transformed into a fireball, leaving the driver with no escape. Eyewitnesses traveling on the highway reported that the vehicle was in motion when flames suddenly erupted from the engine bay.

## Raut Has Lost His Senses. Girish Mahajan's Scathing Attack



Mumbai: Maharashtra Cabinet Minister and senior BJP leader Girish Mahajan slammed Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Tuesday accusing him of being disconnected from political reality.

Praising the BJP's performance in West Bengal, Mahajan attributed the success to the relentless efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Responding to Raut's recent remarks, Mahajan used a local proverb ("Gira to bhi meri taang upar") to describe Raut's habit of acting superior despite political setbacks. "Raut has lost his senses. He sits at home and indulges in idle talk while our leaders are out on the field working for the people," Mahajan

said. Mahajan went a step further, suggesting that Uddhav Thackeray needs to distance himself from Raut to save his party. "If there is any sense left, Uddhav ji should show Raut the door and stop this constant bickering. Otherwise, even the few MLAs currently with him will leave, he warned.

The Minister also took a swipe at the Shiv Sena's mouthpiece, Saamana, stating that its readership has dwindled to nothing because of the nonsensical content written by Raut.

He concluded by saying that if the opposition spent more time emulating the BJP's work ethic and less time on social media, they might actually win a few more seats.

## Maharashtra Cabinet's Mega Education Push: Tribal Schools Upgraded, New Engineering Hubs Approved

Mumbai: The Maharashtra State Cabinet on Tuesday approved several transformative measures aimed at boosting educational infrastructure, particularly focusing on tribal welfare and advanced engineering studies.

In a significant move for the educational progress of tribal children, the government has approved the upgrading of 24 aided Ashram schools managed

by voluntary organizations. Five Primary Ashram schools will be upgraded to Secondary, and 19 Secondary Ashram schools will become Junior Colleges. This will accelerate education in hilly and remote areas. The Cabinet has sanctioned the creation of new teaching posts and the necessary budget for this expansion.

Starting from the 2026-27 academic year, the Government Polytechnic in Sol-

apur will offer three new degree-level engineering programs. Each course will have an intake of 60 students. The new branches include AI & Machine Learning, Computer Science & Engineering and Electronics & Telecommunication. This provides a massive opportunity for aspiring engineers in and around the Solapur region to access cutting-edge technical education locally.

The Cabinet has decided to transfer Shree Tuljabhavana College of Engineering (previously run by the Temple Trust in Dharashiv) to the Government of Maharashtra.

Under state governance, the college will receive updated facilities and enhanced educational resources, ensuring high-quality engineering education for local students in the Dharashiv district.

## Maharashtra Cabinet Approves Key Education Decisions for Tribal and Engineering Students

Mumbai: The Maharashtra cabinet on Tuesday approved three major decisions related to education, tribal student welfare, and engineering studies in Solapur and Dharashiv districts.

One of the key decisions focuses on improving educational opportunities for tribal students.

The cabinet approved the upgradation of five primary and 19 secondary aided Ashram schools run by voluntary organisations. The schools will now be upgraded from primary to secondary level and from secondary level to junior college level.

Approval has also been granted for the creation of necessary posts and financial provisions. The decision is expected to boost educational access for tribal children living in hilly and remote areas.

In another decision, the cabinet approved the launch of three degree-level engineering courses at the Government Polytechnic in Solapur from the academic year 2026-27.

The move is expected to benefit aspiring engineering students from Solapur and nearby regions. The new courses, each with an intake capacity

of 60 students, include Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Computer Science and Engineering, and Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering.

The cabinet also decided to transfer Shri Tuljabhavana Engineering College in Tuljapur, Dharashiv district, currently operated by the Shri Tuljabhavana Temple Trust, to the state government. The transfer is expected to strengthen the institution and provide modern educational facilities, helping students in the region gain access to quality engineering education.

## 15-year-old boy assaulted for plucking mangoes from tree

Thane: A shocking report has emerged from the Aptewadi area of Badlapur, where a 15-year-old boy was allegedly subjected to a brutal physical assault. The incident, which has sparked outrage in the local community, highlights a disturbing overreaction to a minor act by a child.

The trouble began during a seemingly ordinary afternoon at the Swanand Tarang housing society. A group of children from the building were engaged in a friendly game of cricket in the society's open spaces, enjoying the typical outdoor activity common in residential neighborhoods. During the course of the game, the cricket ball was reportedly hit over the boundary and landed inside the compound of a nearby private bungalow.

The 15-year-old victim, acting on behalf of his playmates, went inside the neighboring premises to retrieve the ball so the game could continue. While inside the bungalow's compound, the boy noticed a tree laden with ripe mangoes. In a moment of youthful impulsiveness, he allegedly plucked a few mangoes from the tree before heading back to the

housing society with the cricket ball.

The consequences of this act unfolded later that night. According to the boy's mother, the bungalow owner, identified as Raja Jamdare, and his wife were incensed after learning about the missing fruit. Instead of approaching the parents or the society committee, they took matters into their own hands.

The couple reportedly entered the Swanand Tarang society premises at night, specifically seeking out the teenager. They found him while he was still playing with his friends and immediately confronted him. The situation quickly escalated from a verbal reprimand to a physical altercation. Witnesses and family members allege that the couple began assaulting the minor right there in the society's common area. The sheer disparity in strength between the grown adults and the 15-year-old has been a point of significant concern for the residents who witnessed the initial scuffle. The ordeal grew even more harrowing as the accused couple allegedly dragged the boy from the playground toward

his own home. The mother claims that the violence did not cease during this transit, as the boy was forcibly moved through the society under duress.

Once they reached the victim's doorstep, the assault reportedly continued in the presence of his shocked parents. The boy was allegedly subjected to a series of kicks and punches, as the couple vented their frustration over the stolen mangoes in a display of unbridled aggression.

The boy's mother further alleged that the attackers didn't just stop at physical violence but also issued terrifying threats. They reportedly told the family that if the boy were ever caught plucking mangoes again, they would "strip and beat him," a statement that has left the family fearing for the child's psychological well-being. During the confrontation, the Jamdare couple allegedly attempted to intimidate the family by asserting their social dominance. They reportedly claimed significant influence in the locality, identifying themselves as "local villagers" to imply that they were above the standard rules of the housing society.

## Ashok Kharat brought to Shirdi by police in connection with land grabbing and a fake accounts scam

Nashik: The Shirdi Police have officially taken the alleged fraudulent godman, Ashok Kharat, into their custody following a transfer from the Nashik Special Investigation Team (SIT). This significant move is tied to two major criminal investigations: a high-stakes land-grabbing case and an extensive fake accounts financial scam.

Prior to this transfer, Kharat was being held by the SIT in Nashik for a separate, unrelated case. Legal experts and local authorities believe that bringing him directly to Shirdi will drastically accelerate the pace of the ongoing investigations, allowing local detectives to confront him with specific evidence gathered on the ground.

