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

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

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

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

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

Pokhran-II consisted of a series of five underground nuclear weapon tests under the leadership of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and involved both fission and thermonuclear devices, signalling India's capability to develop advanced nuclear weapons systems.

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tension in Ch. Sambhajnagar as civic body bulldozes properties linked to AIMIM corporator

Ch. Sambhajnagar : Tension prevailed in the Naregaon area of Ch. Sambhajnagar on Wednesday morning after the Ch. Sambhajnagar Municipal Corporation carried out a bulldozer action against three allegedly illegal properties linked to AIMIM corporator Mateen Patel, who has recently come under scrutiny over allegations of providing shelter to Nida Khan in the alleged Nasik religious conversion case.

According to officials, the demolition operation commenced at around 6:15 AM amid heavy police security and administrative presence in the area. Three JCB machines were deployed to demolish the alleged unauthorised structures located in Naregaon, following directions issued by the civic administration.

The action was undertaken after municipal authorities claimed that legal notices had earlier been issued regarding the alleged illegal constructions. According to the administration, no satisfactory legal response had initially been submitted by corporator Mateen Patel in connection with the notices.

Officials further stated that the matter had been challenged before the court, but no relief was granted in favour of the corporator. Following the legal



developments, the municipal administration, along with police authorities, proceeded with the demolition drive under tight security arrangements.

The development triggered strong political reactions from the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM).

According to party sources, AIMIM state president and former Member of Parliament Intiaz Jaleel reached Naregaon at around 12:30 AM along with 34 corporators and a large number of party workers after receiving information about the proposed demolition operation.

The AIMIM alleged that the civic action was being carried out as part of "political revenge" and accused the authorities of selectively targeting opposition leaders.

Party workers gathered in large numbers in the area during the night, resulting in heightened tension and a heavy police deployment to maintain law and order.

Police personnel and senior administrative officials remained present throughout the operation to prevent any untoward incident.

The controversy is linked to the wider investigation into the alleged religious conversion case in Nasik, in which Nida Khan has been named as an accused. Allegations regarding shelter being provided to her had recently intensified political debate in Maharashtra, particularly involving AIMIM leaders.

The demolition drive has now added another political dimension to the ongoing controversy, with opposition leaders accusing the administration of misusing civic and police machinery for political purposes, while authorities have maintained that the action was purely based on violations related to illegal constructions.

IUML leadership meet today to finalise ministerial strategy

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

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

According to party sources, discussions are also likely to focus on internal power-sharing arrangements and representation from various regions and community segments within the party. There is speculation in political circles that a section within the IUML may press for the post of Deputy Chief Minister in the new government.

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

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

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

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

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

Nagpur : union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, has decided to slash the size of his official convoy by 50 per cent during his two-day visit to Maharashtra beginning Thursday, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for fuel conservation and austerity measures.

Gadkari is scheduled to tour various districts in Maharashtra on May 14 and 15 to review the progress of the Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj and Sant Tukaram Maharaj Palakhi Marg projects, key pilgrimage corridor developments in the state.

Ahead of the visit, the union Minister instructed local authorities to significantly reduce the number of escort and accompanying vehicles usually deployed in his convoy.

In a communication issued to officials, Gadkari stated that the convoy strength should be curtailed by half in view of the need to minimise fuel consumption and support national energy security efforts.

He also informed that he would travel by bus along with officials, security personnel and media representatives during the tour, saying the move would help improve traffic management and ensure greater public convenience.

The decision comes amid growing concerns over global crude oil supply disruptions following tensions in West Asia.

Addressing a public gathering in Hyderabad recently, PM Modi had urged citizens and government agencies to adopt fuel-saving practices, including greater use of public transport, carpooling, electric vehicles and work-from-home measures to reduce fuel consumption and save foreign exchange.



Gadkari is scheduled to

Nitin Gadkari Cuts Convoy by Half, Travels by Bus to Save Fuel

Mumbai : A court here today granted transit remand of two days to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), enabling the central agency to question Shubham Khairnar (30), a prime accused arrested in alleged NEET paper leak case. CBI had on Tuesday arrested Khairnar, resident of Nandgaon in Nashik district. He was today produced before the Killa court in Mumbai. While moving the remand application, CBI had sought his transit remand so that they could take him to Delhi for further investigation to trace other accused involved in the case.

Accused in NEET paper leak case remanded to CBI custody

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 144 MLAs who supported the motion included TVK's 104 MLAs (minus Speaker and Deputy Speaker) and one MLA restrained by Court in taking part in the trust vote of the total 107 MLAs as Vijay resigned one of the two seats he had won), 13 from five supporting parties, one from AMMK and the rest from the Rebel AIADMK MLAs.

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

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

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

AIADMK-led NDA, spoke pledging his support to Vijay, amid some interruptions, another ally, Udhayanidhi Stalin, urging the government to work for the welfare of all the sections, said the DMK, winning 108 seats, heralding a new era in the Dravidian heartland and ending the six-decade long entrenched bipolar domination by DMK and AIADMK, with the actor-turned-politician himself winning from two seats.

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

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

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

Winding up the debate, Leader of the Opposition

having 59 members, are walking out of the Assembly saying "I know this government will win and urged the government to work to fulfill the confidence response on it by the people and led his Party members out of the House.

Vijay in his first stint in electoral politics within two years of floating his own outfit, made a stunning entry

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

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

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

should abide by the orders of the Party Whip and former Minister Agri S S Krishnamurthy and those violating it would attract disqualification under the anti-defection law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



angement.

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

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

convoy while maintaining the mandatory security arrangements as per protocol.

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

ing from the crisis in West Asia.

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

Union Home Minister Amit Shah too adopted simi-

lar measures by cutting down vehicles in his convoy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fuel.

The Chief Minister said collective public participation would play a crucial role in reducing pressure on fuel consumption and protecting the country's economic stability during uncertain global conditions. He further urged people to adopt simpler lifestyles and avoid excessive spending in line with the Prime Minister's broader message on economic prudence. Majhi also called upon citizens to avoid unnecessary foreign travel, stating that reducing overseas trips could help save valuable foreign exchange reserves. In addition, he appealed to people to refrain from non-essential purchases such as gold, echoing the Centre's emphasis on careful spending during the current global crisis.

