

Aryan Age

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PM Modi highlights India's technological rise and democratic strength at Diaspora event in The Hague

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday hailed India's rapid technological transformation, democratic resilience and growing global influence while addressing members of the Indian community in The Hague during his visit to the Netherlands.

Speaking to a large gathering of the Indian diaspora, Modi praised the community for maintaining strong cultural ties with India and contributing to the country's image abroad through their achievements and professional success.

"Delighted to interact with the Indian community in The Hague. Their warmth, achievements and strong bond with India continue to make us proud," the Prime Minister said.

Emphasising the enduring nature of Indian civilisation, Modi said India's cultural identity had remained vibrant despite centuries of global change.

"History bears witness that many civilisations and cultures disappeared with the passage of time. But India's diverse culture still beats strongly in the hearts of its people today," he said.

The Prime Minister also reflected on his long tenure in public office, describing the continued support he has received from voters over the past two-and-a-half decades as his "greatest asset."

"13 years as Chief Minister... 12 years of service as Prime Minister... In the democratic world, receiving the continuous support of crores and crores of voters for 25 years... this is a matter of immense good fortune for me," Modi said.

"For me, this is not just a number... it is



my greatest asset," he added.

Highlighting India's economic and technological progress, Modi said the country was making major advances in semiconductor manufacturing and emerging technologies. He noted that work was currently underway on 12 semiconductor plants across India, with production already having started at two facilities.

"This means that chips will now be 'designed in India' as well as 'made in India,'" he said.

The Prime Minister also pointed to the rapid growth of India's startup ecosystem, saying the country now had nearly 125 active unicorns and the world's third-largest startup network.

"Our startups are doing remarkable work in AI, defense and space sector," Modi said, adding that India's innovation-driven economy was opening new opportunities for global cooperation.

Referring to India's democratic framework, Modi said the country took pride in en-

suring participation from every citizen.

"India values the democratic participation of every one of its citizens. And as the mother of democracy, this is a matter of great pride for all of us," he said.

Modi said India and the Netherlands were working together to build trusted and transparent global supply chains and could deepen cooperation in areas ranging from technology and trade to strategic projects on the international stage.

"India and the Netherlands can coordinate

in the global arena and work on securing global projects," he said.

Describing the current decade as one marked by uncertainty and global crises, Modi referred to the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing international conflicts as major challenges confronting the world community.

"This decade is becoming a decade of challenges for the world," he said.

At the same time, the Prime Minister asserted that India remained a land of opportunity driven equally by technological advancement and human values.

"India is a land of opportunities. India is both technology driven and humanity driven," he said.

Modi said India was presently undergoing an unprecedented phase of transformation fuelled by the aspirations of its people.

"Today's India is going through a phase of unprecedented transformation," he said.

"Aspirations in India are unlimited, so efforts are also becoming limitless," the Prime Minister added.

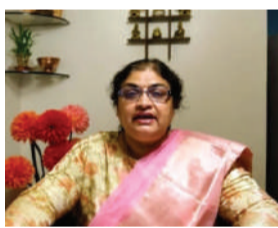
Modi's address came as India continues to strengthen engagement with European nations, including the Netherlands, in areas such as technology, trade, climate cooperation, semiconductors and strategic supply chains. The Netherlands has emerged as an important economic partner for India within the European Union, with both countries seeking closer cooperation in innovation, water management, clean energy and advanced manufacturing.

The Indian diaspora in the Netherlands, estimated to number over 200,000 people, has played a significant role in enhancing cultural and economic ties between the two countries.

CBI arrests another mastermind in NEET-UG 2026 biology paper leak case

New Delhi : The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday said it has identified and arrested another mastermind allegedly involved in leaking Biology questions for the NEET-UG 2026 examination.

plaint filed by the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education regarding the alleged paper leak in the NEET-UG 2026 examination.



"Another key accused, Ms. Manisha Gurunath Mandhare, a senior Botany teacher from Pune, Maharashtra, has been arrested in Delhi after thorough interrogation by the CBI. She was involved in the NEET-UG 2026 examination process and had been appointed by the NTA as an expert," a CBI official said.

The official added that she had complete access to the Botany and Zoology question papers. During April 2026, she allegedly mobilized prospective NEET candidates through Manisha Wagmare of Pune, who was arrested earlier on May 14, 2026, and conducted special coaching classes for students at her residence in Pune.

During these classes, she allegedly explained and disclosed several questions from Botany and Zoology, asking students to note them down in notebooks and mark them in their textbooks. A majority of these questions reportedly matched the actual NEET-UG 2026 examination paper held on May 3, 2026.

The CBI had registered the case on May 12, 2026, based on a written com-

plaint filed by the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education regarding the alleged paper leak in the NEET-UG 2026 examination.

So far, nine accused have been arrested in connection with the case from Delhi, Jaipur, Gurugram, Nashik, Pune, and Ahilyanagar. Of them, five accused have already been produced before the court and remanded to seven days of police custody for detailed interrogation.

Two other accused arrested on Friday were produced before a court in Pune and later shifted to Delhi after obtaining transit remand. They are now being produced before a Delhi court.

The investigation has reportedly revealed the source of the Chemistry and Biology paper leaks, along with middlemen who allegedly mobilized students paying lakhs of rupees to attend special coaching classes where likely exam questions were discussed.

The CBI said it remains committed to conducting a comprehensive, impartial, and professional investigation into the case.

IMD issues rain alert for parts of Maharashtra over next four days

Pune : The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a rain alert for several parts of Maharashtra over the next four days, warning of thunderstorms and gusty winds in multiple regions. According to weather officials, coastal areas, including the Konkan region and neighboring Goa, are likely to receive rainfall accompanied by strong winds and cloudy conditions.

Authorities said that parts of South Central Maharashtra and South Marathwada have already witnessed a slight drop in temperature, creating favorable conditions for pre-monsoon showers and thunderstorm activity. Due to changing weather patterns, several districts may experience sudden rain spells, lightning, and windy conditions during the forecast period.

The IMD has indicated that lower daytime temperatures

are expected to persist in some areas over the coming days, increasing the possibility of scattered thunderstorms and moderate rainfall. Residents in vulnerable regions have been advised to remain alert, especially during evening hours when thunderstorm activity is expected to intensify.

Farmers and citizens have also been urged to take precautionary measures to avoid damage to crops, vehicles, and outdoor structures due to gusty winds and lightning strikes. Weather officials are closely monitoring the situation, and further updates are expected based on changing atmospheric conditions.

Meanwhile, the temporary relief from intense summer heat has brought some comfort to people in several districts, though authorities cautioned that unstable weather may continue throughout the week.

IMD issues yellow alert for Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, Raigad amid hot and humid conditions

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert for Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, and Raigad districts, warning of hot and humid weather

conditions likely to continue until the morning of May 17, officials said on Saturday.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre, isolated

WEATHER FOR NEXT FOUR DAYS

KONKAN & GOA REGION
 > Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Neighboring Goa | Thunderstorms with gusty winds
 > Coastal Areas | Heavy to very heavy pre-monsoon showers

INTERIOR MAHARASHTRA
 > Pune, Kolhapur, Satara, Nashik | Thunderstorm with lightning & cloudy conditions
 > South Central Mah & South Marathwada Districts | Pre-monsoon showers and windy conditions
 > All Districts | Further decrease in daytime temperature likely

Residents and farmers advised to take precautionary measures.

Maharashtra Cyber asks Apple, Google to remove Ola, Uber, Rapido apps over illegal bike taxi operations

Mumbai : In a major escalation against unauthorized transport platforms, the Maharashtra State Cyber Department has directed tech giants Google and Apple to remove and disable access to ride-hailing applications Ola, Uber, and Rapido from their respective app stores.

The strict directive follows allegations that the aggregators have been operating illegal two-wheeler bike taxi services, flouting the state's Electric Vehicle (EV) policy, and severely compromising passenger safety norms.

The Office of the Additional

Director General of Police, Maharashtra Cyber, issued formal notices to Apple and Google under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000. The enforcement agency stated that the bike taxi services run via these platforms are entirely unlawful and violate the regulatory framework prescribed by the State Transport Department and the Motor Vehicles Act.

The notices further warned both tech companies that failure to comply with the directives of Indian law enforcement could invite strict legal action and affect their intermediary liability protections. The state government has taken a particularly stern view on safety deficiencies, labeling the platforms' existing safeguards as "highly inadequate." Authorities pointed out critical failures in Comprehensive driver background verification, Valid insurance protections for commuters, dedicated emergency response and women's safety mechanisms.

The crackdown intensified following a recent tragic accident involving an unauthorized bike taxi, which resulted in the death of a female passenger. The incident led

to a criminal case being registered alongside multiple complaints across various police stations in Maharashtra regarding misconduct and regulatory breaches by bike riders.

The cyber department's sudden intervention follows a formal letter sent on May 12 by Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik, who urged immediate action against the digital aggregators.

Confirming the development, Minister Sarnaik clarified that while the government is not opposed to the concept of bike taxis, the platforms have consistently

failed to comply with the state's EV bike taxi policy framework despite temporary windows provided to regularize their documentation.

"Letters have been dispatched through Maharashtra Cyber to Google and Apple regarding these apps. Bike taxis are running illegally in Maharashtra, and zero tolerance will be shown," Sarnaik stated.

Emphasizing the administration's stance, the Minister added, While generating employment is important, the safety of women remains our absolute supreme priority.

Maratha reservation agitator Jarange Patil to begin hunger strike from May 30

Mumbai : Maratha reservation agitator Manoj Jarange-Patil announced here today that he will go on a hunger strike from May 30 to protest alleged delay in the process of issuing Kumbhi caste certificates to the Maratha community, which would make them eligible to get government job reservations. "The Maratha community should have received Kumbhi certificates on time, but many are still not getting the certificates," Jarange-Patil said. Earlier, the Maratha reservation quota activist had gone on a prolonged hunger strike at Azad Maidan in August 2025, which lasted for days and saw thousands of his followers occupy Azad Maidan area in South Mumbai. Later, he withdrew his agitation and left Mumbai after Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil gave him a set of assurances on behalf of the state government.

Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil was

on a visit to Ahilyanagar. Speaking on the occasion, Vikhe-Patil said, "After becoming the chairman of the Maratha Reservation Sub-Committee, I began implementation of the Hyderabad Gazette. I have given 2.5 lakh Kumbhi certificates. As the chairman of the Maratha Reservation Sub-Committee, I have sent letters to all the MLAs. "Local MLAs should try to solve the problems faced at the local level. We have now started the process of Sataza Gazette. We accept that the Sataza Gazette has not been implemented, but the process is going on".

"Also, if my resignation as the chairman of the sub-committee satisfies Jarange Patil, I am ready to resign. Also, I will meet Jarange Patil soon and inform him about the work done so far. If he has any misunderstandings, I will try to clear them," Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil said.



Sunetra-led NCP denies Tatkare, Patel shut out of party office

Mumbai : The Sunetra Ajit Pawar-led NCP's Organising General Secretary Sanjay Pranjapati and National President of Youth NCP Dheeraj Sharma today issued statements denying that party leaders Sunil Tatkare and Praful Patel were stopped from entering the Delhi office of the party.

They also denied any internal conflict within the party, saying that such perceptions about any internal rift are false reports which appeared in a section of the media.

However, it learnt that Brijmohan Srivastava, a supporter of Sunil Tatkare and Praful Patel based in the party's Delhi office, was

detained by some Sunetra Pawar-led NCP workers and asked to explain why he allegedly spread false messages which indicated an internal rift within the party.

In the recent leadership reshuffle within the party, Tatkare-Patel supporter Brijmohan Srivastava was not given a place in the new Executive Committee of the party, which upset him.

It has also been alleged that Brijmohan Srivastava allegedly spread false information that there is an internal dispute in the party and only Pawar family and their relatives were given a chance in the party's new Executive Committee.