The first major set of allegations involves the illegal seizure of four acres of prime agricultural land in Shirdi. The property belongs to a local farmer who claims his livelihood was snatched away through coercive and illicit moneylending practices orchestrated by Kharat and his associates.

The second, perhaps more complex, case pertains to a massive financial irregularity involving the



Samata Credit Society. Investigations have revealed a sophisticated scheme where approximately 100 fake accounts were opened to facilitate illicit transactions totaling crores of rupees, effectively using the institution for money laundering.

The catalyst for the land-grabbing investigation was a formal complaint lodged by the victimized farmer, Raoasaheb Gondkar. In his detailed statement to the police, Gondkar accused Kharat's group of utilizing fraudulent documentation and predatory lending prac-

tics to usurp his ancestral property. Interestingly, the financial scam was uncovered as a "byproduct" of the land dispute probe. As investigators began tracing the source of the funds used in the illegal moneylending business, they stumbled upon the trail of the fake accounts, revealing a much deeper web of financial criminality than initially suspected.

To consolidate their efforts, the Shirdi Police filed a formal application with the Nashik Court to seek Kharat's physical custody. They argued that his pres-

ence was vital for a comprehensive interrogation to connect the dots between the land seizure and the Credit Society's fraudulent transactions. The judiciary acknowledged the gravity of the situation and granted the transfer. The court ordered that Kharat be moved from the high-security SIT custody in Nashik to the jurisdiction of the Shirdi Police to ensure that both the agricultural and financial aspects of the crime are fully addressed. Following the court's mandate, a specialized police unit led by

PSI Nivanta Jadhav traveled to Nashik on Monday. The team successfully took over custody and transported Kharat back to Shirdi under tight security to prevent any interference with the legal process.

Immediately upon his arrival in the pilgrimage town, Kharat was placed under formal arrest. Before interrogation could begin, he was taken to the Rural Hospital in Rahata for a mandatory medical examination, a standard procedure to ensure the suspect's fitness for police questioning. The Shirdi Police Station has officially registered two separate First Information Reports (FIRs) against the self-styled godman. One focuses on the intricacies of the land dispute, while the other is dedicated to the systematic financial irregularities and the exploitation of the credit society. In the land-grabbing FIR, the police have identified five primary accused. Alongside Ashok Kharat, the list includes his wife, Kalpana Kharat, as well as collaborators Arvind Bavke, Kiran Sonawane, and Ashok Tambe, all of whom are suspected of playing specific roles in the fraud.

## Imran Khan returns to set for additional shoot of comeback film 'Adhure Hum Adhure Tum'

**Mumbai:** Imran Khan has resumed shooting nearly ten months after wrapping principal photography for his comeback film *Adhure Hum Adhure Tum*, marking a significant step forward for the much-anticipated project.

According to reports, the film is currently undergoing a brief round of additional filming following creative feedback from Netflix, which aims to further refine the narrative.

Sources indicate that the streaming platform's team reviewed the film about a month ago and suggested certain enhancements to strengthen storytelling and overall impact.

Both Imran Khan and director Danish Aslam, who had initially completed the film as per the approved script, were receptive to the feedback and agreed to incorporate the suggested changes.

A fresh four-day shooting schedule has been planned to capture the additional footage, focusing on elevating specific aspects of the story rather than altering its core.

The new schedule began in Mumbai on Monday and is expected to wrap up by Friday, with key cast members returning to the set.

Actors Bhumi Pednekar and Gur-



fateh Pirzada are also part of this phase of filming, contributing to the newly added sequences.

A source close to the project clarified that this is not a reshoot or corrective patchwork, but rather the addition of new material intended to enhance the film's emotional and narrative depth.

Once filming concludes, the project will return to the editing stage before the final cut is submitted to Netflix for approval. The film is currently expected to premiere in the second half of the year, though an official release date is yet to be announced. This development comes after earlier speculation about the film's status,

particularly when it was absent from Netflix's annual slate announcement in February.

The omission had led to rumours of delays or shelving, especially amid reports of internal restructuring within the streaming platform.

However, the latest progress suggests renewed confidence in the project and a clear path toward completion and release.

Described as a dysfunctional romantic dramedy, "*Adhure Hum Adhure Tum*" promises a mix of humour, emotional complexity, and layered relationships.

The film marks Imran Khan's return to cinema after an 11-year hiatus, making it a highly anticipated comeback for fans and industry watchers alike.

Directed by Danish Aslam, who previously helmed *Break Ke Baad* starring Imran Khan and Deepika Padukone, the project is expected to bring back the breezy, relatable storytelling style associated with the actor's earlier work. With its blend of nostalgia and fresh narrative elements, the film aims to reconnect audiences with Imran Khan's signature charm while offering a contemporary cinematic experience.

## Raghav Juyal, Komal Pawaskar's fresh pairing creates buzz for 'Ikaee'

**Mumbai:** Vikas Bahl's upcoming romantic thriller *Ikaee* is steadily generating buzz, with one of its most talked-about elements being the fresh on-screen pairing of Raghav Juyal and debutante Komal Pawaskar.

The film promises a gripping blend of romance and suspense, but early conversations within the industry suggest that the chemistry between the lead actors has emerged as a standout feature.

According to sources close to the project, the pairing of Raghav Juyal and Komal Pawaskar brings a refreshing dynamic that adds emotional depth to the narrative.

Raghav, known for his unconventional screen presence and unpredictable style, is said to bring a certain intensity and magnetism to his role.

In contrast, Komal Pawaskar's natural and effortless performance reportedly balances his energy, creating a compelling and



reliable on-screen connection.

A source associated with the film noted that their chemistry feels raw yet believable, which enhances the emotional authenticity of the story.

What makes this pairing particularly interesting, the source added, is that it does not follow a conventional romantic template often seen in mainstream cinema.

Instead, there is an emotional honesty in the way the two characters interact, mak-

ing their relationship appear more grounded and nuanced.

This unique dynamic is expected to give the film a distinct texture, setting it apart from typical romantic thrillers.

As anticipation builds, industry observers believe that the film could mark the beginning of a promising new on-screen duo.

The combination of intensity from Raghav and freshness from Komal is being seen as a strong creative advantage for the project.

## Isha Ambani reinvents the bandage dress at Met Gala Pre-Party with a 450-hour handcrafted masterpiece

**Mumbai:** At a prestigious pre-party for the iconic Met Gala, Isha Ambani delivered a striking fashion statement that seamlessly blended contemporary couture with centuries-old Indian craftsmanship. In an era

where fast fashion often dominates the conversation, this appearance served as a refreshing reminder of the enduring power of slow, intentional design. Ambani's presence at the event was not merely a social appearance but a curated moment of cultural diplomacy, using the global stage of the Met Gala festivities to highlight the sophistication of Indian aesthetics.