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

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

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

The poster prominently positions Shivakumar in a

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ideals championed by B. R. Ambedkar.

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

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

ernment led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sharma served as the Election Co-Incharge (Saha Prabhari) for the 2026 Assam Assembly Elections.

The NC leader said the people of Jammu and Kashmir had given a decisive mandate to the National Conference and rejected both the BJP and PDP.

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

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

and reflected public engagement.

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

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

Conference government or its ministers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

"Thousands of people

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

Referring to reports of informal engagements between retired diplomats and

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

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

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

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

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

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

NHPC during earlier NC-led governments.

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

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

Mangoes Spill Across Highway After Tempo Overturns In Palghar

Palghar : A tempo carrying mangoes from Gujarat to Mumbai overturned on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad National Highway near Chamadra bridge close to the Ghol toll plaza, creating chaos on the road as people rushed to collect the scattered fruit.

According to reports, the driver lost control of the vehicle, causing the tempo to overturn near the roadside. The driver suffered minor injuries in the accident.

After the crash, several boxes of mangoes fell onto the highway and spread across a large part of the



road. Soon after, local residents gathered at the spot carrying bags and sacks to

collect the mangoes lying on the highway.

Videos of people picking up mangoes from the road quickly spread on social media.

The sudden crowd on the busy highway also caused traffic disruption for some time before police cleared the area.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad National Highway, a vital artery connecting two major commercial hubs, became the site of a peculiar and chaotic scene after a tempo transporting a cargo of mangoes met with an accident.

Welfare Plot Turned Into Business Hub, FIR Filed In Mulund

Mumbai : A major case of alleged misuse of public welfare land has come to light in Mulund East after Navghar Police registered an FIR against developers, Blinkit Commerce and gym operators for illegally using a reserved plot for commercial activities.

The complaint was filed by Amar Rambhauji Khandar, Deputy Chief Engineer of the Building Proposal Department of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). According to officials, the land located at CTS No. 43/44/45/4B in Neelam Nagar was originally approved only for a social welfare centre and dispensary.

BMC records show that permission for the project was granted on March 10, 1988, after a municipal resolution passed on February 25, 1988. Later, an Intimation of Disapproval approval was issued on June 22, 1988, in the name of developer Champalal Vardhan and others. An Occupation Certificate for the building was finally issued on April 13, 2005.

Officials said that in October 2025, the civic body received information that commercial activities were being carried out from the premises. During inspection, authorities found that the place was being used as a Blinkit distribution centre.

Investigators also found that developer Kunal Vardhan had signed a leave-and-license agreement on February 27, 2025, with Blinkit Commerce and Sanskar Realtors Pvt. Ltd. to commercially use the ground floor, which was against the original approved purpose of the land.

Authorities said action had already been taken against the developer in 2023 under Section 52 of the MRTP Act at Navghar Police Station. Despite that, the premises continued to operate as a Blinkit hub and gymnasium. Officials from the T Ward later inspected the site and sealed the premises on October 25, 2025.

Jewellery Industry Supports Higher Gold Import Duty

Mumbai : The Gem and Jewellery Council has supported the Central Government's decision to increase the effective gold import duty from 6 per cent to 15 per cent.

GJC Chairman Rajesh Rokde said the move was temporary and taken in the larger national interest. He added that the gems and jewellery industry has always shown strength during difficult economic situations and would continue supporting government policies.

Rokde appealed to traders and businesses not to panic and said the council would continue working closely with the government and industry stakeholders to maintain stability and consumer confidence.

GJC Vice Chairman Avinash Gupta said gold and jewellery are deeply connected with India's economy, culture and savings habits. He requested traders to continue business operations responsibly and confidently.



He also said the council remains committed to protecting the interests of artisans, traders and consumers while ensuring long-term growth and stability in the

jewellery sector.

The decision by the Central Government to significantly raise the effective gold import duty from 6 per cent to 15 per cent has

sent ripples through the financial landscape of the country, yet it has found a surprising and robust ally in the Gem and Jewellery Council.

This regulatory shift represents a substantial leap in the cost of importing the precious metal, a move that typically triggers immediate concern within the retail sector, but the council has stepped forward to frame this as a necessary step for the broader health of the nation's economy.

By aligning themselves with the government, the leadership within the council is signaling a shift toward long-term fiscal responsibility over short-term market fluctuations.

GJC Chairman Rajesh Rokde has been vocal in his support, emphasizing that this dramatic increase in duty should be viewed as a temporary measure rather than a permanent fixture of the trade environment.

His perspective is rooted in the idea of the larger national interest, suggesting that the move is designed to stabilize the rupee and manage the current account deficit which often feels the weight of heavy gold imports.

Nepalese Man Found Dead At Vashi Ground

Navi Mumbai : A 43-year-old Nepalese man was found hanging from a tree at the NMSA ground in Vashi on Tuesday morning. Police suspect that stress and alcohol addiction may have been linked to the incident.

The deceased was identified as Rupbahadur Kunwar. Police said he had been living in Navi Mumbai for work for the last few years.

According to officials, Kunwar had developed a serious al-

cohol addiction and had been living in unstable conditions for the past few months. He was reportedly staying wherever he could after consuming alcohol.

At around 6 am on Tuesday, security guards at the NMSA ground noticed him hanging from a tree and informed the police. Vashi Police reached the spot and took custody of the body.

Since no identity documents were found with him, police took help from members of the Nep-

alese community to identify him. Later, the body was handed over to his relatives. Police have registered an Accidental Death Report and further investigation is underway.

The discovery of a 43-year-old man at the NMSA ground in Vashi has cast a somber shadow over the local community this Tuesday morning.

The deceased, identified as Rupbahadur Kunwar, a Nepalese national who had moved to Navi

Mumbai in search of a better life and employment, was found in a tragic state that has prompted a deep look into the struggles faced by migrant workers.

This incident has highlighted the often-overlooked emotional and psychological burdens that individuals carry while living far from their primary support systems and families.

According to the Vashi Police, the initial investigation suggests that Kunwar's life had

become increasingly difficult in recent months due to a combination of severe stress and a burgeoning struggle with alcohol.

It appears that these factors may have created a sense of isolation and despair, leading to the unfortunate circumstances found at the sports ground.

The police are looking into his personal history to understand the exact pressures he was facing during his final days in the city.