Reacting to Brijmohan Srivastava's alleged moves, angry Sunetra Pawar-led NCP youth workers stopped Brijmohan Srivastava and demanded an explanation. So far, neither Sunetra Pawar who heads the party, nor Sunil Tatkare nor Praful Patel have spoken anything about equations within the party.

The development came after Sharad Pawar-led NCP MLA Rohit Pawar here today said that both Sunil Tatkare and Praful Patel met founder of the undivided NCP Sharad Pawar recently and complained against NCP chief and Deputy CM Sunetra Pawar's elder son Parth Patel. Rohit Pawar stated that both Tatkare and Patel complained to Sharad Pawar that Sunetra Pawar's elder son Parth Patel does not give them the respect which they used to get from his father, the late Ajit Pawar. According to Rohit Pawar, the late Ajit Pawar had insisted on unifying both the NCPs when he was alive. Reacting to Rohit Pawar's statements, a Sunetra Ajit Pawar-led NCP leader Umesh Patil said, "Sunil Tatkare is the state president of the NCP and will remain so. Journalists should note that Praful Patel is the working president and will remain so. Rohit Pawar is trying to take ad-

vantage of Ajit Pawar's name."

"Rohit Pawar has his eye on Baramati which was Ajit Pawar's stronghold. Rohit Pawar is making a fuss about the investigation into Ajit Pawar's plane crash. He is trying to drag down Ajit Pawar's legacy. He should not worry about Ajit Pawar's party. All the MLAs and MPs from his party are ready to join our party but we have not taken any decision yet," Umesh Patil claimed.

However, party insiders said that the leadership is attempting to downplay the issue to avoid further escalation ahead of key organisational decisions.

Suwendu Adhikari announces crackdown on police unionism, extortion networks

Kolkata: Indicating an overhaul of police administration in the state, West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced a series of major administrative and policing measures, including the dissolution of the Police Welfare Board, a crackdown on alleged extortion networks and stricter action against attacks on police personnel.

Addressing a press conference after a high-level administrative meeting in Diamond Harbour over preparations for the Falta Assembly by-election on Saturday, the Chief Minister said, "If anyone attacks police personnel, strict punishment will follow."

The meeting was attended by senior officials linked to the by-election process and several police officers from South 24 Parganas district.

Police officials from different police stations across the state also joined virtually following the Prime Minister's call for administrative coordination.

The Chief Minister alleged that the Police Welfare Board had turned into a political organisation and announced its immediate dissolution.

"The Police Welfare Board has become a party organisation. The names of Shantanu Sinha Biswas and Bijitshwar Raut are known. Today we dissolved the board. We will remove the concept of aggressive trade unionism," he said.

He also added that a new board would be formed within three months after consultations with police officers under the leadership of the Chief Secretary.



Announcing a crackdown on illegal toll collection and transport syndicates, Adhikari said police had been directed to take strict action against illegal toto (e-rickshaw) and auto syndicates.

"Till now there was the ruler's law, now rule of law will be established. Work according to law," he said.

The Chief Minister said several administrative orders had been issued over the past week and announced that policing in the state would now be conducted under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

He further said that people allegedly affected by political violence during the last five years would be allowed to lodge fresh complaints, regardless of whether documentary proof was available.

Police have been instructed to investigate and register new FIRs

wherever necessary.

"After today's press conference, victims of political violence, lower-rank police personnel who faced harassment, people tortured unjustly by police, and women who could not file complaints at police stations earlier can now submit complaints afresh," he said.

At the same time, Adhikari warned against filing of false complaints.

"If thousands of false complaints are filed, action will be taken under the relevant sections of the BNS," he added.

The Chief Minister also announced strict action against those accused of demanding money for providing benefits under central government schemes. "If there is documentary evidence, the accused will be arrested directly.

Even without documents, police

will investigate," he said.

On police administration, Adhikari said female police personnel would be given preference for transfers to neighbouring districts.

"If a sister from Alipurduar works in North Dinajpur or Siliguri, it is better than posting her in Bankura or Purulia," he said.

The government will also examine whether officers should remain posted in the same district for more than 15 years.

Referring to the recent violence in Asansol, the Chief Minister said 15 people had been arrested in connection with Friday's incident.

"There was no BNS here earlier, now there is. There was an atmosphere of fear and no proper system. The situation will be monitored for the next one month," he said.

He directed the Director General and Additional Director Generals of Police to ensure that the recently issued administrative orders were implemented on the ground.

Warning those involved in attacks on police stations and public property, Adhikari said, "Action will be taken according to law against those involved in vandalism at police stations. Damage to government property will be recovered from personal property."

The Chief Minister also said central forces would remain in the state for another two months.

"I have told police and officials that the duration should be extended because the state police do not have that capacity at present," he said.

UP promotes rural tourism on World Agri-Tourism Day under 'Visit My State' campaign

Lucknow: Marking World Agri-Tourism Day, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department on Saturday organised a series of rural tourism activities across multiple districts under its recently launched 'Visit My State' campaign, aiming to strengthen village-based tourism, promote local livelihoods and encourage travellers to explore the cultural richness of rural Uttar Pradesh.

The initiative was carried out across tourism villages in districts including Jhansi, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Prayagraj, Etawah, Bulandshahr, Lucknow, Saharanpur, Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, Siddharthnagar, Basti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Hamirpur and Banda. Through these activities, the tourism department sought to take tourism beyond traditional destinations and introduce visitors to authentic rural experiences rooted in agriculture, local culture and traditional lifestyles.

Officials said the campaign was designed to showcase the real essence of village life by promoting farm stays, local cuisine, handicrafts, folk traditions and community-based hospitality. The initiative also aimed to create economic opportunities for villagers by connecting tourism with agriculture and rural entrepreneurship.

In Prayagraj's Singraur village, visitors participated in an agro-tourism exposure visit and guided village tour where they observed farming activities, interacted with local residents and gained insight into rural traditions and agricultural practices. The programme drew enthusiastic participation from students and tourists interested in sustainable tourism experiences.

Etawah's Bara Khera village hosted activities focused on farm stays, local food experiences and nature trails. Visitors explored agricultural fields, tasted regional dishes prepared using traditional methods and experienced the simplicity of rural living, which officials said is becoming increasingly attractive to urban travellers seeking eco-friendly tourism options.

In Jhansi's Patha Kharka village, students took part in interactive sessions on tulsi cultivation, traditional pottery-making and



local culinary traditions. The activities were organised at a village farm stay where participants were introduced to the importance of medicinal farming and indigenous crafts that continue to sustain rural communities.

A major attraction was organised in Barabanki, where students from a Lucknow-based school visited a beekeeping centre in Rajauli village. During the visit, they learnt about honey production techniques, different bee species and the ecological importance of beekeeping. Students were also given an opportunity to taste different varieties of honey produced locally.

Similarly, students and young visitors in Firozabad's Akbarpur and Mainpuri's Sahana and Bhanwat villages explored farm stays and interacted with villagers to understand how rural tourism models are being developed in Uttar Pradesh. Officials said such visits help young people appreciate agriculture, rural culture and sustainable lifestyles.

Vijayendra takes metro ride backing Modi's fuel conservation call

Bengaluru: Responding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for fuel conservation and austerity measures amid global economic uncertainty, Karnataka BJP President and MLA B Y Vijayendra travelled by the Bengaluru Metro on Friday while heading to a party programme at Kumbalagodu.

Vijayendra travelled from Majestic on the Challaghatta-Kengeri Metro corridor, drawing public attention amid rising fuel prices and the ongoing national debate on fuel conservation.

Speaking to reporters during the journey, Vijayendra said the Prime Minister's call for limited fuel usage and austerity measures was timely in view of global economic challenges and geopolitical tensions, particularly the con-



flict involving the United States and Iran. He said Prime Minister Narendra

Modi had urged citizens to seriously think about fuel conservation and make greater use of public transport systems.

Odisha H&UD Department mandates fuel conservation drive, urges vehicle pooling

Bhubaneswar: In a significant move aimed at promoting fuel conservation and responsible resource management, Odisha's Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Department has issued a comprehensive advisory directing officers and other employees to adopt strict fuel-saving measures, including "vehicle pooling" and "ride-sharing" for official duties.

The advisory, issued by Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee, comes against the backdrop of prevailing global economic uncertainty and evolving international

developments that demand prudent use of public resources.

Aligned with the Prime Minister's call for sustainable resource management and energy conservation, the initiative underscores the Odisha government's commitment to administrative efficiency and cost optimisation.

Under the new directive, officers using official vehicles for meetings, inspections, field visits, and other government-related engagements have been asked to prioritise shared transportation arrangements wherever

feasible. Senior officers attending common meetings or events will coordinate pooling mechanisms to minimise unnecessary fuel consumption.

According to the advisory, collective transport practices are expected to substantially cut avoidable fuel expenditure, improve administrative coordination, and contribute to broader national energy conservation goals.

The department has also specifically discouraged the use of official vehicles for lunch outings and other non-essential short-distance per-

sonal trips during office hours.

Instead, officers and staff have been encouraged to choose shared mobility options or environmentally friendly alternatives for shorter travel needs.

Importantly, the fuel conservation directive is not limited to the State Secretariat alone. It has been extended to all agencies, directorates, and organisations functioning under the H&UD Department, with clear instructions to implement similar measures across their offices with sincerity and commitment.

Mayawati seeks aid for UP storm victims, slams fuel price hike

Lucknow: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) national president Mayawati has demanded that the state government extend generous assistance to families affected by the recent severe storm in Uttar Pradesh, "So that devastated families can restart their lives."

She also criticized the central government for increasing petrol and diesel prices by Rs. 3 per liter. Posting on X on Saturday, Mayawati said that the severe storm has caused massive destruction of life and property in many parts of Uttar Pradesh.

The state government should generously assist the victims in every possible way so that they can rebuild their devastated/shattered families and restart their lives.

Mayawati expressed concern over the

continued rise in petroleum prices.

She said that the central government's increase of Rs 3 per liter in the price of petrol and diesel will severely impact the lives of millions of poor people, hardworking families, farmers, and the middle class. This inflation will directly impact the livelihoods of all these families.

The BSP chief said that the government should take necessary and meaningful steps to reduce inflation and this regular increase in prices that makes life difficult. This is the need of the hour. It is noteworthy that over 110 people have died and lakhs have been affected in the storm that hit several districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Bhadohi, Fatehpur, Sonbhadra, and Badaun on Tuesday night.

TMC MLA's brother arrested in Canning over alleged role in attack on BJP worker

Kolkata: In a significant development, Uttam Das, brother of Trinamool Congress MLA from Canning West in South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal, Paresh Ram Das was arrested by the police on Friday night allegedly for his involvement in an attempt to murder a BJP worker during post-poll violence.

Considered to be a powerful local leader and president of the Canning-I Panchayat Samiti, Uttam Das,

was picked up from in front of his residence at Mithakhal village in Canning.

Central forces accompanied the police team during the arrest operation and surrounded the house while he was being taken into custody. The arrest was made in connection with the attack on BJP worker Arghyadeep Basu at Dighirpar village on May 4, the day the West Bengal Assembly election results were announced.

According to allega-

tions, unidentified persons opened fire targeting the BJP supporter during vote counting. Basu sustained a bullet injury on his right leg. Tension spread across the area following Uttam Das's arrest. Soon after he was taken to the police station, a large number of his supporters gathered outside the premises. Police and central forces later dispersed the crowd amid fears of unrest. The administration reportedly took additional security measures

keeping in mind past incidents in the Canning area where accused persons were allegedly snatched away from police custody and attacks on police personnel had taken place. Heavy security deployment was maintained outside the police station throughout the night. The situation in the area remains tense after the arrest. Uttam Das is likely to be produced before a court on Saturday. The arrest comes amid continuing allegations of

post-poll violence in different parts of West Bengal following the Assembly election results declared on May 4. The BJP, which won 207 seats in the state, has accused Trinamool Congress workers of carrying out attacks on its supporters in several districts. Despite the BJP's sweeping victory across the state, Trinamool Congress candidate Paresh Ram Das retained the Canning Paschim seat by a margin of more than 40,000 votes.