Dressed in a bespoke creation by Manish Malhotra in collaboration with Swadesh Online, Ambani's ensemble transcended traditional red-carpet glamour, emerging as a profound tribute to India's rich artisanal legacy. This partnership between a leading couturier and a platform dedicated to Indian crafts signaled a significant shift toward "conscious luxury." By choosing to wear a garment rooted in indigenous skill, Ambani positioned herself as a patron of the arts, bridging the gap between rural artisans and the pinnacle of global high society.

The outfit reimaged the iconic bandage dress silhouette, presenting a sleek, strapless, floor-length design that hugged the body while serving as a canvas for intricate craftsmanship. While the bandage dress is often associated with the high-octane Western glamour of the 1990s, this iteration was entirely unique. By utilizing structured textile borders rather than elasticated fabric, the silhouette gained a new sense of architectural integrity, proving that traditional materials can adapt to modern, provocative forms.

Meticulously developed over 450 hours, the

ensemble incorporated 26 distinct textile borders sourced from across India, each representing a unique regional tradition. This staggering investment of time speaks to the "couture" nature of the piece, where every inch was handled with extreme precision. The assembly process required a deep understanding of how different fabrics—varying in weight, weave, and texture—could be harmonized into a single, fluid garment without compromising the integrity of the individual crafts.

The result was described by onlookers and fashion critics as a "living tapestry," reflecting the diversity and depth of Indian textile heritage on a global stage. Unlike a standard gown that features a repetitive pattern, this dress offered a different story from every angle. It acted as a geographical map of India's creative soul, allowing the viewer to journey through the country's history through the medium of thread, gold, and silk.

From North and West India, the design featured rich zari work and Banarasi brocade, complemented by Karchobi embroidery from Rajasthan and traditional techniques like Ajrakh, Ashavali, and Aari Bharat from Gujarat. These elements brought a regal weight to the dress, utilizing the metallic glint of gold and silver threads to catch the light. The inclusion of Ajrakh—a complex block-printing technique—introduced a geometric discipline that anchored the more fluid embroidered sections.

Elements of Paithani weaving from Maharashtra were also integrated, adding further dimension and historical richness to the garment. Known for its oblique square designs and peacock motifs, Paithani added a splash of royal tradition that resonated with the gown's opulent theme. By weaving these storied traditions into a contemporary silhouette, the designers ensured that the history of Maharashtra's looms was presented in a fresh, relevant context.

## Bobby Deol breaks his image boundaries for Anurag Kashyap's 'Bandar'

**Mumbai:** Bobby Deol is set to surprise audiences with a completely new avatar in his upcoming film *Bandar*, produced by Nikhil Dwivedi and directed by Anurag Kashyap.

The film is already generating strong buzz, with Deol taking on a highly intense role that marks a significant departure from his previous on-screen image. Known for reinventing himself in recent years, the actor appears ready to push his boundaries even further with this project.

Speaking about his role, Bobby Deol said that every actor aspires to explore new dimensions in their craft, especially after being typecast in certain roles over time. He acknowledged that breaking



away from an established image is often challenging in the film industry.

Reflecting on his own journey, Deol admitted that he has experienced phases of typecasting but emphasized that "*Bandar*" offered him a chance to step into unfamiliar territory.

He revealed that the role was completely outside his

comfort zone, requiring him to overcome hesitation and embrace a new acting approach.

According to Deol, he consciously chose to take up the challenge without holding back, marking a turning point in his career choices.

The film signals his return to a lead role in an intense drama after a series of

impactful performances that have already revived his career in recent years.

Backing the project is Zee Studios, known for supporting content-driven cinema with strong storytelling.

The screenplay has been written by Sudip Sharma and Abhishek Banerjee, both of whom are associated with critically acclaimed projects.

Their previous works include popular titles like *Paatal Lok*, *Kohra*, and *Udta Punjab*, which have been praised for their gritty narratives and strong character development.

Sudip Sharma has also recently directed *Kohra 2*, which received critical acclaim, further raising expectations from "*Bandar*."

## Jackie Shroff shares powerful life advice at MFN 18: "Jaan hai toh jahaan hai"

**Mumbai:** Veteran actor Jackie Shroff made a strong impression at Matrix Fight Night 18 held in New Delhi, where his candid reflections on health, discipline, and life struck a chord with the audience.

Attending the high-energy mixed martial arts event alongside Gulshan Grover, Shroff brought his trademark charisma and grounded outlook to the gathering, engaging warmly with fans and participants.

The event, led by Ayesha Shroff and Krishna Shroff, saw enthusiastic participation, with a particular focus on promoting fitness and combat sports among the youth. Amid the electrifying atmosphere, Jackie Shroff stood out for his simple yet impactful message, especially directed at younger audiences navigating modern lifestyles.

Known for his iconic 'Bhidu' style, the actor shared a memorable line that quickly gained traction across social media platforms.

"Jaan hai toh jahaan hai. Dimag shant rakh, maa baap ki seva kar, bachhon ko sambhal, sir thanda rakh, hath-pair garam rakh, peit naram rakh," he said, blending humour with practical life advice.



Through this statement, Shroff emphasized the importance of maintaining physical health, emotional balance, and strong family values in everyday life.

His straightforward and relatable way of speaking resonated widely, reinforcing his reputation for delivering wisdom without pretense.

Beyond the MMA platform, Jackie Shroff also extended his support to inclusive sports by inaugurating the 5th National Wheelchair Cricket Championship 2026.

The tournament was organized by the Wheelchair Cricket India Association, bringing together athletes from across the country.

During the event, Shroff interacted closely with players, acknowledging their de-

termination, resilience, and passion for the sport.

He expressed admiration for their performances, noting that their dedication serves as an inspiration to many.

Encouraging both participants and supporters, he urged sponsors and stakeholders to provide greater backing to such initiatives that promote inclusivity in sports. "My message to everyone is that be bindass in life," he said, adding that witnessing the players' passion left him deeply moved.

From advocating fitness at a major MMA event to uplifting athletes in adaptive sports, Shroff's recent appearances highlight his engagement beyond the film industry.

## Jacqueline Fernandez set to return to Cannes Film Festival 2026

**Mumbai:** Jacqueline Fernandez is expected to attend the Cannes Film Festival 2026, marking its 79th edition scheduled from May 12 to May 23 in France. This appearance is more than just a red-carpet walk; it signifies a milestone in her career as she continues to solidify her position as a recurring figure at one of the world's most elite cinematic gatherings. In a landscape where the French Riviera becomes the epicenter of global art and style, Fernandez's return is viewed as a testament to her enduring relevance in both the film and fashion industries. The actor, who has become a familiar face at the prestigious international event in recent years, is reportedly gearing up for another high-profile appearance on the global red carpet.

Her journey at Cannes has evolved from that of an attendee to a celebrated personality whose presence is anticipated by international paparazzi and critics alike.