SBI Says Strict KYC Rules Help Track Illegal Money

Mumbai : State Bank of India Managing Director Ashwini Kumar Tewari said banks in India work under very strict rules related to money laundering and transaction monitoring under Reserve Bank of India regulations.

Speaking at a FICCI event, Tewari explained that banks are required to carefully monitor customer transactions to prevent

illegal money movement and financial fraud.

He said the Know Your Customer (KYC) process in banks is more detailed compared to many other sectors because banks need to understand how money moves in and out of customer accounts.

According to Tewari, banks are expected to closely track financial transactions and ensure

all activities follow regulatory guidelines. Due to these responsibilities, strict checks are necessary while opening new bank accounts.

He also said compliance requirements under RBI rules have increased the workload on banks, but strong monitoring systems are important to identify suspicious transactions and maintain transparency

in the banking system.

Tewari added that strict KYC procedures and regular monitoring help banks reduce risks linked to money laundering and other financial crimes.

He stressed that banks cannot take a relaxed approach while onboarding customers because regulations demand proper verification and continuous monitoring.

Strict Warning To BLOs Over Voter List Revision Work

Navi Mumbai : Navi Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Dr. Kailas Shinde has warned Booth Level Officers (BLOs) of strict action if they show negligence during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

The Election Commission drive aims to make voter lists more accurate by matching the 2024 electoral rolls with the final voter list of 2002.

Officials said names that are not verified during this process may be removed and fresh registration may be required.

Recently, Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer S. Chockalingam reviewed the progress of the work during his visit to the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation headquarters. After the review,

Additional Commissioner Sunil Pawar held a meeting with Electoral Registration Officers and senior civic officials.

Commissioner Shinde said any employee neglecting this important election-related duty would face strict legal action. He directed all BLOs to complete the work correctly and within the given deadline.

Officials also pointed out that some BLOs had not reported for duty even after receiving appointment orders, while others were delaying their assigned work.

The revision process includes checking unclear voter photographs, removing duplicate or wrong entries and verifying similar demographic records. BLOs are carrying out

field verification with the help of civic staff, teachers and ASHA workers.

Authorities have also asked local corporators and political party representatives to appoint Booth Level Agents to support the work.

Citizens have been requested to verify their names in the 2002 voter list or provide details of their parents or grandparents for verification through the BLO app. Officials said the exercise is important to ensure that only eligible voters remain on the electoral rolls.

Residents from Airoli and Belapur constituencies have been urged to cooperate with BLOs visiting homes for verification, as unverified names may be deleted from the voter list.

Editorial

Corporate Jihad and Security Under Siege

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Mission for Cotton Productivity"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ceive a fair share of the value created.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

balance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maharashtra ATS launches statewide crackdown on Pakistan-based gangster network

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) carried out a major statewide operation on Wednesday, launching coordinated raids across multiple cities targeting individuals allegedly linked to Pakistan-based gangster Shahzad Bhatti and the Dogar gang.

The simultaneous raids began around 8 am and covered key urban centres across Maharashtra.

According to ATS officials, raids were conducted in Nalasopara, Mira Road, Nagpur, Pune, Mumbai, Akola, Nanded, Nashik and Jalgaon as part of the operation targeting networks suspected to be associated with



the gangsters either directly or through social media platforms.



The ATS stated that the ongoing action is focused on identifying and

questioning people who were found to be in contact with the gangsters or were

allegedly following and supporting their activities online.

Officials said those under scrutiny include individuals suspected of maintaining direct links as well as those connected through digital communication and social media interactions.

The agency further said the operation forms part of a wider campaign to dismantle gangster networks across the state.

In Maharashtra and to monitor any possible links with Pakistan-based criminal elements.

Investigations and questioning were continuing at multiple locations till the filing of this report.

Two persons drown on Hiralge-Kovad dam in Ajara tehsil

Kolhapur: In a tragic incident that has cast a shadow of grief over the Mazgaon and Ajara regions, two individuals lost their lives in a drowning mishap at the Shera (Hiranyakeshi) River dam near the Mazgaon area of Ajara tehsil.

The victims have been identified as Sunil Sheikh (Sonal) Chauhan (41) and his relative, marking a somber moment for the local community as they grapple with the sudden loss of two lives.

The victims were identified as Sunil Chauhan, a resident of the area, and his nephew, who had reportedly traveled to the location for a brief visit. The duo had ventured toward the water body

located near the Meenakshi Apartment vicinity in the early evening hours of May 12, 2026, seeking a moment of respite from the summer heat before the tragedy unfolded.

According to local police reports, the incident occurred around 5:45 PM when the two men approached the catchment area of the dam. Preliminary investigations suggest that they may have underestimated the depth of the water or the strength of the undercurrents near the dam's structure, leading to the fatal accident that occurred in a matter of moments.

The alarm was raised when the two individuals failed to return home,

prompting family members and local residents to launch a frantic search operation. Upon reaching the banks of the river, search parties discovered the personal belongings of the victims, including their footwear and mobile phones, left untouched on the shore.

Acting on the information provided by the locals, the Ajara Police, supported by local divers and rescue teams, initiated a search and recovery mission late that evening.

Despite the challenging visibility and the vast expanse of the water body, the teams worked tirelessly to locate the missing persons throughout the night and into the early morning.

Feline Club of India to Host World's Biggest Cat Show in Navi Mumbai

Mumbai: The Feline Club of India (FCI) will organise what it described as the world's biggest cat show on May 17 at the CIDCO Exhibition Centre in Vashi, Navi Mumbai.

The event would feature more than 600 cats, international judges, adoption initiatives, educational activities and participation from major pet industry brands.

Details of the event and the organisation's nationwide feline welfare initiatives were announced during a press conference here on Wednesday by FCI President Saquib Pathan.

Pathan said the upcoming exhibition would be the sixth cat show organised by FCI in Mumbai and that every edition had surpassed previous records in participation and scale. Judges from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand will participate and evaluate cats belonging to several recognised breeds.

According to FCI, visitors attending the exhibition will get an opportunity to appreciate more than 600 cats representing various breeds including Persian, Bengal, Classic Long Hair, Exotic Short Hair, Maine Coon and several other internationally recognised feline varieties.