On directives of CM Yogi, Ministers visit homes of disaster victims, distribute compensation cheques

Lucknow: On the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, compensation was distributed to people affected by the recent storm, heavy rains and lightning incidents that caused loss of life and property.

In different districts, the Ministers-in-charge handed over financial assistance cheques to the victims and assured them that the government stands with them.

Along with Rs 4 lakh assistance to the family of each deceased person, relief materials and benefits of various schemes were also provided.

Lakhimpur Kheri: A severe storm and heavy rain on the night of May 13 devastated a family in Jamunia Kadhile village of Mitali tehsil. The roof of the house collapsed, resulting in the tragic death of 40-year-old Ratiram, son of Dina.

Following the incident, district in-charge minister Nitin Agarwal visited the village on Thursday as directed by the Chief Minister and met the bereaved family. In the presence of former MP Jugul Kishore and DM Anjani Kumar Singh, the minister handed over Rs 4 lakh as disaster relief assistance and a demo cheque of Rs 6,500 as house grant assistance to the deceased's wife and children. Relief kits were also distributed and every possible help was assured.

DM Anjani Kumar Singh said, "The family is being provided Rs 4 lakh from the disaster relief fund along with benefits Grih Anudan, Krishak Durghatna Bima Yojana, Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana, Parivarik Labh Yojana, Nirashrit Mahila Pension Yojana and CM Bal Seva. The administration

will also provide agricultural land lease support."

Hardoi: Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Social Welfare and District In-charge Minister of Hardoi, Aseem Arun, visited the affected family in Aant Majra Aant Sant village of Sandila tehsil along with local public representatives and expressed deep condolences.

The minister consoled the family of deceased Anika, who died after being struck by lightning on May 13.

He said, "The state government under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is committed to providing quick assistance with sensitivity during natural disasters.

He also informed Kamla, mother of the deceased, that Rs 4 lakh relief assistance had already been transferred to her bank account.



Notably, MP Ashok Rawat and MLA Ram Pal Verma also consoled the grieving family on the occasion.

Ambedkar Nagar: District in-charge minister Girish Chandra Yadav visited the family of Sukna Devi in Kudha Mohammadgarh village, who died after a wall collapsed during the storm.

He expressed condolences and informed the family that the state government had provided Rs 4 lakh as financial assistance to support them during this difficult time. He said the government stands with the people of the state in every difficult situation and shares their grief.

Sambhal: Due to the severe storm and rain-related disaster, Nemwati, daughter of Rajpal Singh, and Bhag-

wan Singh, son of Veere, died after being hit by a falling electric pole and house wall in Gangheta village under Kailadevi police station area. District in-charge minister and Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Home Guards and Civil Defence, Dharmveer Prajapati, visited the village and met the affected families. He expressed condolences and handed over certificates confirming transfer of Rs 4 lakh each into the victims families' bank accounts along with disaster relief materials.

District Magistrate Ankit Khandelwal and SP Krishna Kumar Bishnoi were also present. Badaun: In-charge minister Gulab Devi distributed cheques of Rs 4 lakh each to families affected by the storm in Bisauli area. She visited Birampur village, met the bereaved families and expressed condolences.

Relief materials were also distributed among affected families of Fatehpur Birampur, Tarkparoli and Bhopatpur villages.

The minister said the government stands with every family in this difficult time. Bareilly: A disaster relief distribution programme was held today in the auditorium of Aonla tehsil under the chairmanship of Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Cooperation and district in-charge minister J.P.S. Rathore. Financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh each was provided to the families of Devki, daughter of Rajesh Kumar, aged 12 years from Harrampur village, and Leepi, wife of Umedi, aged six years from Behta Juno village, following loss of life in the incidents. Apart from this, Rs 1.62 lakh assistance was distributed among 30 victims whose houses were

damaged in natural disasters, while nine victims received assistance for animal loss.

In Daruapur village, 10 farmers whose wheat crop was destroyed in a fire incident were given a total assistance amount of Rs 2,29,973 under the Chief Minister Khet Khalihaan and Accident Assistance Scheme.

Additionally, under the Mukhyamantri Krishak Durghatna Kalyan Yojana, financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh each was distributed to Phoolwati wife of Chhotelal of Manauna village, Urmila Devi of Balliya village, Navita wife of Lalan Singh of Lilaur Sahasa village, Kanyawati wife of Rakshpal of Sarau village, Chandni wife of Dharmendra of Labhari Majra Gurgawan, Mahipal son of Krishnapal of Mai Kiratpur village and Varfa Devi wife of Harpal of Sarau village.

Thane-Borivali Tunnel Work Begins, Traffic Diversions For One Year

Thane : The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has started important construction work for the much-awaited Thane-Borivali underground tunnel project. Work has begun in the Mullabag area of Ghodbunder in Thane.

Due to the construction, the Thane Traffic Police has announced major traffic diversions in the area. These changes started on May 16, 2026, and will continue till May 15, 2027. Officials have already issued notices about the new traffic rules and alternate routes.

The Ghodbunder road is used every day by thousands of heavy vehicles and other vehicles travelling towards Gujarat, Vasai-Virar, Borivali and Mira-Bhayander. However, people often face long traffic jams because some parts of the Ghodbunder Ghat road are narrow. Officials believe the tunnel project will help reduce traffic problems in the future.

The Mumbai Metropol-



itan Region Development Authority has officially initiated critical construction phases for the highly anticipated Thane-Borivali underground twin-tunnel project, marking a historic milestone in the development of the region's transport network. The initial construction footprint has been established in the Mullabag area of Ghodbunder in Thane, where heavy machinery and engineering teams are being deployed to begin groundwork

for this engineering marvel. This ambitious infrastructure project aims to establish a direct, subterranean highway link that will cut down travel times between Thane and the western suburbs to just a fraction of the current duration. The commencement of this work represents the culmination of extensive planning and environmental clearances, signaling a long-term solution to the geographical barriers that have historically separated these

two major urban zones. To facilitate the heavy construction work and ensure public safety around the active excavation sites, the Thane Traffic Police has announced a comprehensive plan for major traffic diversions across the surrounding road network. This sweeping regulatory order officially came into effect on May 16, 2026, and is mandated to remain operational for an entire calendar year, concluding on May 15, 2027.

Law enforcement agencies and municipal bodies have already issued widespread public notices, digital route maps, and updated traffic rules detailing the alternative arterial roads that commuters must utilize to navigate around the construction zone. The sheer duration of the one-year diversion underscores the immense scale and complexity of the subterranean engineering tasks being undertaken beneath the surface.

The Ghodbunder road corridor serves as an irreplaceable regional lifeline, bearing the daily load of thousands of heavy commercial trucks, interstate containers, and private passenger vehicles traveling toward Gujarat, Vasai-Virar, Borivali, and Mira-Bhayander. Because this critical highway acts as the primary transit artery linking the central mainland to the coastal western corridors, any localized disruption inherently threatens to trigger a cascading effect across the entire metropolitan transport network.

Major Train Changes At Dadar Station, Passengers Asked To Check Schedule

Mumbai : Train services on Western Railway will be affected on May 16 and 17 because of a major engineering block at Dadar station. Railway officials said several outstation trains will be delayed, rescheduled or partially cancelled for maintenance work and passenger safety.

Officials said the work is necessary to improve railway infrastructure and ensure safer train operations. Because of this, some trains will start late, stop at different stations or end their journey earlier than usual.

Train number 22946 Okha-Dadar Saurashtra Mail, starting its journey on May 16, will leave Okha about 2 hours and 15 minutes late and will end its journey at Borivali station instead of Dadar.

Train number 09052 Bhusaval-Dadar Special, starting on May 16, will leave Bhusaval one hour late. Passengers have been advised to check train schedules before travelling to avoid inconvenience.

The Western Railway network is bracing for a weekend of significant structural modifications as a major engineering block gets

underway at Dadar station, a vital transit artery for Mumbai's commuting population. This intensive maintenance and infrastructure upgrade, scheduled across May 16 and May 17, 2026, has prompted senior railway officials to issue a comprehensive advisory urging commuters and long-distance travelers to double-check their train schedules. The planned operational block is designed to execute essential track maintenance, platform upgrades, and signaling adjustments, all of which are critical for enhancing long-term operational efficiency and reinforcing passenger safety protocols on one of the busiest rail corridors in the country.

Because Dadar station serves as a massive interchange hub where thousands of passengers transition between various local and outstation lines every hour, any localized track possession necessitates a sweeping recalibration of the surrounding timetable. Railway authorities have clarified that the massive undertaking will inevitably cause a cascading effect on several long-distance train services, leading to a mix of delays, strategic

reschedulings, and partial cancellations. While these temporary disruptions are expected to cause short-term inconvenience to weekend travelers, the administration emphasizes that such blocks are unavoidable for the structural upkeep and modernization of the aging urban rail infrastructure.

To minimize passenger confusion and prevent overcrowding at platforms, the Western Railway division has highlighted specific outstation trains that will bear the immediate brunt of the technical work. Among the most notable modifications is the regulation of Train Number 22946, the Okha-Dadar Saurashtra Mail; for its journey commencing on May 16, this service is scheduled to experience a departure delay of approximately two hours and fifteen minutes from its origin station in Okha. Furthermore, to completely insulate the train from the active construction zone at Dadar, its inbound journey will be short-terminated at Borivali station, forcing South Mumbai-bound passengers to seek alternative local transit options from the western suburb.

Mumbai Faces Water Trouble As BMC Warns Rule Breakers

Mumbai : Mumbai has started facing a 10 per cent water cut from May 16 as water levels in lakes supplying the city continue to fall. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has warned people not to use electric pumps illegally to draw extra water from pipelines. The civic body said strict action will be taken against those who break the rules.

The BMC said people found using electric pumps to take extra water may face penalties, seizure of pumps, water supply disconnection and even criminal cases. Officials said the water cut has been introduced as a precaution because reservoir levels are dropping and there are concerns about a below-normal monsoon this year due to weather conditions like El Niño and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD).

According to BMC data, the seven lakes that supply water to Mumbai had 340,399 million litres of usable water as of May 11.

This is only 23.52 per cent of the city's yearly water requirement of 14,47,363 million litres.

The city of Mumbai has officially entered a period of strict water conservation, with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation enforcing a mandatory ten percent water cut across all residential and commercial sectors.

This sweeping municipal directive is designed to preserve the city's rapidly depleting water reserves amid a scorching summer and prolonged dry spell. Alongside the supply reduction, the civic body has issued an uncompromising warning to citizens regarding the illegal use of heavy electric suction pumps to draw additional water directly from the main distribution pipelines.

The BMC has mobilized specialized flying squads across all administrative wards to detect and penalize rule-breakers, emphasizing that individual greed during a civic scarcity will not be

tolerated. The civic administration has outlined a severe, multi-tiered penalty system for any housing society, commercial establishment, or individual resident caught using unauthorized suction devices.

Violators face immediate and heavy financial fines, the permanent seizure of their electrical pumping equipment, and the instantaneous disconnection of their municipal water connection. Furthermore, senior officials have clarified that because tampering with public utility lines threatens the equitable distribution of an essential resource, the BMC will not hesitate to register formal criminal cases under public property damage and theft laws against persistent offenders.

This aggressive legal stance is intended to serve as a strong deterrent against resource hoarding.