This evolution reflects the broader trend of Indian talent becoming an integral part of the global entertainment ecosystem, where boundaries between regional and inter-

national stardom are increasingly blurred. According to sources close to the actor, Jacqueline has already begun her exhaustive preparations, which include multiple styling sessions and finalizing her wardrobe for the festival. The process of preparing for Cannes is often described as a marathon rather than a sprint, requiring months of collaboration with top-tier designers. Every ensemble must be curated to tell a story, ensuring that she stands out amidst the heavyweights of Hollywood and European cinema while maintaining her

unique personal brand. Her fashion choices at Cannes have consistently attracted global attention, and expectations remain high for her looks this year as well. From avant-garde silhouettes to classic gowns that pay homage to vintage cinema, Fernandez has shown a remarkable ability to adapt to the festival's high-stakes fashion environment. Stylists and fashion enthusiasts are eager to see how she will navigate the 2026 trend cycle, which is expected to lean toward sustainable luxury and innovation.

A source close to the development noted that Jacqueline's presence at Cannes reflects her growing stature as a global personality rather than just a regional star. This transition is marked by her ability to resonate with audiences across different continents, facilitated by her diverse background and cosmopolitan appeal. As she prepares for the 79th edition, her team is focused on highlighting her "global citizen" status, which has made her a favorite for international brand endorsements.

## 'Pati Patni Aur Woh Do' trailer released



Wamiqa Gabbi and Rakul Preet Singh. From hilarious jungle events to emo-

tional drama and plenty of comic confusion, the trailer promises a film packed with humor, heart, and nonstop entertainment. Keeping in mind this 'wild' and fun spirit of the film, the makers launched the trailer at Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai in the presence of the star cast, director, producers, and media, making it a memorable and one-of-a-kind launch. Many great actors, including Vijay Raj, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Ayesha Raza, and Durgesh Kumar, will also be seen in important roles in this film. Gulshan Kumar, B.R. Chopra and T-Series present the film, which is directed by Mudassar Aziz and produced by Bhushan Kumar, Renu Ravi Chopra and Krishan Kumar, with Juno Chopra serving as the creative producer.



## India & Australia retain top positions in Men's and Women's T20I team rankings

**Dubai:** India and Australia have retained their positions at the top of the ICC Men's T20I Team Rankings and the ICC Women's T20I Team Rankings, respectively, following the annual updates carried out on Tuesday.

The latest rankings, which rate all matches played since May 2025 at 100 per cent and those of the previous two years at 50 per cent, see India's lead over England trimmed from 14 to 13 points in the men's table while Australia's lead over England in the women's rankings has reduced from 18 to 12 points.

India, who retained their title in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup played in India and Sri Lanka this year, are on 275 points, still enjoying a comfortable lead over England (262) and Australia a close third with 258 points in the updated rankings, which see the top seven positions unchanged.

New Zealand (247), South Africa (244), Pakistan



(240) and the West Indies (233) are the other teams in the top 10 to have retained their positions.

Sri Lanka have dropped six rating points and slipped below Bangladesh to ninth position and are now just one point ahead of Afghanistan while the USA have leapfrogged the Netherlands and Scotland to take 13th position.

In other movements in the top 20, Nepal have overtaken the United Arab Emirates to 17th position while Oman have moved past Canada to 19th.

In other notable changes, Italy have gained 11 points and moved from 26th to 23rd, Spain's 12-point gain sees them advance from 30th to 26th, Cyprus have gained 10 points to progress

from 64th to 53rd and Esawtini have gained 10 points to move from 74th to 65th.

Mozambique are the biggest losers, dropping 15 places to 87th position after the latest update that sees a reduction in the number of ranked teams from 102 to 98 with Fiji, Gambia, Greece and Israel not making the cut as they did not play the requisite eight T20Is in the past

three years.

The Women's T20I Rankings sees an unchanged top 16 teams with Australia No.1 with 287points, England on 275 and India third with 264.

New Zealand (253), South Africa (243) and the West Indies (238) complete the lineup from fourth to sixth with Sri Lanka (237) closing the gap to just one point while retaining seventh place.

Similarly, Bangladesh are just one point behind ninth-placed Ireland after gaining five points.

The USA have moved from 22nd to 20th and Germany from 35th to 29th after the latest update, that sees 78 teams ranked after having played at least eight T20Is over the past three years.

Cambodia have dropped out of the rankings and need to play four more matches to regain their ranking while Peru are no longer rated as they have not played any match for three years.

## Bayern coach Kompany hails Kane's intelligence, leadership before PSG tie

**Berlin:** Bayern Munich coach Vincent Kompany said joining the German record champion team has taken Harry Kane to a new level ahead of Wednesday's UEFA Champions League semi-final second leg against Paris Saint-Germain.

The tie has drawn global attention following a wild 5-4 first leg, with the 32-year-old Kane contributing a goal and key assists.

Kompany said the England captain's overall profile has risen significantly since his move from Tottenham in 2023.

Speaking on the club's social media channel, the 40-year-old said Kane's qualities were often reduced to goalscoring during his 14 years in England.

"People saw him as a goalscorer during his time playing there," Kompany said, adding that his finishing and leadership were always recognized.

"But we have seen other qualities too, such as football intelligence. We can appreciate that now. It was perhaps somewhat underestimated in



England."

Kompany likened Kane's development to "a fine wine that improves with age."

The striker again underlined his all-around game in the first leg against PSG, setting up Bayern's fourth goal with a precise pass to Luis Diaz, who finished past Marquinhos late in the match, according to Xinhua.

Kane has scored 54 goals and provided 16 assists in all competitions this season, performances that have reportedly attracted interest from several top European clubs, including PSG and Premier League sides.

Bayern supervisory board member Karl-Heinz

Rummennigge said the club plans to open talks to extend Kane's contract, which runs until 2027.

"We will take up talks right after the season," he said, describing the move as a unanimous decision by the club's leadership.

German media reports say Kane and his family are settled in Munich and that the striker has not activated an exit clause this spring.

Kane became the Bundesliga's most expensive signing when he joined Bayern in 2023, and board member Uli Hoeness recently said the forward is worth up to 250 million euros and is "priceless" beyond his on-field contribution.

## China's Wu Yize wins World Snooker Championship in Crucible thriller

**London:** Wu Yize became the second Chinese to win World Snooker Championship following Zhao Xintong's triumph last year, defeating England's Shaun Murphy 18-17 at the Crucible Theatre here.

Wu, 22, also became the second-youngest Crucible winner after Stephen Hendry who was 21 in 1990.

He lifted the trophy after the final, with his parents standing by his side on Monday.

"They are the true champion, since the moment I devoted myself to snooker, my father has always been my

company, my mother also went through ups and downs in these years. They are and always will be my motivation," said Wu, who moved to Sheffield at 16 years old and lived in a tiny room with his father for a long time.