Pathan said the organisation had also undertaken special efforts to recognise Indian stray cats by registering the breed under the name 'INDIMAU', thereby encouraging the participation of Indian-origin cats in organised cat shows and promoting indigenous feline breeds at national and international platforms.

The exhibition will remain open for the public from 11 am to 7 pm. Organisers said the programme would include children's fun

zones, educational sessions on feline care, awareness activities for pet owners and opportunities for visitors to interact directly with breeders, veterinarians and cat experts. NGOs associated with animal welfare and cat rescue will also participate in the programme, enabling visitors to adopt cats during the event.

FCI informed that the exhibition hall, spread across nearly 5,000 square metres, would house more than 60 stalls from companies dealing in pet food, grooming products, accessories, healthcare services and other cat-related products. Visitors are expected to receive discounts, promotional offers and product demonstrations during the event.

Pathan said the Feline Club of India was presently the only active organisation in the country dedicated exclusively to feline welfare and cat fancy promotion. He said the organisation was founded by cat enthusiasts, veterinarians and animal lovers with the objective of improving awareness regarding cat upkeep, responsible breeding and overall feline welfare standards in the country.

FCI representatives informed that the organisation currently operates through regional clubs in major Indian cities and regularly conducts conventions, registration drives and cat shows across the country. The organisation said it was also working with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, to introduce genetic fingerprinting systems and certification procedures aimed at improving pedigree identification and ancestral tracking.

The organisation stated that cat registration and

breed certification programmes were helping establish documented lineage systems and maintain breed standards throughout India. FCI also highlighted its focus on microchipping cats in order to prevent inbreeding and improve the feline gene pool. According to the organisation, inbreeding can lead to structural deformities among cats, while pedigree tracking helps maintain healthy breed standards.

FCI further stated that it discourages inter-breed breeding in order to preserve breed characteristics and genetic purity among recognised cat breeds. The organisation said one of its major objectives was to provide a common platform for cat owners, breeders and experts while encouraging responsible breeding practices across India.

Speaking about the organisation's broader vision, Pathan said FCI aimed to unite the Indian cat community on a common platform while promoting the welfare of both pedigree and stray cats. The organisation regularly conducts seminars and educational conventions for cat owners in association with veterinarians and international experts, focusing on feline nutrition, diseases, healthcare and responsible ownership practices.

FCI informed that it had conducted more than 80 conventions and awareness programmes across India, while many sessions after the Covid pandemic were shifted to online platforms including Facebook, YouTube and webinars. The organisation stated that it had also conducted more than 350 classroom activities and training sessions and organised over 100 webinars for breeders and cat owners.

Prime Minister Modi should first cancel his foreign tours: Hindu Mahasabha

Kolhapur: Following the austerity plea by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha (ABHM) in a sarcastic reaction, said that PM Modi should first cancel his foreign tours, his ministers should reduce the number of vehicles in their convoy and then give advice to

the people.

In a press statement, which was also handed to the district collector Vijay Rathod, ABHM district president Abhijeet Patil said that PM Modi's statement to buy less gold, reduce the use of edible oil and private cars, and prioritize working from home, has created

confusion across the country.

After the assembly election results, the PM has made such a statement, which has confused the citizens across the country.

Patil asked in his statement, what exactly does Prime Minister Modi want to prove by making such a

statement? The country has already fallen into the abyss of inflation with the prices of domestic gas, petrol and diesel already reaching an all-time high, but he is not saying anything about it.

He said "It is not the right for him to give such advice to the people. First, Prime Minister Modi

should start this with himself, and cancel foreign tours. He should instruct his colleagues to reduce the fleet of vehicles, and cancel the pensions of MPs and MLAs across the country."

A delegation led by Patil met district collector Vijay Rathod and handed over a copy of the statement.

Mumbai Police arrest two for firing at D-Company aide's son in Mazgaon

Mumbai: The Mumbai Crime Branch has made a significant breakthrough by arresting two primary suspects in connection with the daylight shooting of Sameer Sheikh, the 41-year-old son of notorious D-Company associate Asif Dadi. Following their apprehension, the duo was produced before a local metropolitan court today, which granted police custody of the accused until May 15, 2026, to facilitate further interrogation.

The incident, which sent shockwaves through South Mumbai, occurred on the evening of May 12 around 5:45 pm. According to the official police report, the victim was targeted near Meenakshi Apartment in the Mazgaon area. While the bullets were fired at close range, the specific details regarding injuries or the immediate aftermath have been kept under wraps as the investigation deepens.

The breakthrough in the case came swiftly, thanks to a coordinated effort by the Mumbai Police Crime Branch. Investigators relied heavily on technical analysis, which included scour-

ing local CCTV footage and tracking mobile tower signals, alongside a network of human intelligence inputs that eventually narrowed down the location of the suspects.

The late-night operation on May 13 culminated in a high-stakes arrest near the iconic Mahim Dargah. Law enforcement officials moved in based on precise coordinates, successfully intercepting both the alleged primary shooter and his accomplice before they could flee the city or go deeper into hiding.

During the subsequent search and seizure, the police managed to recover critical pieces of evidence that link the suspects directly to the crime scene.

This included the firearm used in the attack, the motorcycle utilized for the getaway, and several mobile phones which are currently being analyzed for digital footprints and communication logs.

The legal framework for the prosecution has been established at the Byculla Police Station, where a formal First Information Report (FIR) was registered.

Hansraj Ahir gives up security escort following Modi's appeal

Chandrapur: Following the recent geopolitical escalations in the Middle East, former Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Hansraj Ahir has taken a proactive stance in support of national energy security. Ahir announced that he would immediately discontinue the use of the police escort vehicle typically attached to his security convoy, citing a need for personal accountability in fuel consumption.

This decision comes as a direct response to a nationwide appeal made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Prime Minister has called upon citizens and leaders alike to practice extreme fuel conservation as the ongoing Iran-US-Israel conflict continues to destabilize global energy markets and disrupt traditional supply chains. The international conflict has significantly hampered crude oil supply routes, creating a ripple effect that directly impacts India's import of petrol, diesel, and natural gas. With the threat of rising fuel prices and potential supply shortages looming, the government has moved into a defensive

economic posture to safeguard the nation's reserves.