This precautionary ten percent reduction has been deemed absolutely nec-

essary by urban planners because the collective reservoir levels have dropped significantly, coupled with mounting anxieties regarding the upcoming monsoon season. Long-range weather forecasts have indicated that regional precipitation could remain below normal due to complex global weather patterns, including the lingering effects of the El Niño phenomenon and a fluctuating Indian Ocean Dipole. By conserving ten percent of the daily distribution now, the city is actively building a vital buffer to ensure that basic drinking and sanitation needs can be met even if the seasonal rains experience a delayed arrival or a weak onset in the catchment areas.

Providing a stark look at the city's current hydrological reality, latest data released by the BMC hydraulic engineering department reveals that the seven primary lakes supplying Mumbai are holding a combined total of just 340,399 million litres of usable water.

Leopard Seen Near Homes In Bhayandar, Search Operation Started

Mumbai : A leopard was spotted near a residential area in Bhayandar West on May 15, creating fear among local residents. The wild animal was reportedly looking for food and was seen near Shivam Garden in the Rai Gaon area. A woman living nearby recorded a video from her balcony at around 5 pm. The video showed the leopard calmly walking through an open ground near a gutter behind the building before disappearing. After getting information, forest officials started a search operation in the area and appealed to residents to stay alert. The incident happened just a week after another leopard entered the Raheja Heights complex in Goregaon East. A leopard was spotted exploring an open ground near a residential area in Bhayandar West on May 15, triggering immediate safety concerns and a swift response from regional wildlife authorities. The adult leopard was specifically observed navigating the open spaces behind Shivam Garden, located within



the Rai Gaon neighborhood. The unexpected appearance of the apex predator within a semi-urban buffer zone created an immediate wave of anxiety among the local population, who are unaccustomed to seeing large wildlife so close to their housing complexes. Local community groups quickly spread the word across messaging networks to ensure that families, especially those with

young children and pets, remained indoors during the evening hours. The presence of the big cat was officially documented when a local resident managed to record clear video footage from her apartment balcony at approximately 5:00 PM. The visual evidence showed the leopard calmly and unhurriedly traversing an open plot of land running parallel to a drainage channel right behind the

residential building, before it melted back into the dense vegetation of the surrounding mangroves and scrubland. Wildlife experts who reviewed the clip noted that the animal did not display any signs of aggression or panic, suggesting it was likely navigating its natural territory or searching for small prey like stray dogs or rodents, which frequently draw leopards toward urban fringes.

Mumbai Hospital Reaches Big Success In Heart Treatment

Mumbai : A Mumbai-based heart hospital has completed more than 100 MyClip procedures for patients suffering from severe heart valve leakage. Doctors said this is a major achievement in advanced heart treatment, especially for patients who are not fit for open-heart surgery.

The Heart and Vascular Superspecialty Hospitals (HVSH) said its Heart Valve Experts (HVE) team successfully completed over 100 advanced clip procedures for serious heart valve problems. Doctors said this treatment became available in India in 2018, but many



patients could not afford it earlier because the cost was

close to Rs 40 lakh. They added that the treatment is

safer for elderly and high-risk patients and helps them

recover faster without major surgery. The Heart and Vascular Superspecialty Hospitals (HVSH) in Mumbai has achieved a major milestone in advanced cardiac care by successfully completing more than 100 MitraClip procedures. This significant medical breakthrough offers a lifeline to patients suffering from severe heart valve leakage, particularly those diagnosed with critical mitral valve regurgitation. For many individuals within this demographic, traditional open-heart surgery carries an unsustainably high risk due to age or co-existing health complications.

Chaos At Mumbai Mall Forces Luxury Watch Event To Be Cancelled

Mumbai : A special event for the launch of the new Swatch x Audemars Piguet watch collection was cancelled in Mumbai after huge crowds created chaos at Palladium Mall in Lower Parel on May 16. Many people had gathered to buy the limited-edition watch, but the crowd soon became difficult to control. Videos shared online showed large crowds both inside and outside the mall near the watch store. One visitor claimed that some people entered from another gate, which led to arguments and pushing between visitors and security staff. Police and mall security were later seen trying to control the crowd and clear the area. Mall staff and authorities reportedly called the situation very disorderly. In one vid-

eo, a staff member was heard saying, "We are not animals," while informing people that the store would remain closed for the day. The luxury retail sector in Mumbai experienced unprecedented disruption today when a high-profile watch launch event devolved into chaos, forcing organizers to completely abandon the scheduled product release. A massive crowd of horology enthusiasts and resellers descended upon the Palladium Mall in Lower Parel, drawn by the highly anticipated arrival of a limited-edition collaboration collection. However, the sheer volume of prospective buyers quickly overwhelmed the venue's prepared infrastructure, creating a volatile public safety situation that required the emergency intervention

of local law enforcement and private security teams. The disorder began escalating early in the day as hundreds of collectors gathered outside the luxury retail outlet, eager to secure a spot in line for the rare timepieces. As the morning progressed, the density of the crowd inside the enclosed spaces of the shopping complex reached critical levels, stretching the mall's crowd management protocols to their absolute limits. Videos rapidly circulating across digital media platforms captured striking footage of packed corridors, with tightly grouped crowds surging both within the main atrium and along the perimeter of the watch boutique, illustrating a rapid transition from high consumer demand to operational vulnerability.

Action Begins Against Illegal Rickshaw Parking In Ghatkopar

Mumbai : Traffic police have started action against illegal autorickshaw parking in Ghatkopar East after repeated complaints from local residents about traffic jams near Sudha Park in Garodia Nagar.

Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde said unauthorised rickshaw parking had been causing daily traffic problems in the area, making it difficult for senior citizens, women and school students to travel.

She said residents had raised the issue with her, after which immediate action was promised. Under the guidance of Ghatkopar East MLA Parag Shah, traffic

police visited the area and carried out inspections.

Photos shared online showed officials checking the area.

Rickshaw drivers were given strict warnings, and action was also taken against those found breaking traffic rules.

The Mumbai Traffic Police have launched an enforcement drive against unauthorised autorickshaw parking in the Ghatkopar East locality, addressing a long-standing grievance that has caused severe gridlocks in the residential block.

The targeted enforcement operations are pri-

marily focused on the thoroughfares surrounding Sudha Park, a prominent micro-locality nestled within the Garodia Nagar neighborhood.

For months, residents had expressed growing frustration over the unrestricted expansion of illegal parking stands, which had effectively converted vital driving lanes into chaotic vehicular holding zones, severely diminishing the operational capacity of the local road network.

The civic issue gained high-level administrative attention after local citizen groups and resident welfare associations formally



escalated their grievances to Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde.

Highlighting the ground-level impact of the situation, Mayor Tawde

noted that the unmanaged accumulation of stationary autorickshaws had established a persistent, daily traffic bottleneck that compromised the neighborhood's overall mobility.

She emphasized that the resulting congestion posed a disproportionate challenge to more vulnerable pedestrian demographics, including senior citizens navigating the footpaths, women carrying out daily household chores, and school students trying to reach transit hubs safely during peak morning and afternoon hours.

Following these intense public complaints, the may-

oral office initiated immediate cooperative protocols with regional lawmakers to ensure a swift on-ground solution. Under the administrative guidance and coordination of Ghatkopar East Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Parag Shah, a joint team consisting of senior traffic police personnel and municipal inspectors conducted comprehensive site visits and structural inspections of the Garodia Nagar bottlenecks. This joint field assessment allowed authorities to map out the exact points of obstruction, identify illegal repeat offenders, and formulate a sustainable strate-

gy to restore the legal right-of-way to standard moving traffic.

The initial phases of the enforcement drive were documented via official photographic updates shared across digital civic platforms, showcasing uniform traffic officers actively clearing the choked corridors around Sudha Park. During the field operations, enforcement squads issued strict legal warnings to the local autorickshaw unions and individual operators, making it clear that the arbitrary creation of informal parking stands would no longer be tolerated by the city administration.

Editorial

The Crisis of Inflation and Economic Challenges

The hike of three rupees per liter in petrol and diesel prices is not merely an increase in fuel costs; it serves as a harbinger of a looming new crisis of rising inflation across the country. The global geopolitical climate marked by war like conditions, surging crude oil prices, and tensions in the Strait of Hormuz has posed a formidable economic challenge for nations like India, which are heavily dependent on fuel imports. With the conclusion of the elections, these elevated fuel prices have now begun to pinch the pockets of the common man.

The Central Government's decision to raise petrol and diesel prices by three rupees per liter is not confined solely to a hike in fuel costs; rather, there are strong indications that it marks the prelude to a major inflationary crisis poised to engulf every sector of the nation. In reality, given the global geopolitical instability, the shifting dynamics of international politics, and the consequent severe fuel shortages, this price hike had been anticipated for quite some time. However, with the political landscape of the assembly elections in five states looming large, both the oil companies and the government had deliberately deferred this decision. Now that the election results have been declared and the political equations have stabilized, this economic burden as expected has been shifted onto the shoulders of the public; this has created a grave challenge for the nation, raising the specter of an inflationary flare-up across the country and the emergence of a major economic crisis.

In today's modern era, petrol and diesel have become an indispensable necessity just as vital as the fundamental human needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Their significance is so profound that neither the wheels of human life nor the machinery of the economy can move forward without fuel. Over a prolonged period spanning nearly four years, domestic oil companies maintained stable fuel prices; however, during this very time, global crude oil prices surged from \$70 per barrel to a range of \$110 to \$115 per barrel. Due to this massive disparity, oil refining companies were compelled to absorb a staggering daily loss exceeding ₹1,000 to ₹1,200 crore. Consequently, the Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, had just a few days ago given indirect indications regarding this impending price hike. The Prime Minister's earnest appeal to the public some time ago to exercise fuel conservation was, in reality, a preparatory measure and an effort to set the stage for this very price increase. India imports over eighty percent of its total crude oil requirements from abroad; as a result, even the slightest spark at the global level inflicts a direct financial blow upon the nation's exchequer.

Currently, the intense conflict unfolding between the United States and Iran on the international stage has brought maritime traffic to a near standstill in the 'Strait of Hormuz' a waterway considered vital for global trade. Since this specific sea route accounts for approximately 20 percent of India's total oil shipments, domestic fuel supplies have faced a significant disruption. Furthermore, aggressive shifts in U.S. foreign policy coupled with certain lapses in India's diplomatic maneuvering have created obstacles regarding the supply of concessional oil traditionally received from long standing allies such as Russia. As a cumulative result of all these factors, a critical situation akin to a fuel shortage has emerged within the country. Although government authorities have offered assurances that India currently possesses sufficient reserves of crude oil and refined fuel to last for approximately 60 days, given our extreme dependence on external sources for fuel, the immediate future is poised to be a period of severe trial for India. Given the soaring prices of crude oil in the international market, the recent hike of three rupees is merely the beginning; the possibility of a further substantial increase in the near future cannot be ruled out.

The far-reaching economic repercussions of this fuel price hike are now gradually beginning to pinch the pockets of the common people. The Indian economy is currently already plagued by grave issues such as the persistent depreciation of the Rupee and a depletion in foreign exchange reserves; with the added burden of this fuel price hike, the sting of inflation is set to become even more acute. India's domestic freight transport system runs primarily on diesel; consequently, as soon as diesel prices rise, transportation costs inevitably increase, leading to a rise in the market prices of virtually every commodity. As a result of this price hike, the costs for the common man ranging from travel via state transport buses to fares for auto-rickshaws, taxis, and private transport services are set to skyrocket. Even more concerning is the fact that essential commodities required for daily sustenance such as milk, vegetables, food grains, and fruits will also bear the brunt of this severe inflation. Given the inextricable link between agricultural produce and transportation, farmers will now have to incur double the cost to transport their produce to the market; ultimately, this entire additional burden will be passed on to the consumers.