Wu took an early 3-0 lead before Murphy fought back to tie the first session 4-4. Breaks of

103, 89 and 91 helped Wu established a 10-7 lead after session two, before Murphy won five straight frames, according to Xinhua.

Wu then dominated the next three frames to take a slender 13-12 lead into the

last session. Murphy contributed the highest break of the final in the 32nd frame with 131 points to tie 16-16, turning the 35-frame final into a best-of-three match.

Each player won one frame, before Wu successfully potted a tricky red in the middle pocket to finish the decider with a winning break of 85.

"I'd like to congratulate Wu Yize. I hate being right earlier this season I said he would be world champion one day. It's just a shame it is today!" joked Murphy, who won his solitary title in 2005 before finishing runner-up in

his next four final appearances in 2009, 2015, 2021 and today.

Wu was among a record 11 Chinese players at the Crucible this year, including snooker pioneer Ding Junhui, the first Asian finalist in 2016, and defending champion Zhao Xintong, the first Asian title winner.

Wu defeated Lei Peifan, Mark Selby and Hossein Vafaei in the first three rounds, and reached the final in dramatic fashion by edging Mark Allen 17-16 in the semifinal after Allen missed the match-ball black in the 32nd frame.

## Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu closes in on No.1 ranking ahead of T20WC

**Dubai:** Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu has been rewarded for her excellent recent form by making big gains on the latest ICC Women's T20I Player Rankings.

Athapaththu was adjudged Player of the Series during Sri Lanka's recent 3-0 whitewash over Bangladesh, with the veteran compiling 115 runs from three innings and chipping in with four wickets in an ominous display ahead of the upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup that commences on June 12.

Those efforts saw Athapaththu rise three places to 41st on the latest rankings for T20I bowlers, while the 36-year-old gains two places to jump to third overall on the list for T20I all-rounders.

Athapaththu catapults past India's



Deepti Sharma and Australia's Ash Gardner on the T20I all-rounder rankings, with New Zealand skipper Melie Kerr and West Indies captain Hayley Matthews now the only two players ahead of the Sri Lanka star.

There is more joy for Sri Lanka as Harshita Samarawickrama (up five runs to equal 20th) and Imesha Dulani (up 23 spots to 49th) make gains on the rankings for T20I batters, while team-

mates Kavisha Dilhari (up two slots to 17th) and Malki Madara (up 11 places to 44th) join Athapaththu on making eye-catching improvement on the charts for T20I bowlers, according to ICC.

Bangladesh will be buoyed by the performances of a host of their players despite the series loss, with Sharmin Akhter Supta (up 10 rungs to 37th), Dilara Akter (up five spots to 55th) and Shorna Akter (up 19 places to equal 62nd) all rising the list for T20I batters and Sultana Khatun (up 48 slots to 38th) the big improver for T20I bowlers.

There was also some change on the latest ODI rankings following the first game of the three-match series between Pakistan and Zimbabwe in Karachi as the hosts opened up a 1-0 series advantage via a whopping 168-run triumph.

## Antonelli holds off Norris in Miami to tighten grip on F1 title race

**Miami:** Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli tightened his grip on the 2026 Formula 1 title race with a composed victory in Sunday's Miami Grand Prix, holding off McLaren's Lando Norris to secure a third consecutive win and extend his championship lead to 20 points. In a race that threatened rain but ultimately stayed dry, strategy and execution proved decisive. Antonelli and Norris were closely matched throughout, swapping the lead in the early phases after having overtaken the fast-starting Ferrari of Charles Leclerc. But once the pit window opened, the balance swung

firmly toward Mercedes. Antonelli, who had already built momentum with wins in Japan and China, again demonstrated a knack for delivering when it mattered most. Despite another sluggish start from pole, a recurring weakness this season, he stayed within striking distance and positioned himself perfectly for the race-defining moment. That came on lap 26, when Mercedes called Antonelli in for his only stop, committing to the undercut. Norris pitted a lap later, and although McLaren's stop was clean, a slightly slower outlap and Antonelli's tyres already up to temperature

left the pair side by side at pit exit. The Mercedes driver edged ahead and, crucially, made it stick through the flowing Esses. From there, the contest settled into a tense rhythm. Norris remained within a second for several laps, probing but unable to find a way through on a track that punishes even the smallest error. A brief concern over Antonelli's paddle shift system threatened to complicate matters, but the Italian gradually stretched the gap to cross the line 3.2s ahead of Norris, according to Xinhua. "The pace was strong," Antonelli said. "The team did a great strat-

egy, we did a massive undercut and managed to bring it home. It wasn't easy, but we made it work." Norris's hopes faded further when McLaren warned him of a potential rear wing issue late on, forcing a more cautious approach. "We just got undercut, no excuses," raved Norris, who had won Saturday's Sprint event. "Kimidi a good job. I'm gutted to miss out on a win here, I think it was possible today." Behind them, the fight for the final podium spot provided late drama. Oscar Piastri completed an encouraging weekend for McLaren by passing Leclerc on the pen-

ultimate lap, sealing a double podium for the team after its 1-2 finish in the Sprint. Leclerc's race unraveled in the closing laps.

After losing ground through a slow pit stop, the Ferrari driver spun and clipped the wall while battling back, damaging his car and dropping down the order. A subsequent time penalty for repeated track limits violations compounded the damage, leaving the Monegasque with a disappointing eighth-place finish from a race he had briefly led. George Russell salvaged fourth for Mercedes after a difficult weekend in

which he struggled for balance, at one stage complaining over the radio that he was "four-wheel sliding everywhere." Though he passed both Max Verstappen's Red Bull and the wounded Leclerc in a chaotic final lap sequence to limit the damage, the Briton has conceded yet more ground to Antonelli in the title race. Verstappen endured a scrappy afternoon. A spin at Turn 2 on the opening lap while dicing with Leclerc dropped the Dutchman down the order, and an aggressive early switch to hard tyres under a Safety Car left him nursing worn rubber to the finish.

There's a strong core of experienced players who continue to set the standard, but what's equally exciting is the young talent coming through our system. "Players are earning their opportunities and continuing to push the group forward and represent Victoria with pride."

Forgotten opener Ashley Chandrasinghe's dominant summer with the Second XI and Premier club Casey South Melbourne, where he amassed 1,345 runs at 58, saw the 24-year-old retain his state contract despite not being able to break into the Victorian side last Shield season, with fellow left-hander Dylan Brasher, who bettered that tally with 1,498 runs at 50 for Victoria's senior and Second XI sides, as well as his club team Footscray, also holding his spot on the list after making his first-class and domestic 50-over debuts.

## Sao Paulo midfielder Lucas Moura undergoes Achilles surgery

**Sao Paulo:** Sao Paulo midfielder Lucas Moura underwent surgery on Monday to repair a ruptured Achilles tendon in his right leg, the Brazilian club said.

The 33-year-old former Brazil international suffered the injury late in Sao Paulo's 2-2 home draw with Bahia in Brazil's Serie A on Sunday.