In a formal statement, Ahir emphasized that the Prime Minister's appeal is not merely a suggestion but a necessity that should be embraced by every citizen. He framed the act of conservation as a vital contribution to the national interest, urging others in positions of privilege to audit their own energy usage.

"Every citizen should respond to the Prime Minister's appeal and contribute towards fuel conservation," Ahir stated. He believes that collective small actions can lead to a significant cumulative impact, helping the country navigate the current volatility without placing an undue burden on the national exchequer.

Ahir's decision to drop his escort vehicle is a symbolic gesture aimed at reducing the carbon footprint and fuel dependency of political entourages.

He clarified that from this point forward, he would only utilize vehicles when absolutely necessary, opting for more efficient travel arrangements whenever possible.

The geopolitical tension between Iran, Israel, and the United States has specifically targeted key maritime corridors, most notably the Strait of Hormuz. As a significant portion of India's energy imports passes through this narrow waterway, any prolonged disruption poses a severe challenge to India's energy security.

The Prime Minister's broader strategy involves encouraging the public to transition toward public transport and minimize domestic gas consumption. By reducing the national demand for fuel, the government hopes to create a buffer against the price hikes that often follow disruptions in the Middle Eastern oil belt.

Ahir's move is being viewed by political analysts as one of the first high-profile responses to this call for austerity.

It sets a precedent for other former and current ministers to evaluate their security protocols and logistical requirements in light of the global energy crisis. Beyond the immediate fuel savings, the gesture is intended to foster a sense of national solidarity.

Arrest NTA chief Abhishek Singh for NEET paper leak, demands Maha Congress

Mumbai: Maharashtra State Congress Committee President Harshwardhan Sapkal has demanded the immediate dismissal and arrest of National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General Abhishek Singh over allegations linked to the leakage of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) question paper.

Sapkal alleged that repeated examination irregularities reflect a deep failure in the system and accused the government of allowing "paper leak mafia" networks to operate without fear.

He said the alleged NEET paper leak had severely impacted the future of lakhs of students aspiring to become doctors, calling it a serious breach of trust in the national examination system. "The exam paper leak mafia is operating freely because criminals are getting immunity under the BJP rule. They are playing with the future and lives of lakhs of students," Sapkal said.

He further criticised the administration, claiming that the cancellation or disruption of the NEET examination had "shattered the dreams" of millions of students across the country.



"Can't the BJP government conduct even a single exam?" he asked, attacking the government's examination management system.

Sapkal said the repeated failures in conducting national-level exams indicated inefficiency and administrative weakness within the system. He also claimed that students and parents would not forgive what he described as the government's inability to ensure a fair and secure examination process.

"The very fact that the BJP government cannot even conduct examinations is a sign of an inefficient government," he said.

The Congress leader said his party stood firmly with students and would continue to demand accountability from the government on the issue.

"The Congress party has always raised the voice of the people. The Congress party is with the students to hold the government accountable for the NEET paper leak case," he added.

Sapkal noted that the NEET examination conducted on May 3 had been compromised, affecting nearly 22 lakh students who had appeared for the test after months of preparation.

He said any re-examination would cause further distress and uncertainty for students and their families. "The NEET exam is a symbol of many years of hard work, sacrifice, discipline and dreams of becoming a doctor," he said, adding that such incidents damage public confidence in competitive examinations.

The Congress leader also

referred to previous allegations related to NEET-UG 2024, claiming that malpractice cases were reported but not adequately addressed.

He accused Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan of failing to take strict action despite earlier controversies linked to examination irregularities.

Sapkal further alleged that no significant corrective steps had been taken despite earlier incidents of alleged malpractice in Bihar and Hazaribagh. He also criticised what he described as a lack of accountability, claiming that no senior minister had resigned despite repeated controversies under the current government since 2014. Sapkal additionally referred to alleged irregularities in Maharashtra during the tenure of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, claiming that several paper leak incidents had occurred without strict action. He also pointed to the SRPF Daund constable recruitment examination held on May 2, 2026, alleging that a large number of questions were reportedly taken from a specific private publisher's book, calling it another example of malpractice in competitive exams.

Speaker Scraps Japan Tour as BJP Mumbai Chief Amit Satam Draws Fire Over 25-Car Convoy

Mumbai: Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar has made headlines by officially cancelling a high-profile diplomatic visit to Japan. The decision was framed as a strategic move to promote fiscal discipline, signaling a shift toward more stringent oversight of government-funded international travel.

The delegation, which originally included 12 MLAs, was slated to visit two Japanese prefectures following a formal invitation from local governors. Despite the diplomatic importance of the trip, the tour was abruptly called off at the eleventh hour to align with broader national interests and economic sensibilities.

This specific decision follows a direct appeal from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who recently urged political leaders across India to scale back on non-essential foreign travel. The Prime Minister's directive aims to mitigate public expenditure and address global energy concerns by minimizing fuel and resource consumption.

State officials clarified that the cancellation was a deliberate attempt to set a standard for responsible governance. By prioritizing the state treasury over international diplomatic engagements, Narwekar intended to demonstrate that the administration is serious about public expenditure control during periods of global economic uncertainty.

The move initially garnered widespread appreciation across the political spectrum in Maharashtra. Many observers viewed the Speaker's choice as a symbolic and necessary step toward



political accountability, proving that leadership is willing to make sacrifices to uphold the spirit of austerity measures.

However, the goodwill generated by Narwekar's decision was quickly overshadowed by a brewing political storm in Mumbai. While the Speaker was cutting costs, other members of the ruling party were being accused of excessive spending and resource mismanagement during local administrative duties. The controversy centers on Mumbai BJP President Amit Satam, who recently conducted an official inspection of pre-monsoon desilting work. These routine "nala cleaning" checks in the western suburbs are meant to ensure the city is prepared for the heavy rains, but the logistics of the visit drew sharp criticism. Eyewitnesses and media reports highlighted that Satam's convoy was unexpectedly massive, reportedly comprising roughly 25 vehicles. This fleet included a mix of private luxury SUVs, cars belonging to various party officials, and several official vehicles from the Brihanmumbai

Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Opposition leaders were quick to seize on the visual of the long motorcade, arguing that it stood in direct contradiction to the Prime Minister's fuel conservation plea. They pointed out the irony of a leader using dozens of vehicles for a local inspection while the national leadership calls for restraint.