From the perspective of the agricultural sector, the rising cost of diesel which powers the tractors, water pumps, and generators used in modern farming will lead to a massive surge in overall agricultural production costs. This raises fears that the farming community, already reeling under distress, may sink even deeper into debt. On the other hand, the industrial sector is also poised to take a major hit; with the cost of transporting raw materials and finished goods on the rise, companies are gearing up to increase the prices of their products. Caught in this dual squeeze, the monthly budgets of middle-class and low-income families are on the verge of complete collapse. As signs of a liquidity crunch begin to emerge across the domestic market, this entire period appears to be foreshadowing the onset of a major economic recession. Whenever the nation has faced such economic crises, the need for sound economic policies has invariably arisen. In the past during the unprecedented foreign exchange crisis of 1991 and the global recession of 2008 it was the then Finance Minister and former Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, who safely steered India out of peril through his exceptional expertise and farsighted economic policies; it is only natural to recall this legacy in the difficult circumstances we face today. The uncertainty currently plaguing the oil markets is bound to persist until the clouds of global conflict have completely dissipated. Consequently, the nation's current leadership must formulate economic policies with utmost fortitude, composure, and expert consultation eschewing any focus solely on short term political gains. This crisis cannot be averted merely by appealing to the public for austerity or by deferring critical decisions until after the next elections; rather, it necessitates the establishment of fiscal discipline at the governmental level itself by curbing unnecessary expenditure. If India is to successfully navigate its way out of this cycle of global recession and inflation, the only viable long term solution lies in reducing our dependence on conventional energy sources while rapidly accelerating the adoption of alternative and sustainable pathways, such as solar energy and electric vehicles. Today's discerning electorate and citizenry stand ready to cooperate with the nation during these trying times; however, it is equally imperative that the administration demonstrates a corresponding degree of transparency and foresight. Only then without a shadow of a doubt will we be able to safeguard the livelihood of the common man and preserve the nation's economic autonomy amidst this inflationary surge.

Celebrating the Return of India's Lost Cultural Heritage

Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat today said that the return of the sacred antiquities from the United States marks the restoration of India's civilisational memory and reflects the Government's unwavering commitment towards reclaiming and preserving the nation's cultural heritage under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

Addressing a press conference at the National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi, the Minister described the repatriation of the three historic bronzes from the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art as a significant milestone in India's ongoing efforts to bring back stolen cultural treasures and strengthen ethical museum practices globally.

The repatriated bronzes include a Chola-period Shiva Nataraja dating to circa 990 CE, a 12th-century Somaskanda (Shiva and Uma), and a 16th-century Vijayanagara-period sculpture of Saint Sundarar with Paravai. These sacred temple bronzes, originally from Tamil Nadu, had been illicitly removed from India in the mid-20th century and subsequently housed abroad.

The Minister mentioned that antiquities are not merely artistic objects but embodiments of India's spiritual traditions, historical continuity and civilisational memory.



He noted that illicit trafficking of antiquities had deprived India of several invaluable cultural treasures over decades.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), through extensive provenance research using archival records, field documentation and historical temple photographs from the 1950s and 1960s, successfully traced the artefacts to their original temple sites in Tamil Nadu. The findings formed the basis for coordinated negotiations involving the Ministry of Culture, the Smithsonian Institution and the Embassy of India in the United States.

The Somaskanda and Saint Sundarar with Paravai bronzes arrived in New Delhi on 12 May 2026, while the Shiva Nataraja will

be repatriated following its scheduled display in the exhibition "The Art of Knowing in South Asia,

Southeast Asia, and the Himalayas."

As a goodwill gesture and in



Mizoram Ginger Mission

The Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER), Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, together with Chief Minister of Mizoram Shri Lalduhoma, today launched the Mizoram Ginger Mission, a ₹189.79 crore convergence-led initiative for Ginger Cultivation & Value Chain Development for the State of Mizoram. Anchored by MDoNER, the Mission builds upon convergence with Schemes of Ministries of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Rural Development, Food Processing Industries, along with NABARD, ICAR, APEDA and private investors for processing of Ginger.

Sh. Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, MDoNER, in his introductory remarks, elaborated on the implementation framework of the Mission. He highlighted the rationale behind the Mission, particularly the need to bridge the price gap, ensure optimal utilisation of GI-certified varieties, and address post-harvest losses. He further emphasized the importance of a multi-ministerial convergence model, anchored by clearly defined and time-bound critical milestones for effective implementation. The ginger farmers of Champhai district extended their heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region for launching the Mizoram Ginger Mission, which promises to transform the livelihoods of thousands of farming



households who have long cultivated one of the world's finest pharma-grade ginger varieties without receiving its rightful value. Private sector partner, warmly welcomed the launch of the Mission and commended MDoNER for creating an enabling ecosystem that bridges the long-standing gap between Mizoram's pharma-grade ginger and the markets it deserves. Industry pledged its full support in making Mizo Ginger a globally recognised premium brand and a model of farmer-industry partnership for the North East. The Hon'ble Chief Minister of

Mizoram expressed deep appreciation to the Ministry of DoNER for conceptualising and anchoring the Mizoram Ginger Mission, which marks a defining moment in the State's agricultural and economic journey. He noted that the Mission rightly recognises Mizoram's unique strength in pharma-grade ginger and converts it into a structured pathway for farmer prosperity, value addition, and global market integration. The State Government is fully committed to ensuring time-bound execution on the ground. The Union Minister for the Develop-

ment of North Eastern Region underscored Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's commitment to ensuring that farmers become true stakeholders in the entire agricultural value chain — "from farm to fork." The Minister emphasised that the objective is not merely crop cultivation, but enabling farmers to participate meaningfully in processing, branding, packaging, export-led value addition, and global market integration. He noted that while Mizo Ginger contains 6-8 percent oleoresin against the global average of around 3 percent, farm-

ers today receive only ₹8-15 per kilogram, even as the value chain reaches over ₹500 per kilogram in international markets. Calling for a decisive effort to "disintermediate the intermediary" and strengthen cooperative and FPO structures, he positioned the ₹190 crore initiative as the "Mizo Ginger Movement" — anchored on four strategic pillars of Convergence, Value Addition, Branding, and Market Integration — and designed through convergence among the Ministries of DoNER, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Food Processing Industries, and Ru-

ral Development, along with APEDA, NABARD, the Government of Mizoram, and industry stakeholders. The Minister highlighted that the Mission will deliver one integrated Processing Hub and three Spoke centres, over 30 strategic interventions, and the integration of nearly 20,000 farming households into a unified value-chain ecosystem built on traceability, distinctiveness, quality assurance, and farmer-led value creation. He set out a clear global vision for Mizo Ginger, with targeted entry into South-East Asian, Middle Eastern, and European markets, and stated that success would be realised the day Mizo Ginger is available on global shelves, traceable to individual farmers, and delivering direct economic benefits to them. Situating the Mission within the larger vision of "Brand North East" with one USP for each State like Sikkim as Organic State, Kiwi of Arunachal Pradesh, Queen Pineapple of Tripura, Coffee of Nagaland and Lakadong Turmeric from Meghalaya — the Minister assured farmers that the Government stands "side by side" with them, describing the initiative as a long-term movement expected to deliver a six-fold increase in farmer value realisation, sharp reduction in post-harvest losses, international branding of Mizo Ginger, sustainable rural livelihoods, and a robust export and processing ecosystem for the region.

DRDO opens CBRN Field Training & Demonstration Centre in Delhi

The Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) marked a significant step towards strengthening India's preparedness against unconventional threats by inaugurating the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Field Training and Demonstration Centre at the Burari plains in Delhi on May 6, 2026. The advanced facility has been established with the objective of enhancing the country's readiness to tackle radiological and nuclear emergencies through modern training, research and rapid response mechanisms.

The centre was inaugurated by Dr Samir V Kamat, who is the Secretary of the Department of Defence Research and Development and Chairman of DRDO. During the inauguration, he highlighted the growing importance of preparedness in the field of CBRN defence and stressed the need for specialised infrastructure to train personnel dealing with high-risk emergencies and disaster situations.

The newly-established training and demonstration centre is expected to serve as a

unique DRDO-CBRN Centre of Excellence equipped with several state-of-the-art facilities. These facilities are designed to provide comprehensive practical exposure and scientific support for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents in real-world conditions.

One of the major highlights of the centre is the dedicated radiological and nuclear test bed facility, which will allow experts and response teams to simulate and study the impact of nuclear and radiological hazards in controlled conditions. The facility will help researchers and emergency responders develop effective mitigation strategies and improve operational preparedness.

The centre also includes a heavy ion research facility aimed at advancing scientific studies related to radiation exposure, nuclear effects and protective technologies. This facility is expected to contribute significantly to ongoing research efforts in nuclear medicine, radiation safety and defence preparedness.

Apart from research infrastructure, the

training centre has been equipped with emergency medical response systems and real-time field response units. These units are intended to provide rapid medical assistance and operational support during emergencies involving hazardous chemical or radioactive exposure, thereby reducing casualties and improving survival outcomes.

The CBRN training and demonstration centre forms an important part of the upcoming CBRN Centre of Excellence being developed under the Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS), one of DRDO's premier laboratories. INMAS has long been involved in research related to nuclear medicine, radiation biology and allied sciences, and the new centre further expands its role in national security and disaster management.

According to officials, the centre has been dedicated to providing specialised training to responders from various government agencies, including the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Home Affairs and the National Disaster Management Authority. Personnel from

other organisations involved in crisis management and emergency response will also undergo advanced training at the facility.

The initiative is expected to significantly improve coordination among different agencies responsible for handling CBRN emergencies. Since such incidents require swift and coordinated action, the centre will help create a unified response framework by training personnel together in simulated field conditions.

The DRDO facility will also conduct workshops, simulation exercises and technical demonstrations aimed at preparing the next generation of CBRN specialists. These programmes will focus on introducing the latest technologies, scientific techniques and operational protocols required for handling evolving threats in the modern security environment. Experts believe that the establishment of the centre comes at a crucial time when nations across the world are focusing on strengthening disaster preparedness and homeland security capabilities.

▶▶ MAHARASHTRA

Aryan Age | 05

Maha govt to give priority to single women farmers in welfare schemes: Dy CM Sunetra Pawar

Pune : Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar today said that single women farmers would be given priority in benefits under government schemes and that the drone scheme would also be implemented at the earliest.

She gave this assurance during the district-level pre-Kharif season review meeting held online today, where senior Shiv Sena (Shinde) leader and MLC Dr. Neelam Gorhe urged the administration to give priority to single women farmers in beneficiary-oriented government schemes.

The meeting focused on the implementation of various agricultural schemes and achieving targets, including a special campaign to increase applications from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities.

Dr. Gorhe instructed officials to ensure that single women farmers, women agricultural labourers, accident-affected women, families af-



ected by farmer suicides, and project-affected women are included on a priority basis in welfare schemes.

She also suggested creating dedicated categories or special provisions for these women in govern-

ment initiatives.

Highlighting the challenges women face in the joint family system, Dr. Gorhe emphasized the need to organize "Samadhan Camps" to help resolve issues related to land

registration and ownership in women's names.

She further referred to a meeting of the M. S. Swaminathan Foundation held on March 11 in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde, and Sunetra Pawar, where discussions were held on empowering women farmers.

Dr. Gorhe noted that the Maharashtra government has already signed an agreement with the Foundation and stressed the need for a comprehensive action plan to strengthen women farmers across the state.

Dr. Gorhe also called for direct consultations with stakeholders at different levels to prepare a policy framework for the rights and empowerment of women farmers in Pune district and across Maharashtra. Pune District Collector Jitendra Dudi welcomed the suggestions and assured immediate implementation.

Rohit Pawar says farmers, Marathas, OBCs facing hardships amid rising fuel and fertiliser costs

Mumbai : NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) leader Rohit Pawar on Saturday said that multiple sections of society in Maharashtra are currently facing serious economic and social difficulties, including the Maratha and OBC communities, as well as farmers from various regions of the state. Speaking to the media, Pawar highlighted that rising fuel prices, shortages of petrol and diesel, and increasing fertilizer costs have collectively added to the financial burden on ordinary citizens, particularly those dependent on agriculture and rural livelihoods.