"The procedure, carried out by the team led by Doc-

tor Moises Cohen, was successful and the player is expected to be discharged from hospital on Tuesday, remaining at home to rest during

the initial days of recovery before beginning physiotherapy at the club," read a Sao Paulo statement on Tuesday.

The club did not provide a timeframe for his recovery,

but Brazilian media reported he was unlikely to return to the pitch this year, according to Xinhua.

Lucas has made 236 appearances across two stints for Sao Paulo, scoring 58 goals and providing 40 assists. He returned to the club that launched his career in 2023 following spells with Paris Saint-Germain and Tottenham.

## Villarreal announces Marcelino to step down as coach despite Champions League qualification

**Madrid:** Villarreal has confirmed that coach Marcelino Garcia Toral will leave the club at the end of the current season after two and a half years in charge in his second spell, during which he twice led the club into the Champions League.

The news came in a statement published by the club after Saturday's 5-1 home win over Levante, which secured Villarreal's place in next season's Champions League and left the east-coast club third in La Liga with a five-point cushion over Atletico Madrid.

"Villarreal CF and the Asturian (region of northern Spain) coach will part ways at the end of the season. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, Marce, for everything you have given to this club and these fans."

"We wish you all the best in your future sporting endeavors," the club confirmed

on social media. The news had been expected after the coach and club failed to reach an agreement on a new contract at the start of the year.

Marcelino returned to Villarreal as the club's third coach of the season in November 2023 after a brief spell at Olympique Marseille. His task that season was to steer the club to safety in

La Liga, while last season Villarreal finished fifth and qualified for the Champions League, according to Xinhua.

The club's European campaign was a major disappointment, with Villarreal suffering seven defeats and managing only one draw in its eight group games to finish 35th out of 36 teams in the competition.

Villarreal also disappointed in the Copa del Rey, losing to second-division

Racing Santander in the round of 32, and those two setbacks could be factors in Marcelino's departure despite another excellent league campaign.

Speaking to the press, Marcelino gave a strong indication that his departure was near. "We have to follow certain timelines, and those timelines are determined by conversations and mutual agreement," said the coach.

"When we arrived here, we had several objectives: on a sporting level, to change a very negative dynamic, to eliminate the fear and uncertainty that the team had. We managed to rejuvenate the squad on the sporting side, and finally, we want to leave as friends when the time comes," he concluded.

Rayo Vallecano coach Inigo Perez is thought to be the club's preferred candidate to take over next season.

## Maxwell, Short go freelance as Victoria name 2026-27 squad

**Sydney:** Glenn Maxwell and Matt Short have opted against taking Victorian contracts next season as the Sheffield Shield finalists retained a stable squad in their search for a first men's title in eight years.

After falling short at the final hurdle four times in the past five seasons, including going down to South Australia in last season's Shield final, Victoria have upgraded three players to the senior list and awarded three more rookie contracts in the only inclusions to their squad for 2026-27.

Star seamer Fergus O'Neill has recommitted after significant interest from Tasmania and NSW, with Peter Handscomb, Sam Harper and Campbell Kellaway also signing contract extensions.

Fast bowlers Sam Elliott and Mitch Perry have also been rewarded with fresh deals after finishing last Shield season among the competition's top seven bowlers with 34 and 33 wickets respectively.

Teenage batting sensation Oliver Peake has been awarded his maiden full state contract after playing nine of 11 Sheffield Shield matches in his rookie season, with young quicks Austin Anlezark and Tyler Pearson also securing upgrades to the senior list.

Another promising paceman, left-armed Harry Hoekstra, is one of the three new rookies for next summer following an impressive 46-wicket season for Victoria's Second XI and club side Casey South Melbourne, alongside Australia Under-19 representatives Aryan Sharma and Tom Paddington.

Sharma played all six of Australia's U19 World Cup matches earlier this year, taking six wickets, and was part of the Stars BBL squad last summer as a replacement player, while Paddington played a Youth Test against India last year.

Meanwhile, Maxwell and Short will continue to represent Victoria when available but have opted not to take up state contracts after losing their Cricket Australia deals.

Short now lives on the Gold Coast with wife Madi, a two-time Olympic gold medalist in swimming, and their one-year-old son, but travelled to and from Victoria to play four Shield and five One-Day Cup matches last season.

The 30-year-old all-rounder is currently with Chennai Super Kings and has played two matches this Indian Premier League season for scores of 2 and 34. Despite being dropped from Australia's T20 World Cup



squad on the eve of this year's tournament, Short remains in the frame for white-ball internationals with tours of Zimbabwe and South Africa and home T20 and 50-over series against England scheduled during the first half of next domestic season.

Maxwell played two one-day matches for Victoria at the beginning of last summer prior to his Australian T20 commitments, hitting a 73-ball century in a losing cause against Queensland.

But having retired from one-day internationals following last year's Champions Trophy, the 37-year-old lost his CA contract with the Australian men's side to play just five T20Is during the upcoming contracting period.

Despite struggling for runs and wickets of late, he hopes to continue to represent Australia in the T20 format. He will also play on franchise leagues around the

world, having recently finished a stint with beaten Pakistan Super League finalists Hyderabad Kingsmen.

He also signed a two-year extension with Melbourne Stars in January and will return to the United States for Washington Freedom's Major League Cricket campaign as well as appearing in the new European T20 Premier League, in which he co-owns the Belfast-based Irish Wolves.

Scott Boland and off-spinner Todd Murphy are the two Victorians with CA contracts as the state reduced their list from 27 to 25 players.

Wicketkeeper-batter Jai Lemire is set to head south to Tasmania to play Premier Cricket in search of greater opportunities, while pacer Xavier Crone and left-arm spinner Callum Stov were not offered contracts but will continue to train

BSE Sensex		Nifty 50		Nifty 500		Nifty Next 50		Nifty 100		Nifty Bank		Nifty Midcap 100	
Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change
77,269.40	0.46%	24,063.55	0.51%	22,830.75	0.65%	70,283.85	0.92%	25,041.10	0.58%	54,878.50	0.028%	60,159.75	0.63%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
76,913.50	77,257.27	23,997.55	24,063.55	22,683.55	22,783.80	69,643.90	69,976.55	24,896.00	24,973.70	54,863.35	54,937.90	59,784.85	60,235.50
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
77,910.75	76,939.54	24,290.20	24,004.75	22,954.30	22,709.75	70,834.05	69,958.20	25,191.70	24,924.45	55,602.30	54,723.50	60,563.95	59,787.60

## Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
M&M	3,210.80	3.36
UltraTechCement	11,963.00	1.74
Nestle	1,477.80	1.42
Bajaj Finserv	1,794.60	1.37
Hindalco	1,054.70	1.15

## Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
Jio Financial	248.45	-1.70
ICICI Bank	1,251.30	-1.53
Coal India	472.60	-1.53
Eternal	248.47	-1.36
Tech Mahindra	1,452.20	-1.32

## Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	150,150.00	811.00 0.54
Silver Jul 03	245,693.00	1,798.00 0.74
Crudeoil May 18	9,760.00	-297.00 -2.95
Naturalgas May 26	269.00	-5.50 -2.00

## Stock market ends in red erasing previous gains

**New Delhi:** The Indian stock market on Tuesday closed in red, erasing all the previous session's gains, with Nifty managing to close above the 24,000 mark.