The incident has transformed into a major political flashpoint in the state. Opponents of the current administration have accused the ruling BJP of hypocrisy, suggesting that their commitment to austerity is merely a "paper policy" that is not being practiced on the ground by their own representatives.

Among the most vocal critics was Rohit Pawar, who utilized sharp sarcasm to highlight the discrepancy. Pawar questioned how a 25-car convoy for a routine municipal inspection could possibly be justified under the umbrella of the government's touted austerity guidelines. Pawar further remarked that such displays of excess undermine the public's trust in government mandates. He suggested that when leaders ignore their own advice regarding fuel consumption, it sends a contradictory and damaging message to a public already grappling with rising costs. Mocking the situation further, Pawar linked the fuel controversy to recent government suggestions regarding the reduction of household expenses, such as cooking oil usage. He argued that if citizens are expected to cut back on essentials, political leaders must provide practical examples of restraint in their daily professional lives.

Akshay Kumar, Vidya Balan and Anees Bazmee's untitled comedy film to release on Dec 4

Mumbai: Bollywood actors Akshay Kumar and Vidya Balan are set to reunite on the big screen for an untitled comedy entertainer directed by Anees Bazmee, which is slated for a theatrical release on December 4.

The upcoming film recently completed its shooting schedule in Kerala, and reports suggest that the makers may soon unveil a fresh look or still featuring Akshay Kumar from the project.

The film marks another collaboration between Akshay Kumar and Anees Bazmee, regarded as one of Hindi cinema's most successful actor-director combinations.

Over the years, the duo has delivered several popular entertainers known for their humour, family appeal and commercial success, making the new project one of the most anticipated comedy films of the year.

The movie is being produced under the banner of Sri



Venkateswara Creations and features an ensemble cast including Raashi Khanna, Vijay Raaz and Sudesh Lahiri in pivotal roles.

The project also marks the much-awaited reunion of Akshay Kumar and Vidya Balan, whose on-screen pairing has remained popular among audiences through films they have worked on

together in the past.

Industry observers believe the chemistry between the two actors is likely to be one of the major highlights of the film.

The film is being produced by Shirish Reddy and Kuldeep Rathore, while Akshay Kumar's production house Cape of Good Films is also associated with the project.

ect.

This venture is significant for Sri Venkateswara Creations as it marks the banner's 60th production.

Producer Dil Raju is backing the film, continuing his tradition of mounting large-scale commercial entertainers featuring leading stars and established filmmakers.

According to reports, the shooting of the film is progressing as per schedule, with the production team aiming for a smooth completion ahead of its release.

The makers are reportedly planning a major promotional campaign in the coming months as anticipation around the project continues to grow.

The combination of Akshay Kumar's comic timing and Anees Bazmee's expertise in the comedy genre has already generated considerable buzz among moviegoers.

Fans are also excited about Vidya Balan's return to a full-fledged commercial comedy alongside Kumar after several years.

With its star-studded cast, experienced creative team and focus on humour and family entertainment, the untitled film is expected to emerge as one of the biggest family entertainers of late 2026.

'Lakadbagha 2: The Monkey Business' set for exclusive screening at Cannes' Marché du Film

Mumbai: Actor-director Anshuman Jha's film "Lakadbagha 2: The Monkey Business" is set for an exclusive screening at the Marché du Film Market, the industry section of the Cannes Film Festival.

The film is currently being prepared for international distribution ahead of its official world premiere this year. Backed by German production company Webfilm Productions and is one of the select Asian action films at Cannes.

Anshuman Jha's second directorial venture is being billed as the world's first animal-loving vigilante franchise. The film is expected to attract the attention of major distributors and studios worldwide, including Toho, Kino, and The Joker Films.

Set in Indonesia, "Lakadbagha 2: The Monkey Business" is being touted as one of India's most raw and powerful hand-to-hand action films. The film pushes



es the boundaries of the genre with its realistic and powerful action choreography and storytelling.

It is also the first official co-production between India and Indonesia. It stars Sunny Pang (Headshot, Havoc), Dan Chupong (Ong-Bak), Adil Hussain (Life of Pi), Sarah-Jane Dias (Angry Indian Goddesses) and Jha (LSD, Chauranga).

Jha said, "Lakadbaagha 1" was inspired by my love for dogs, while 'Lakad-

bagha 2: The Monkey Business' extends that thought to all animals. Animals are disappearing because humanity is disappearing. We wanted to make the action not just bigger, but more meaningful. Because beyond the battles, the biggest question is what you stand for. Marché du Film allows us to bring this story to audiences around the world who love cinema that connects with both the heart and the mind."

Powerful trailer of 'System' unleashed

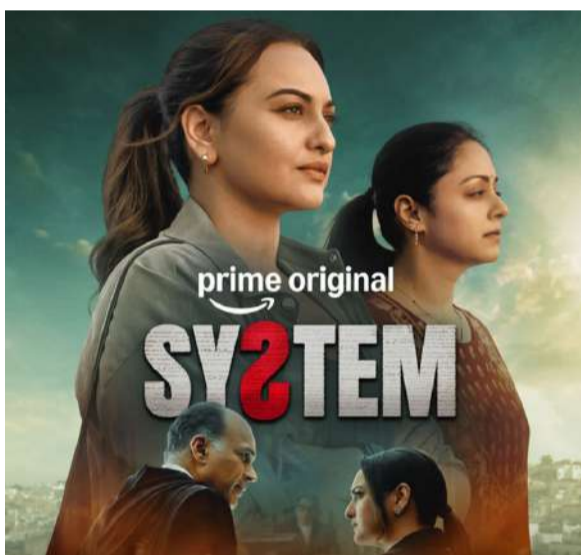
Mumbai: The makers of the courtroom drama titled "System" have released the gripping trailer promising high emotional stakes and intense legal confrontations.

The Prime Original thriller is directed by Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and produced by Pammi Baweja, Harman Baweja, and Smita Baliga under the banner of Baweja Studios.

The film is scripted by Harman Baweja, Arun Sukumar, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, Tasneem Lokhandwala and Akshat Ghildial. "System" stars Sonakshi Sinha, Jyothika and Ashutosh Gowariker in lead roles. They will also feature Preeti Agarwal, Adinath Kothare, Ashriya Mishra, Gaurav Pandey, and Sayandeep Sengupta in pivotal roles.