He said that farmers across different communities are going through a challenging phase, with input costs rising steadily while incomes remain under pressure. According to him, the increasing prices of essential commodities are worsening the overall economic stress



in rural Maharashtra. Pawar stated that the combined impact of inflation and supply-related issues is making day-to-day life increasingly difficult for common people, especially those in farming and low-income households. He specifically pointed out that the rising cost of fuel is not only affecting transportation but is also indirectly pushing up the prices of other essential goods and services across the state. He also noted that fertilizer

price increases have further deepened the crisis for farmers, as agricultural production costs continue to rise at a time when many cultivators are already struggling with debt and uncertain returns. Reacting to Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange Patil's announcement of an indefinite hunger strike starting May 30, Rohit Pawar urged the government to proactively engage in dialogue with the concerned community.

Man bludgeons to death his parents over domestic dispute in Dhule

Dhule : A shocking incident has unfolded in the Mahavir Society of Shirpur, where a son, enraged over being humiliated by his parents in front of his wife during a domestic dispute, allegedly bludgeoned them to death using a pestle today, sending shockwaves across the Dhule district.

The accused son, Chandan Ganga Mahato (aged 28), who was preparing to flee after committing the murders, was apprehended by the Shirpur police with the assistance of local residents.

The deceased have been

identified as Ganga Jhirilal Mahato (49) and his wife Ranjudevi (43), both residents of Plot No. 38, Mahavir Vihar, Sector No. 2, Mandal Shiwar, Shirpur.

Following the incident, a large crowd of local residents gathered at the scene. Police arrived immediately, took custody of the couple's bodies, and sent them for a post-mortem examination.

The police have taken the accused son into custody. A case of murder has been registered against him at the Shirpur City Police Station.

Just two days prior to the

incident, the parents—who had returned to Shirpur from Rajasthan after their daughter's wedding—got into an argument with their son. It has emerged that, in a fit of rage stemming from this altercation, the son allegedly murdered his parents.

The fact that the parents were killed by their son less than two days after their daughter's wedding has caused a massive stir across both the Shirpur and Dhule districts.

As the accused son is unemployed, it has come to light that frequent arguments had previously taken

place between the parents and their children.

It is reported that the accused son took this drastic step specifically because he felt humiliated in front of his wife during one of these recurring arguments.

The Shirpur police are conducting further investigations into the matter.

It has come to light that the Mahto family originally hails from the Darbhanga district of Bihar. It is reported that Sadar's family had settled in Shirpur, in the Dhule district, a few years ago for work-related reasons.

Revenue Minister Bawankule Warns Officials Over Public Harassment

Mumbai : Maharashtra Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule publicly reprimanded officials of the revenue department, expressing deep concern over the hardships faced by ordinary citizens due to administrative delays, negligence, and procedural inefficiencies. He warned that even a single wrong signature by an officer could ruin an entire family's future and stressed that protecting citizens' property rights is one of the most important responsibilities of the government.

Bawankule was speaking at the "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Camp Campaign" organised at the Shahaji Raje Bhosale Sports Complex in Andheri, where a large number of citizens gathered to receive government services and documents under a single

platform. During the programme, the minister distributed rehabilitation flats allotted under slum redevelopment schemes, along with key civic and administrative documents such as domicile certificates, income certificates, senior citizen certificates, and other essential papers issued through the tehsil office system.

He said that such initiatives are aimed at reducing the burden on citizens by bringing multiple government services under one roof and ensuring faster delivery of essential documentation without unnecessary delays or harassment. Addressing the gathering, Bawankule stated that 55 services of the revenue department have already been included under the Ease of Doing Business framework, and it is now the re-

sponsibility of officials to execute these services with efficiency, speed, and accountability. He emphasized that the state government is working on a model of governance that is people-centric, transparent, and fast, drawing inspiration from the administrative principles of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

The minister further said that the objective of the government is to ensure that citizens do not have to repeatedly visit government offices for basic services, and that processes should be simplified and made more accessible.

Bawankule highlighted that the Maharashtra government has already successfully organised six such outreach camps across different regions, through which nearly 50,000 families have benefited so far.

WR launches 'EASE' team for female employees

Mumbai : For promoting women empowerment and strengthening workplace support system, the Western Railway's Mumbai Central Division has launched the 'EASE' Team, short for Empowerment, Advocate and Support Enhancement.

According to a press release issued by Western Railways Chief Public Relations Officer Vineet Abhishek, the newly formed EASE team under the guidance of Dr. Aarti Singh Parihar, Additional Divisional Railways Manager (ADRM) of Mumbai Central Division comprises of women representatives nominated from various departments across



the Mumbai Division to ensure wider participation and representation from different sections of the railway administration.

As part of the initiative, members of the EASE Team will conduct regular visits to railway stations, offices and workplaces falling under the Mumbai Central Division.

During these visits, the team will directly interact with women employees and

staff members to understand their concerns, experiences, challenges and suggestions in a more approachable and open manner.

Western Railway stated that the initiative has been designed with the objective of fostering a safe, inclusive and supportive work environment where women employees feel heard, valued and empowered in their workplace.

Nagpur, Akola, Amravati and Wardha likely to witness intense heatwave from May 16

Nagpur : Nagpur city, along with Akola, Amravati and Wardha, is likely to witness intense heatwave conditions from Saturday, with temperatures expected to rise further over the next 48 hours, according to the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC).

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast an increase of 2 to 3 degrees Celsius in daytime temperatures over the next two days, which is expected to aggravate the already severe heat conditions prevailing across Vidarbha.

The department has also warned that temperatures may remain 4 to 5 degrees

Celsius above normal during this period.

The four cities, which have remained in the "red zone" throughout the summer, have already experienced extreme heat conditions during April. In early May, residents also faced high humidity levels.

A brief respite was witnessed during the second week of May after thunderstorms, lightning, gusty winds and light rainfall brought temperatures below the 40-degree Celsius mark for a few days. However, mercury levels have once again risen steadily, touching nearly 44 degrees Celsius in several areas on



Thursday. Akola, Amravati and Wardha have been recording temperatures above 45 degrees Celsius for the past three days. Akola remained the hottest city in the region on Thursday at 45.9 degrees Celsius. Amravati recorded a marginal drop

of 0.6 degrees to 45.2 degrees Celsius, while Wardha registered 45.5 degrees Celsius, slightly higher than the previous day. Residents are facing severe discomfort not only during the day but also at night due to persistent warm winds and high mini-

mum temperatures. Night temperatures remained unusually high, with Akola recording 31.5 degrees Celsius, Wardha 30.5 degrees Celsius, Amravati 28.9 degrees Celsius and Nagpur 27.6 degrees Celsius, indicating little relief even after sunset.

Other districts across Vidarbha also continued to reel under extreme heat conditions. Yavatmal, Washim and Brahmapuri recorded temperatures above 43 degrees Celsius, while Chandrapur and Gadchiroli crossed the 42-degree Celsius mark. Gondia and Bhandara too remained above 41 degrees Celsius.

Woman and Accomplices create Chaos in Pune, Assault Youth and His Mother

Pune : A shocking incident of violence took place in the Vishrantwadi area, where a woman along with her four accomplices allegedly assaulted a young man and his mother in the middle of the road.

The group also vandalized several vehicles, creating panic in the locality. Vishrantwadi police have arrested the woman and one of her associates in connection with the case.

The arrested accused have been identified as Pallavi Sambhaji Lavate (40, resident of Dhanori) and Shubham alias Shegar Thakur (22). According to police, the accused and the victim's family were known to each other and had an ongoing dispute for some time.

Police said the attack was allegedly planned out of personal rivalry. On the night of the incident, the victim was sitting inside a rick-

shaw when Pallavi Lavate and her accomplices confronted him. One of the attackers allegedly struck the youth with an iron weapon, leaving him seriously injured.

After seeing her son lying in a pool of blood, the victim's mother rushed to help him. However, the accused allegedly assaulted her as well, punching and kicking her mercilessly.

The attackers also damaged

several vehicles parked on the road, spreading fear among local residents. Police rushed to the spot soon after receiving information about the disturbance.

Vishrantwadi Police Station acted swiftly and arrested Pallavi Lavate and Shubham Thakur. Two minors involved in the incident have also been detained, while police are continuing the search for the remaining absconding accused.

Internal rift surfaces in NCP over National Executive list omissions

Mumbai : A significant political controversy has emerged within the NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) after a revised organisational list submitted to the Election Commission of India (ECI) triggered speculation over internal power restructuring and leadership realignment in the party.

The issue centres around the April 29 letter submitted to the ECI, where several inconsistencies and omissions in the designation of senior leaders have drawn attention from political observers and party insiders alike.

According to the document, Maharashtra State President Sunil Tatkare was mentioned only as the "Lok Sabha Group Leader," without reference to his full organisational role within the party structure.

Similarly, senior leader and National Working President Praful Patel was listed merely as the "Rajya Sabha Group Leader," raising questions over the omission of his formal party designation in the submission.

In contrast, the list explicitly mentioned Tokotatung, President of the Arunachal Pradesh unit, along with his official designation, highlighting what some critics describe as inconsistency in the treatment of senior leaders across state units.

intensified scrutiny within political circles, with many questioning why top Maharashtra-based leaders were not accorded their full organisational titles in the official submission to the ECI.

At the same time, the document has drawn attention for prominently featuring members of the Pawar family in key organisational roles, signalling what some observers interpret as a consolidation of influence within the party's leadership structure.

Parth Pawar was named as General Secretary, while Jay Pawar was designated as National Secretary in the organisational list submitted to the Election Commission.

Sources within political circles suggest that these appointments could significantly strengthen the role of the younger leadership within the party's administrative and organisational framework.

It is also being speculated that the revised structure may effectively place key administrative and financial responsibilities under the influence of National President and Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar and her immediate family members.

The developments have triggered unease among sections of the party's senior leadership, with concerns reportedly emerging over transparency and clarity in

the organisational restructuring process.

Amid growing speculation, Sunetra Pawar responded to the controversy through social media, describing the inconsistencies in the document as "technical and clerical errors."

She assured party workers and stakeholders that a corrected and revised organisational list would soon be submitted to the Election Commission to address the discrepancies.

However, opposition leaders and political analysts have expressed scepticism over the explanation, arguing that errors of such magnitude in high-level political documentation are unusual. Many observers believe that the episode may reflect deeper internal tensions within the party, particularly between the established leadership and the emerging younger faction.

The controversy has also fuelled speculation of an internal "cold war" within the NCP (Ajit Pawar faction), with questions being raised about succession planning and decision-making authority.

As the situation develops, political observers are closely watching whether the matter will be resolved as an administrative correction or evolve into a broader organisational conflict within the party.

Congress Slams Changes in Election Commissioner Appointment Process

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Vinod Mehra's son thanks Gulzar for praising the late actor

Mumbai: Rohan Mehra has opened up about one of the most emotional and memorable moments of his career — his meeting with legendary poet, lyricist and filmmaker Gulzar — revealing that the veteran filmmaker's words about his late father, actor Vinod Mehra, continue to remain deeply special to him.

Speaking to Variety India, Rohan described the meeting at Gulzar's residence as one of the most touching experiences he has had in the film industry. The actor said the conversation left a lasting emotional impact because Gulzar spoke warmly about Vinod Mehra not just as an actor, but also as a sensitive and compassionate human being.

Recalling the interaction, Rohan said Gulzar reflected on the close relationship they once shared and remembered Vinod Mehra with immense affection and admiration. According to Rohan, hearing such heartfelt memories from someone of Gulzar's stature filled him with pride and gratitude.