At close, the Sensex was down 251.61 points or 0.33 per cent at 77,017.79, and the Nifty was down 86.50 points or 0.36 per cent at 24,032.80.

Among the sectors, auto, FMCG, power, pharma, and telecom indices edged higher by around 0.5pc each, while the realty index declined 1.4pc, consumer durable down 1pc and the private banking index slipped 0.5pc.

On Nifty, the major laggards were Jio Financial Services, ICICI Bank, Coal India, Tech Mahindra, and Eternal, while gains were seen in Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Nestlé India, Bajaj Finserv, and Hindalco Industries.

Over 140 stocks touched their 52-week high on the BSE,



including Schneider Infra, HFCL, Adani Power, Emcure Pharmaceuticals, Adani Green Energy, Syraa SGS, Lloyds Metals, Adani Ports, Laurus Labs, Sai Life Sciences, Ather Energy, among others.

Banking stocks weighed on sentiment, with Nifty Bank dropping 331 points to 54,547.

Indian rupee extended its losses for the fifth consecutive session, weakening to a fresh intraday record low of 95.43 per dollar.

The overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies remained largely stable at around Rs 467 lakh crore.

Indian rupee closed weaker at 95.28 against the US dollar, compared with Monday's close of 95.09.

Ambuja Cements Ltd stock fell 2.5 per cent in early trade, and Godrej Properties Ltd shares declined in early trade, falling 2.5 per cent. Shares of Emcure Pharmaceuticals declined 6 per cent.

## D-Mart posts 19.17% YoY growth in net profit in Q4 FY26

**New Delhi:** Avenue Supermarkets Ltd, which owns and runs the retail chain D-Mart, has posted a net profit of Rs 656 crore for Q4 FY26, as compared to Rs 551 crore in the corresponding quarter of last year, representing a 19.17 per cent year-on-year (YoY) rise. The rise in net profit was driven by the DMart's newly opened 58 stores, reaching the milestone of 500 total stores during the Q4 FY26.

The total revenue for the quarter ended March 31, 2026 stood at Rs 17,684 crore, as compared to Rs 14,872 crore in the same period last year. While Earnings before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBITDA) in Q4 FY26 stood at Rs 1,211 crore, as compared to Rs 955 crore in the corresponding quarter of last year.

Profit After Tax (PAT) margin stood at 3.7 per cent in Q4 FY26 as compared to



3.7 per cent in Q4 FY25. Basic Earnings per share (EPS) for Q4 FY26 stood at Rs 10.09, as compared to Rs 8.47 for Q4 FY25. Anshul Asawa, Managing Director & CEO, Avenue Supermarkets Ltd, said the geopolitical tensions led to some spike in consumer-buying during the month of March 2026 which normalised towards the end of the month. The company's business has largely not witnessed any supply chain disruptions thus far. "Two years and older DMart stores grew by 10.8 per cent during Q4 FY26 as compared to 8.1 per cent in Q4 FY25. Gross margins saw slight improvement and costs are largely in-line with business growth," said Asawa. "Our DMart Ready business continues to focus in key metro towns. We have further rationalised our delivery channels with renewed focus on home delivery as the preferred channel. We have discontinued our operations in one city during the quarter."

## BJP victory in Bengal to reshape state's power sector: JM Financial

**New Delhi:** A potential political shift in West Bengal could reshape the state's power sector, with brokerage JM Financial Institutional Securities flagging far-reaching implications when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will come to power following the recent assembly elections.

The state has long held a prominent place in India's energy landscape from hosting the country's first thermal power plant to pioneering rooftop solar and utility-scale renewable projects, alongside the high-performing Purulia pumped hydro facility.

Against this backdrop, policy direction under a new government could mark a decisive turning point for both legacy utilities and emerging energy investments.

The most immediate im-

act is likely to be felt by CESC Limited, the sole electricity distributor in Kolkata. The company has faced sustained scrutiny over tariff hikes, fuel adjustment charges and billing practices, with consumer protests and political opposition intensifying in recent years.

Notably, the BJP, led in the state by Suwendu Adhikari, had earlier mobilised protests against high electricity tariffs, alleging that CESC's monopoly has placed a heavy burden on households.

Regulatory headwinds have also added to the pressure. The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) recently declined to approve a proposed tariff for a wind-solar hybrid project by CESC's subsidiary, raising concerns around pricing transparency.

In this context, a BJP-led

administration is expected to prioritise consumer protection, with measures such as parallel licensing allowing multiple power distributors to operate within the same geography potentially gaining traction under the proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

The coal ecosystem in the state could also see renewed focus. Coal India Limited operates in West Bengal primarily through Eastern Coalfields, which contributes under 10 per cent of its total output.

The subsidiary has grappled with legacy challenges, including ageing underground mines, illegal mining activities and logistical bottlenecks.

Analysts believe a stronger emphasis on law and order could help accelerate project execution and improve operational efficiency.

Coal India's planned coal gasification project at Dankuni, aimed at producing methanol, is also expected to gain momentum under a more execution-focused policy regime, potentially positioning the state as a key node in cleaner coal technologies.

Meanwhile, Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) remains a critical player in the regional power ecosystem. With a diversified portfolio spanning 6,540 MW of thermal and 147 MW of hydro capacity, the PSU operates across both West Bengal and Jharkhand.

Backed by a tripartite ownership structure involving the Centre and state governments, the DVC reported revenue of Rs 23,900 crore and a net profit of Rs 1,200 crore in FY25, underscoring its strategic importance in the region's energy mix.

## Star Health targets Rs 24,000 cr GWP in FY27; eyes Tier-II, III expansion

**Hyderabad:** Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Ltd on Tuesday said it aims to achieve Rs 24,000 crore in Gross Written Premium (GWP) in the current fiscal, up from Rs 20,400 crore in FY26.

The company also plans to launch two affordable health insurance products during the fiscal year, aimed at expanding its reach in Tier-II and Tier-III markets, adding to its existing portfolio of 35 health insurance products catering to diverse customer segments.

Addressing a press conference, Managing Director and CEO Anand Roy said the company is targeting Rs 30,000 crore GWP by FY28, driven by deeper penetration into smaller towns and villages, along with improvements in customer and claims experience. The retail health segment contributed 96 per cent of the company's business, while the group portfolio accounted for the remaining 4 per cent, he said. In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the insurer settled claims worth Rs 1,254 crore in FY26, covering 1.8 lakh claims, marking a 24 per cent increase over Rs 1,014 crore in the previous fiscal. Since incep-



tion, it has settled claims worth over Rs 6,064 crore across more than 9.6 lakh cases in the two states.