"System" will premiere exclusively on Prime Video in Hindi on May 22 in India and in over 240 countries and territories worldwide.

The trailer begins with Neha, a determined young lawyer played by Sonakshi Sinha. She receives a daunting challenge from her father (Ashutosh Gowariker) to prove herself if she wants to become a partner in his firm. To meet this challenge, she brings in Sarika (Jyotika), a



sharp courtroom stenographer with ulterior motives.

The trailer then offers glimpses of fast-paced courtroom battles, complex relationships, and several powerful moments. Powerful dialogue like "The voice of the poor is lost in the noise of the rich" directly highlights the film's core conflict. The trailer begs the question: in a system where influence and power can trump truth, is justice dead or does it still have a fighting chance?

Sinha, who plays Neha, said, "Playing this character has been a very special and

satisfying experience for me. I'm always drawn to stories that challenge me as an artist, and Prime Video has given me the opportunity to explore different genres and themes, from Daadur to System. This original film is not just a legal drama, but also a reflection of the society we live in, where justice can sometimes seem as fragmented as the social structures around us. Ashwini's clear vision helped me deliver my best, and I'm excited to see how audiences respond to System when it premieres."

Alia Bhatt: "Why do we have to alienate anybody?"

Mumbai: Alia Bhatt is once again drawing global attention at the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, not only for her fashion appearances but also for her views on cinema, storytelling and audience representation in films.

During an interaction with The Hollywood Reporter India at Cannes, the actor spoke about the need for more inclusive storytelling in Indian cinema and questioned the long-standing perception surrounding gender-based audience targeting.

Discussing the type of cinema she hopes to see more often, Alia referred to several successful Hollywood productions that resonated strongly with women audiences while also achieving global popularity.

She cited films such as Barbie, Wuthering Heights and The Devil Wears Prada 2 as examples of projects that connected with viewers through storytelling rather than gender-specific marketing. Speaking about the Indian film industry and discussions around box office trends, Alia pointed out that conversations often revolve around the idea that a majority of moviegoers are male and that films therefore need to cater primarily to them.

"In India, somehow when we talk about box office numbers, there's a conversation that comes up pretty often, 'oh 75% of movie-going audience is male, so we need to cater to the mass'. This conversation comes up quite a bit. But, I only wonder if we are catering just to the men, then what happens to the women?" she said.

Alia Bhatt further stressed that films should not be restricted by gender expectations and said storytelling should remain the central focus of cinema. "I am not saying that we alienate the men, but then why do we have to alienate anybody? Why do we have to cater to one gender? Why can't we make movies that are gender agnostic, where the storytelling takes centre stage?" she said during her interaction at the Cannes Film Festival.

According to the actor, whether a film stars a man or a woman should not matter as long as the story is engaging, relatable and emotionally impactful for audiences. "Whether it stars a man or a woman, that should not matter. It is the storytelling that should matter. So, I am just hoping we have more of that," Alia added. Apart from her remarks on cinema and representation, the actor has

also been making headlines for her appearances at Cannes this year.

Alia is attending the international film festival as a global ambassador for L'Oréal Paris for the second consecutive year. Her red carpet appearances, fashion choices and media interactions at Cannes have generated widespread attention across global entertainment platforms and social media. The actor's presence at the festival has further strengthened her growing international visibility and appeal among global audiences.

Industry observers have noted that Alia's participation at Cannes reflects the increasing representation of Indian actors at major international film events. Her comments on inclusive storytelling have also sparked discussions online about gender representation and audience targeting in Indian cinema.



Sonal Chauhan on making Punjabi film debut with Shera, "Mujhe Punjab se ishq ho gaya hai"

Mumbai: Actress Sonal Chauhan, widely recognized for her roles in Bollywood and Telugu cinema, is now embarking on a heartfelt journey into the vibrant world of Punjabi films. She is preparing for the highly anticipated release of her upcoming project, Shera, which is officially slated to hit theatres on May 15, 2026. The film is being touted as a poignant family drama that explores the intricate dynamics of domestic life and traditional values.



Starring the versatile Parmish Verma alongside Sonal in lead roles, the movie marks a significant milestone in Chauhan's career as her official debut in the Punjabi film industry. Reflecting on her

experience, Sonal shared that working in a new linguistic environment has been both a joyful and personally enriching endeavor. For the actress, this transition wasn't just a professional move but a way to honor her long-standing admiration for the Punjabi language, its soulful music, and its rich, welcoming culture. During a recent media interaction, Sonal spoke candidly about the deep emotional bond she has formed with the region. She expressed that the time spent filming in the heart of Punjab allowed her to experience the local lifestyle firsthand, leading to a profound attachment that she hadn't anticipated when she first signed the project. "I am in love with Punjab; mujhe Punjab se ishq ho gaya hai," Sonal remarked with genuine warmth. She noted that while she has always admired the language from afar, being part of Shera provided the perfect platform for her to immerse

herself in its nuances and actively work on improving her linguistic skills. The actress also highlighted the influence of Punjabi music on her personal life, stating that the rhythmic and melodic nature of the songs has always resonated with her. She finds a unique sense of joy and comfort in the language, which she believes carries an inherent warmth that translates beautifully onto the silver screen. Sonal was quick to praise her co-star, Parmish Verma, for his instrumental role in her transition. She mentioned that Parmish went above and beyond to help her polish her dialogues, ensuring her pronunciation and cadence felt authentic to the local audience, which was a vital part of her preparation. While she has gained a foundational grasp of the language through this film, Sonal remains humble about her progress. She admitted that while she can now hold a basic conversation in Punjabi, she views this as just the beginning of her education and hopes to achieve native-level fluency as she takes on more projects in the region. "I can speak a little now, but hopefully by my next Punjabi movie, I'll be a pro," she added with a smile. This dedication to her craft and her respect for the regional audience has already garnered positive attention from fans who appreciate her effort to blend in seamlessly. Her connection to the project goes far beyond the script and the language. Sonal revealed that she felt a spiritual awakening of sorts while filming, as she was exposed to the deep-rooted traditions and spiritual practices that define the Punjabi way of life, particularly those associated with Sikhism.

The actress shared that her understanding of the region grew significantly as she explored the profound concepts of Gurbani.