The actor shared that Gulzar spoke about his father's artistic depth, emotion-



al sensitivity and gentle personality. Rohan admitted that the conversation made him feel blessed to be Vinod Mehra's son and strengthened his emotional connection to his father's legacy.

Rohan Mehra also addressed the expectations that naturally come with being the son of a respected Bollywood actor. However, he clarified that he does not see his father's legacy as a burden or pressure. Instead, he considers it a privilege and a blessing that motivates him to work harder in the industry.

At the same time, Rohan emphasised that while he deeply respects and cherishes his father's legacy, he is determined to build an identity of his own. He said he wants

audiences to recognise him for his individual performances and artistic choices while still honouring the memory of Vinod Mehra.

The actor further revealed that many people often point out similarities between him and his late father. According to Rohan, comparisons are frequently made regarding their shared love for cinema, music and artistic expression, something he finds both emotional and fascinating.

Rohan admitted that although he never had the opportunity to personally know his father, who passed away when he was very young, he often feels connected to him through these shared creative instincts.

Iman Vellani to front climate thriller 'Suffering Is Optional'

Mumbai: Iman Vellani, who gained international recognition through Marvel Studios' hit series Ms. Marvel, has been cast in the lead role of the upcoming climate thriller Suffering Is Optional. The project will be directed by Pakistani-Canadian filmmaker Zarrar Kahn, marking another ambitious addition to his growing body of socially-driven cinema.

In the film, Vellani will portray Noor Rahman, a 20-year-old drama student who lands the lead role in an India-set adaptation of Hamlet. As Noor becomes deeply immersed in the emotionally demanding role, the boundaries between performance and reality begin to blur, pushing her into an increasingly disturbing psychological and emotional journey.

According to reports, Noor is pressured by a demanding and uncompromising director to channel her personal grief into the theatrical performance. At the same time, she begins experiencing haunting visits from the ghost of her deceased partner, who warns her about an impending climate catastrophe. The supernatural element is expected to intertwine with the film's psychological and environmental themes.

The narrative reportedly explores the intersection of artistic ambition,

emotional trauma, institutional abuse and climate anxiety. Set against the backdrop of campus culture wars and a corrupt social environment, the film examines how young people navigate grief, exploitation and societal collapse while trying to define their identities and futures.

The project represents another major international role for Vellani, whose breakthrough performance as Kamala Khan in Ms. Marvel earned widespread praise for bringing a fresh and youthful perspective to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. She later reprised the character in The Marvels alongside established Marvel stars.

Director Zarrar Kahn first gained major global attention with his feature debut In Flames, which premiered at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival in 2023. The critically acclaimed film was later selected as Pakistan's official submission for the Academy Awards, establishing Kahn as one of the emerging voices in contemporary South Asian cinema.

Reports suggest that Kahn developed the screenplay for Suffering Is Optional by drawing inspiration from firsthand testimonies of individuals who survived climate disasters. This research-based approach is expected to give the film an emotionally grounded and realistic portrayal of

climate grief and societal instability. The film is scheduled to begin production in early 2027, with principal photography planned in Hamilton and Montreal. Producers are reportedly aiming for a visually atmospheric style that blends psychological tension with themes of ecological crisis and human vulnerability.

The project has received financial backing from Telefilm Canada and is being mounted as a co-production between CityLights Media, LBG Films, Outer Memory Media and Couronne Nord. Beyond her Marvel appearances, Vellani has continued expanding her acting portfolio with projects including Animal Farm and Tales From Woodcreek. Industry observers view Suffering Is Optional as a significant opportunity for the young actor to take on a more layered and psychologically intense role outside the superhero genre.

With its mix of psychological drama, supernatural elements and urgent climate themes, the film is

already drawing attention as one of the more distinctive upcoming international productions centred on environmental anxiety and youth experiences in an increasingly unstable world.



Tara Sutaria reacts to being honoured at Women In Cinema Gala hosted by Red Sea Film Foundation during her Cannes debut

Mumbai: Actor Tara Sutaria marked a major milestone in her career with her debut appearance at the 2026 edition of the Cannes Film Festival 2026, one of the world's most prestigious and globally recognised film events. Representing India on an international platform, the actress attended multiple events during the festival, including the Women In Cinema Gala hosted by the Red Sea International Film Foundation.

Her appearance quickly became a talking point across social media, with fans and fashion enthusiasts widely sharing photographs and videos from the event. The Women In Cinema Gala was organised to celebrate women and their contributions to cinema, storytelling, and the entertainment industry across the globe. The event brought together actresses, filmmakers, artists, and industry leaders from different countries, creating a platform that highlighted diversity, creativity, and female representation in international cinema. Tara's participation at the gala marked her growing visibility not only within Indian cinema but also in global entertainment and fashion circles.

Soon after attending the event, Tara Sutaria shared a series of photographs from the festival on her social media platforms. Along with the images, she posted a heartfelt note expressing gratitude for being invited to the celebration and for sharing space with accomplished women from around the world. The photographs showcased the actress in elegant red carpet ensembles that were widely praised online for their sophistication and international appeal. Speaking about the honour of being part of the gala, Tara described the experience as deeply emotional and memorable. She said she felt humbled and thrilled to be present in a room filled with talented, powerful, intelligent, and cele-

brated women. According to the actress, the atmosphere at the event reflected a strong sense of unity and admiration among women from different cultural and artistic backgrounds.

The actress also reflected on how the gathering celebrated both similarities and differences among the attendees. She noted that despite coming from different parts of the world and representing diverse experiences, everyone at the gala shared common values through art, storytelling, and cinema. Tara described the evening as a meaningful celebration of individuality, creativity, and collective inspiration. Talking further about the significance of cinema, Tara said storytelling acted as the universal thread connecting everyone present at the gala. She expressed gratitude towards the Red Sea International Film Foundation and organisers at the Cannes Film Festival 2026 for inviting her to be part of such a prestigious platform. According to the actress, sharing the honour alongside accomplished women from across the world made the experience even more special. During her speech at the event, Tara emphasised the importance of celebrating women whose voices continue to shape cinema in meaningful ways. She thanked the organisers for including her in the evening's celebrations and acknowledged the role of global film festivals in bringing artists together through their shared love for storytelling and artistic expression. The actress also spoke about the significance of unity through art, especially during challenging and uncertain times around the world. She said it brought her comfort to see people from different cultures and backgrounds gathering together to celebrate creativity, beauty, and cinema.

"Mahakali" expands the Hanu-Man universe, Rohit Saraf joins cast

Mumbai: The momentum surrounding Mahakali continues to grow as the ambitious project advances into a major phase of production. Positioned as the next important chapter in filmmaker Prasanth Varma's expanding cinematic universe that began with the blockbuster success of Hanu-Man, the film has steadily been building anticipation among audiences across the country. With new casting developments and production updates now emerging, excitement around the project has intensified even further.

Actor Rohit Saraf has officially joined the cast of Mahakali, adding fresh energy and wider appeal to the much-anticipated film. Reports indicate that the actor has already begun shooting for the project in Hyderabad, marking the start of his involvement in what is being described as a significant addition to the growing cinematic universe created by Prasanth Varma.

The inclusion of Rohit Saraf is being viewed as an important development for the film, particularly because of his popularity among younger audiences and his strong fan base in North India. Over the years, the actor has cultivated a loyal follow-



ing through his performances in films and streaming projects, and industry observers believe his presence could help the film strengthen its reach across multiple regions and demographics.

Trade analysts also believe that Rohit's casting reflects the makers' intention to position Mahakali as a true pan-India project. With audiences increasingly responding to large-scale cinematic universes and mythology-inspired storytelling, the addition of recognisable faces from different industries and audience segments is expected to enhance the film's nationwide appeal.

Apart from Rohit Saraf, the film also stars Akshaye Khanna and Bhumi Shetty in pivotal roles. The makers had earlier unveiled the first-look posters of both actors, which generated considerable buzz on social media platforms.

strong screen presence. While Rohit brings a fresh and relatable energy, Akshaye Khanna's reputation is expected to add dramatic intensity to the film.

Mahakali is being mounted as a lavish production under the banner of RKD Studios.

The film is being produced by RK Duggal and Rivaaj Ramesh Duggal, who are reportedly backing the project on a large scale. Industry insiders suggest that the makers are investing heavily in visual effects, production design, and action sequences to expand the cinematic universe established through Hanu-Man.

The Prasanth Varma Cinematic Universe has gained increasing attention following the massive success of Hanu-Man, which emerged as one of the most talked-about mythology-inspired superhero films in recent years. Its strong box-office performance and positive audience reception encouraged the makers to further develop interconnected stories within the same universe.

As a result, every new announcement related to the franchise now attracts widespread public interest.



Dharma adopts low-cost ticket strategy for 'Chand Mera Dil' release

Mumbai: Dharma Productions is reportedly set to introduce an unusually aggressive ticket-pricing strategy for its upcoming romantic drama Chand Mera Dil in an effort to maximise audience turnout on its opening day, scheduled for May 22, 2026. The move is already generating significant discussion within trade circles, with industry observers describing it as one of the more ambitious pricing experiments attempted by a major Bollywood production house in recent years.

According to trade sources, the makers have instructed cinema chains and exhibitors to maintain highly affordable ticket prices for the film's opening day shows. As part of the strategy, tickets for all screenings before 5:00 pm on Friday, May 22, will reportedly be priced at just Rs. 149. Evening and night shows after 5:00 pm will be available at Rs. 199, making the film considerably cheaper than many current theatrical releases in multiplexes across India. The special pricing model, however, will only apply to standard seating categories. Premium formats such as recliners, luxury auditoriums, IMAX-style experiences, and other high-end seating classes will remain excluded from the offer. The strategy appears carefully designed to attract larger footfalls while still allowing cinemas to retain higher pricing options for premium audiences. Trade analysts

believe the move is primarily aimed at attracting younger audiences, especially students and college-going viewers who are often highly sensitive to ticket prices. By lowering the cost barrier on the opening day, the makers are hoping to encourage spontaneous theatre visits and generate strong occupancy from the very first show. Industry experts suggest that a packed opening day can significantly influence a film's social media presence and long-term momentum. Sources within the trade also indicate that the objective behind the pricing strategy is not merely to increase opening-day collections, but to create a strong "event film" atmosphere around Chand Mera Dil. In the current theatrical environment, audience perception is heavily influenced by crowd reactions, online buzz, and viral word-of-mouth. A high turnout on day one could help the film gain traction across social media platforms and entertainment discussions. The approach is being compared to the audience momentum witnessed by surprise theatrical successes like Saiyaara, which reportedly benefited from strong youth-driven word-of-mouth and repeat audience engagement. Industry insiders believe that if Chand Mera Dil manages to generate a similar emotional connection with audiences, the affordable pricing strategy could further amplify its reach during the crucial

opening weekend. The film's advance booking is expected to begin on Monday, May 18, and trade observers are closely monitoring the initial response. Low ticket prices often encourage faster booking momentum, especially among younger audiences who tend to make group viewing plans. Cinema chains are expected to witness strong early demand if the promotional campaign successfully connects with its target demographic.

Directed by Vivek Soni, the film marks another major romantic drama from Dharma Productions. Vivek Soni previously directed Meenakshi Sundareshwar.