Regional GWP rose to ₹2,268 crore in FY26 from Rs 1,928 crore in FY25, while the number of policies increased to 9.4 lakh from 8.8 lakh, he said.

The company has expanded its network to over 1,800 hospitals in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and more than 15,000 hospitals nationwide, supported

by 75-plus branches and over 89,000 advisors in the region. At the national level, he said the company settled claims worth Rs 11,903 crore, covering 30.6 lakh claims in FY26. Since inception, total claims settled stand at over Rs 67,800 crore across more than 1.5 crore claims. Roy said 75 per cent of claims are processed digitally, with 92 per cent of cashless claims settled within three hours.

## Sund Home Fin Net Profit up 15 pc at Rs. 282 cr in FY 26

**Chennai:** Sundaram Home Finance (SHF), the wholly owned subsidiary of Sundaram Finance Ltd., has registered a 15% rise in its net profit for the year ended 31st March 2026 at Rs. 282 crores as compared to Rs. 245 crores registered in the same period the previous year.

Disbursements for the year went up 5% to Rs. 6,842 crores as compared to Rs. 6,517 crores, while the Assets Under Management registered a 14% rise at Rs. 19,909 crores compared to Rs. 17,428 crores.

A company statement on Tuesday said the disbursements in the Emerging Business segment comprising of

Affordable Housing finance and small ticket loans crossed the milestone of Rs.500 crores in FY26 and ended the year with Rs.590 crores compared to Rs. 229 crores registered in the previous year.

During the year, the company also crossed the milestone of 100 Emerging Business branches and added over 500 employees and close to 5,000 customers during the year.

Commenting on the performance, SHF MD D. Lakshminarayanan said "Our prime business continues to do well. The emerging business has expanded to Karnataka, Andhra and Telangana on the back of an established

presence in TN. The emerging business segment saw a strong growth with its disbursements more than doubling in FY26. The contribution of this segment to the overall disbursements is now close to 10%. With our continued focus and expansion in this segment, we are confident of continuing the growth trajectory."

On the outlook for the year, he said, "in both the prime and the emerging business segment, we believe there are significant opportunities available in the mid-tier and smaller towns. Our expansion into new Tier 4 and 5 towns will drive our growth in the emerging business segment this year."

## India's mobility and logistics sector showed strong trucking activity during April: Shriram Finance

**New Delhi:** India's mobility and logistics sector maintained a surprisingly strong momentum throughout April 2024, carrying over the high-octane energy typically seen at the close of a financial year. According to the Shriram Finance monthly bulletin released on Tuesday, trucking activity remained robust despite the transition into a new fiscal period, signaling healthy underlying demand in the domestic supply chain.

Truck rentals across the nation's key trunk routes stayed largely firm, showing only marginal changes on a month-on-month basis. This stability suggests that the logistics network has successfully absorbed the post-fiscal-year lull, with year-over-year (Y-o-Y) data reflecting a deep-seated resilience in the transport of goods across major economic hubs.

Specific corridors saw notable upticks in pricing, with the Delhi-Kolkata-Delhi route leading the charge with a 2.4% increase. Similarly, the Kolkata-Guwahati-Kolkata route rose by approximately 2%, while other major paths like Delhi-Mumbai-Delhi and Mumbai-Chennai-Mumbai recorded modest gains, further proving that long-haul demand remains active.

In contrast, a few selected routes experienced a

slight softening. Corridors such as Mumbai-Kolkata-Mumbai and Delhi-Bengaluru-Delhi witnessed marginal declines in rentals, which experts attribute to localized pockets of softer demand or a temporary rebalancing of fleet availability in those specific regions.

When looking at the broader annual picture, the Y-o-Y growth in trucking activity is even more impressive.

The Delhi-Kolkata-Delhi route surged by nearly 12%, while the Bengaluru-Mumbai-Bengaluru and Mumbai-Chennai-Mumbai stretches both saw growth of about 10%, highlighting a significant expansion in regional trade over the past twelve months.

Sudarshan Holla, Joint Managing Director and COO of Commercial Vehicles at Shriram Finance, noted that while the fiscal year has had a stable start, environmental factors may soon play a role.

He warned that the extreme peak summer heat currently gripping the country could potentially slow down trucking operations in May as labor and machinery face harsher conditions.

The sector is also bracing for potential disruption due to industrial action. Transport associations have announced a three-day "chakka jam" (strike) starting May 21 in Delhi. This



protest is directed at higher environmental charges and the proposed ban on BS-IV trucks scheduled for November, with operators seeking urgent government intervention to mitigate the financial impact.

Fuel consumption patterns in April offered a slightly different perspective, with petrol and diesel usage falling by 3% and 5% respectively on a month-on-month basis.

This dip reflects a sequential moderation in freight movement following the frantic pace of March, though it remains within the expected seasonal range for the start of a new quarter.

Vehicle sales trends across the month presented a mixed bag of results. While some segments saw a pullback from March's high base, others showed remarkable strength. For instance, bus and maxi cab sales rose by 9% and 7% respectively, driven by a surge in passenger mobility demand as the travel season kicked off.

However, the high sales volume of March created a "high base effect" that made April's figures look softer in comparison for certain categories. Passenger vehicles, two-wheelers, and freight-oriented segments saw a seasonal cooling-off period as the initial rush for year-end tax benefits and fleet upgrades subsided.

The Electric Vehicle (EV) segment remains a bright spot in the report, maintaining an optimistic trajectory.

Electric three-wheelers, in particular, grew by 5% month-on-month, a trend fueled by the rapid and continued adoption of green energy solutions for commercial use and last-mile delivery services in urban centers.

Despite the monthly dip in electric two-wheelers and passenger EVs—again largely due to the record-breaking sales in March—the yearly growth remains astronomical.

On a Y-o-Y basis, electric two-wheelers rose by 69%, three-wheelers by

## India's manufacturing PMI rises to 54.7 in April: S&amp;P Global

**New Delhi:** India's manufacturing PMI rose to 54.7 in April, up from 53.9 in March, according to HSBC's India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which is compiled by S&P Global.

Despite rising from 53.9 in March to 54.7 in April, the report signalled the second-slowest improvement in overall operating conditions in close to four years and pointed out that April data showed mild recoveries in growth of new business intakes and production among Indian manufacturers, but rates of increase were still the second-weakest since 2022. It noted that the exports was a bright area, with firms welcoming the fastest upturn since last September. Companies continued to indicate that the war in the Middle East exerted upward pressure on inflation, while the



input costs and output charges rose at the quickest rates in 44 and six months respectively. The two largest sub-components of the PMI, new orders and output, rose since March but trailed readings seen in at least three-and-a-half years.