Aaron Paul boards season 3 of 'Fallout'

Mumbai: Post-apocalyptic series "Fallout" has tapped Aaron Paul for its third instalment.

Annabel O'Hagan and Dave Register have also been upped to series regulars for the upcoming season alongside Frances Turner, who was upped to series regular in Season 2, according to DEADLINE.

Fallout is produced by Kilter Films, with executive producers Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy. Geneva Robertson-Dworet and Graham Wagner serve as executive producers, creators and showrunners for the series, which has surpassed 100 million viewers across its first two seasons.

Having already amassed



over 100 million viewers across its first two seasons, Fallout has emerged as one of Prime Video's most successful and culturally resonant original series.

Paul is no stranger to working with Nolan and Lisa Joy from their time together on HBO's Westworld. Following his multi-Em-

devastated by nuclear war. Set two centuries after the apocalypse, the story follows inhabitants of luxurious underground shelters as they emerge into a hostile wasteland filled with bizarre, brutal and unpredictable dangers.

The cast includes Ella Purnell, Aaron Moten, Walton Goggins, Kyle MacLachlan, Moisés Arias and Turner.

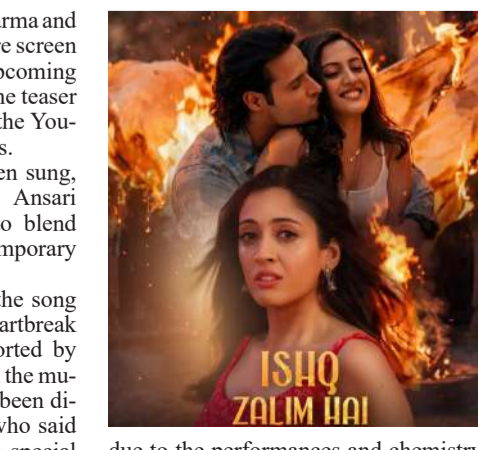
Todd Howard of Bethesda Game Studios also executive produces along with James Altman for Bethesda Softworks and Margot Lulick. Amazon MGM Studios and Kilter Films produce in association with Bethesda Game Studios and Bethesda Softworks.

Aditi Sharma and Hamd Khan come together for music video 'Ishq Zaalim Hai'

Mumbai: Actress Aditi Sharma and actor Hamd Khan are set to share screen space for the first time in the upcoming music video Ishq Zaalim Hai, the teaser of which has been released on the YouTube channel of Venus Originals.

The romantic track has been sung, written and composed by Ansari Mohsin, who has attempted to blend emotional lyrics with a contemporary romantic musical style.

According to the makers, the song focuses on themes of love, heartbreak and emotional intensity, supported by visually dramatic storytelling in the music video. The video album has been directed by Rhythmic Sanadhya, who said the project became even more special



due to the performances and chemistry

shared by the lead actors.

Speaking about working with Aditi Sharma, Sanadhya praised the actress for her professionalism and emotional depth during the shoot.

"Aditi Sharma is a very accomplished artist and it was very easy to shoot with her. She brought life to the emotional scenes and portrayed the character very well," the director said.

He also appreciated Hamd Khan's contribution to the project and noted that the actor is also known as a skilled mehndi artist apart from his acting work.

Aditi Sharma, while talking about the project, shared details about her artistic journey and background in the entertainment industry.

SPORTS

Aryan Age 07

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

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

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

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

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



"It seems like my coaching career comes to an end after 1.5 years, during which we played 5 tournaments and secured 5 podium finishes, including a Junior World Cup bronze medal," Sreejesh wrote.

Sreejesh said coaches are usually removed after poor results, making his situation difficult to understand.

"I have heard about coaches getting fired after bad performances. But this is the first time I am experiencing being removed to make way for a foreign coach."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Confident Swiatek rediscovers ruthless best in Italian Open

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

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

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

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

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

Open title next month, according to BBC Sport.

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

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

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

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

ain's Emma Raducanu ended.

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

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

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

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

African Athletics Championships in Ghana inspire medal & qualification push

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

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

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

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

Local athlete Solomon Diamo said he was pleased with his opening performance and remained focused on qualifying for the Commonwealth Games and the World Athletics Championships.

"In the 2024 African Games, I got an injury, and after I recovered, my coach pushed me hard to achieve my dreams. For this year, I will not disappoint myself. I'm just praying that my time will qualify me for

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

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

"To me, the goal was to make it to the next level because I knew the first two would go to the semifinal automatically. I know my home country will expect a lot from me, and I know they have hope in me," Omoka said.

Solomon Ayala of South Sudan described the championships as a valuable experience as he competed outside his country for the first time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Madrid turmoil takes center stage before Oviedo visit

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

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

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

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

The situation has added



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Former boxer Manoj Kumar raises concerns over BFI selection process

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Manchester United chiefs to recommend Carrick for permanent job

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

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

with Carrick before his future is confirmed.

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

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

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

Manuel Neuer linked with shock Germany comeback for World Cup

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

choice keeper.

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

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

in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

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

Neuer retired from international football after Euro 2024 following an injury-hit period that began with the serious skiing accident he suffered in December 2022.

His performances for Bayern in the Bundesliga and UEFA Champions League this season have reignited speculation over a possible return after previously stating he intended to focus solely on club football.

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

Top Gainers

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

Top Losers

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

Commodities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



previous all-time low of 95,7375. Among the sectors, Metal stocks emerged as the top-performing sector. Nifty Metal index surged 3.18 per-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

The government also

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

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

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

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

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

uncertainty, volatile crude oil markets, and fears of a prolonged conflict in West Asia. India imports nearly all the gold it consumes, so higher duties are expected to directly influence domestic gold prices, jewellery rates, and investment demand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

pealed for voluntary austerity measures amid the uncertainty caused by the conflict. The Prime Minister urged citizens to reduce petrol and diesel consumption wherever possible and postpone non-essential purchases such as gold.

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

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

He said the RBI was closely monitoring the evolving economic situation and would continue to take decisions based on incoming data. "We are being more and more data dependent. We are taking it more meeting by meeting. The RBI is being flexible in its approach and is ready to look through the shock if it's transitory, but if it is entrenched, we need to take action," the RBI Governor said.

His remarks came shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi ap-

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