Ayan Agnihotri sang the song 'Come On Baby' from 'Bandar' on Nikhil Dwivedi's request

Mumbai: The makers of Bandar have revealed an interesting detail behind one of the most talked-about elements of the film's teaser — the song "Come On Baby." According to the makers, the track has been sung by Ayaan Agnihotri, marking his first Hindi song, after producer Nikhil Dwivedi personally encouraged him to take on the project. The revelation has further increased curiosity around the film, which has already been generating strong buzz ever since its announcement. Headlined by Bobby Deol and directed by Anurag Kashyap, the film has attracted considerable attention due to its dark, gritty, and stylised world. The teaser, released recently, immediately caught audiences' attention with its intense visuals, raw energy, and dramatic atmosphere. Social media platforms were flooded with reactions praising Bobby Deol's striking new avatar and the film's unconventional tone. Apart from the visuals and performances, the teaser's background track "Come On Baby" also emerged as one of its standout highlights. The song's unusual voice texture and edgy presentation sparked curiosity among viewers, many of whom wanted to know who had sung it. The makers have now confirmed that the track was recorded by Ayaan Agnihotri, nephew of superstar Salman Khan. Reports suggest that the idea of Ayaan singing the song came directly from producer Nikhil Dwivedi, who is believed to share a close bond with the Khan family. According to industry sources, Dwivedi had heard Ayaan singing at a private gathering and was impressed by the uniqueness of his voice. Convinced that the texture suited the mood and personality of the film, he reportedly persuaded Ayaan to experiment with the Hindi track. A source associated with the project revealed that Ayaan does not usually sing in Hindi and was initially hesitant about taking up the opportunity. However, Dwivedi encouraged him to try the song, assuring him that it would only be used if he personally felt comfortable with the final outcome. After hearing the recorded version, Ayaan reportedly approved the track and agreed to let it become part of the teaser.

The source further shared that even Bobby Deol appreciated Ayaan's vocals after listening to the scratch recording. According to insiders, Bobby's encouragement also boosted Ayaan's confidence regarding the song. The teaser's eventual success and the positive audience response towards "Come On Baby" have now made the track one of the film's early talking points. Interestingly, "Come On Baby" is not an entirely new composition. The song has been recreated from the soundtrack of the 1977 film Videsh, which starred Mahendra Sandhu, Shoma Anand, and Prem Krishnan. Producer Nikhil Dwivedi reportedly had the idea of reviving the track for several years and believed it would perfectly suit the world of Bandar.

Manasvi Mamgai: "There's nothing wrong with promoting safe sex"

Mumbai: Actor-producer Manasvi Mamgai has officially been announced as the new brand ambassador of Manforce, marking a

bold and socially conscious step in her career. The announcement was made through a digital campaign video released on social media, where the actress openly addressed the stigma surrounding conversations on condoms and sexual wellness in India. Her candid remarks and confident approach quickly drew attention online, with many praising her for speaking about a subject that is often considered taboo in mainstream public discourse. In the campaign video, Manasvi spoke directly about the hesitation many celebrities feel when it comes to endorsing condoms or participating in conversations related to sexual health. According to her, public figures often avoid such campaigns because they fear judgment or criticism from sections of society. However, the actress made it clear that she sees the issue differently and believes discussions around protection and responsibility should be encouraged rather than hidden. Introducing herself as the new face of the brand, Manasvi said she was proud to associate with one of India's leading sexual wellness companies. She emphasised that condoms are not merely products linked to intimacy, but are equally connected to safety, responsibility, and mutual care between partners. Through her message, she attempted to normalise conversations around safe sex and encourage audiences to view sexual wellness from a more mature and informed perspective. In the video, the actress stated that there is nothing wrong with promoting safe sex and that encouraging responsible behaviour should be seen as a sign of progress.



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RCB target playoff berth as PBKS battle dramatic slide

Dharamsala: Punjab Kings' stunning fall from early-season frontrunners to a side desperately searching for answers will come under intense scrutiny when they face a confident Royal Challengers Bengaluru outfit in a crucial IPL 2026 clash at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium here on Sunday.

The contest brings together two teams travelling in completely opposite directions. While defending RCB are marching steadily toward the playoffs with momentum firmly behind them, Punjab are battling a dramatic collapse that has threatened to derail what once appeared to be a dream campaign.

Punjab began the season in dominant fashion, winning their first six matches and emerging as one of the most destructive batting units in the tournament. Their aggressive approach made them instant title contenders and revived hopes of finally lifting the IPL trophy after years of disappointment.

However, the second half of the season has exposed glaring weaknesses within the side, particularly in the bowling department. PBKS have now suffered five consecutive defeats, with four of those losses coming despite posting 200-plus totals — a remarkable statistic in T20 cricket.

The inability to defend massive scores has become the defining storyline of Punjab's campaign. Their



batsmen continue to produce explosive performances, but the bowling attack has repeatedly failed under pressure.

Prabhsimran Singh has led the charge at the top with 439 runs, while Priyansh Arya has emerged as one of the breakout stars of the season with an astonishing strike rate above 200. Cooper Connolly has also contributed heavily in the middle order, giving Punjab one of the strongest batting combinations in the league.

Yet the same cannot be said about the bowling unit. Marco Jansen has endured a difficult season, veteran spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has struggled for consistency, and Arshdeep Singh has lacked support from the other end. Punjab's bowlers have consistently leaked

runs in death overs, turning winning positions into heartbreaking defeats.

If Punjab are facing growing pressure, Royal Challengers Bengaluru appear to be peaking at precisely the right time.

Much of RCB's resurgence has revolved around the return to form of former skipper Virat Kohli. After enduring criticism following consecutive ducks earlier in the tournament, Kohli responded in emphatic fashion with an unbeaten 105 against Kolkata Knight Riders in the previous match.

The innings not only guided Bengaluru to another successful chase but also marked Kohli's 10th T20 century, making him the first Indian batter to achieve the milestone. He has now

climbed among the leading run-scorers this season and once again looks central to RCB's title defence.

Kohli's record against Punjab Kings further strengthens Bengaluru's confidence. He has consistently dominated PBKS bowling attacks in recent meetings, including the IPL 2025 final where RCB defeated Punjab by six runs to lift the trophy.

Bengaluru also enjoy a strong recent head-to-head advantage, having won the last three matches against Punjab. Their batting unit, featuring Devdutt Padikkal, Rajat Patidar and Tim David, has complemented Kohli superbly, while veteran pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has spearheaded the bowling attack with 22 wickets this season.

Real Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa insists no problems with Mbappe

Madrid: Senior legal expert Ashutosh Srivastava on Sunday stressed that both ruling and opposition political parties must uphold the spirit of the Indian Constitution and refrain from interfering in the functioning of democratic institutions and investigative agencies.

Speaking at a programme, Srivastava said allegations regarding the misuse of central investigative agencies by governments have become increasingly common in the present political environment. However, he underlined that the Indian constitutional framework clearly distributes powers among different democratic institutions and expects them to function independently.

According to him, every pillar of democracy must operate without interference from political entities, whether from the ruling side or the opposition, in order to preserve institutional integrity and public trust.

Srivastava stated that if any political party attempts to interfere in the functioning of investigative agencies, such matters should be challenged before the Supreme Court of India for judicial scrutiny.

He pointed out that despite frequent political allegations surrounding investigative agencies, the Supreme Court has not officially taken cognisance of any proven direct interference in the functioning of central agencies so far.

The senior advocate added that if evidence of such interference were ever conclusively established,



the apex court would certainly intervene to protect democratic processes and institutional independence.

Srivastava also spoke about recent legal reforms introduced by the Central Government, describing them as important steps toward modernising India's criminal justice system.

He said that after independence, India required comprehensive reforms focused on faster justice delivery, efficient investigations, time-bound probes, victim protection, and greater acceptance of digital evidence in legal proceedings.

According to him, the new criminal law reforms are aimed at making the justice system more responsive, technologically updated, and better suited to present-day challenges.

Welcoming the launch of a training academy by the Maharashtra and Goa Bar Association in Navi Mumbai, Srivastava said the initiative would help bridge the gap between theoretical legal education and practical courtroom exposure for young lawyers. He observed that many law graduates possess strong academic

knowledge but often lack practical understanding of courtroom procedures, judicial functioning, and real-world legal practice.

The senior legal expert also highlighted the growing impact of technology on the legal profession, saying that law students and young advocates must adapt to emerging areas such as cyber law, digital privacy, and data protection law.

He further remarked that Artificial Intelligence can serve as a valuable support tool within the legal sector, especially in research and administrative assistance.

However, Srivastava cautioned that Artificial Intelligence should not be entrusted with judicial decision-making responsibilities, emphasizing that human reasoning, ethics, and judicial discretion must remain central to the justice delivery system.

He concluded by stressing the importance of constitutional values, judicial independence, institutional accountability, and technological adaptation in strengthening India's democratic and legal framework for the future.

China reaches semifinals with win over Saudi Arabia at AFC U17 Asian Cup

Jeddah: China continued its journey at the 2026 AFC U17 Asian Cup as it advanced to the semifinals by defeating host Saudi Arabia 3-1 in the quarterfinals here.

Both sides exchanged early attacks as they looked to gain control of the match, with China creating several dangerous chances through long-range efforts.

Saudi Arabia took the lead in the 21st minute when Faisal Bayomi scored following a pass from Ammar Maimani on the left side on Friday.

China responded quickly as Wan Xiang equalized in



the 27th minute with a strike into the bottom left corner.

China took the lead in the 59th minute when Zhao Songyuan finished from a close range on an assist from

He Sifan inside the box.

Saudi Arabia pushed for an equalizer in the closing stages, but China added a third goal in stoppage time through He, whose powerful

long-range strike ended Saudi Arabia's hopes and secured China's place in the semifinals, where it will face the winner between Australia and Vietnam, according to Xinhua.

Zhao said after the match that he was very excited after defeating Saudi Arabia, adding that the team's next goal is to "fight for victory with all the strengths, strive to win the championship and continue making history."

"We are getting better and better. As long as we do well in duels, transitions and work hard, we can win the title," he said.

Manchester United reach agreement to appoint Carrick manager

London: Manchester United have reportedly reached an agreement with former midfielder Michael Carrick to become the club's permanent head coach, marking a significant managerial development at Old Trafford.

According to reports, the formal process of exchanging contracts is currently underway, with an official announcement expected within the next 48 hours.

There remains some uncertainty over whether all paperwork and formalities will be completed in time for Sunday's Premier League fixture against Nottingham Forest, although the club is reportedly keen to finalise the appointment before their final home game of the season.

Carrick is expected to sign an initial two-year contract, with an option to extend for a further 12 months, as per BBC Sport.

He has been credited with overseeing a notable turnaround in Manchester United's performances since taking charge in an interim capacity following the departure of previous manager R ben Amorim in

Carrick's performances as interim head coach have reportedly placed him in a strong position to take over the role on a permanent basis, with growing support from within the club's leadership structure.



January.

Under his guidance, the team is said to have improved significantly, securing Champions League qualification and stabilising results at a crucial stage of the season.

The club's executive hierarchy, including chief executive officer Omar Berrada and director of football Jason Wilcox, is understood to have recommended his appointment to the ownership group led by INEOS.

Following internal discussions, the recommendation has reportedly been approved at higher levels, paving the way for Carrick's expected promotion.

Since stepping in as interim manager, Carrick has been credited with restoring tactical balance, improving squad morale, and delivering consistent results in both domestic and European competitions.

Supporters and analysts have noted a visible shift in team structure and performance, particularly in defensive organisation and midfield control.

If confirmed, Carrick's appointment would mark a new managerial era at Manchester United, with expectations of long-term squad rebuilding and strategic stability.

The club is expected to make an official announcement once contractual details are finalised and all approvals are completed.

Neuer & Ulreich extend contracts with Bayern

Berlin: Manuel Neuer and Sven Ulreich have extended their contracts with Bayern Munich until June 2027, leaving the German record champions set to continue with their established goalkeeping set-up alongside Jonas Urbig for another season, the club announced. The decision ends speculation over whether Neuer would retire when

his current deal expires, with Bayern also retaining 37-year-old back-up Ulreich as they shape a three-man unit to help Urbig develop. Forty-year-old Neuer said he had taken his time before committing to one more campaign. "The conditions are right here. We can beat anyone with this team, I enjoy going to Sabener Strasse every day and I deliver

my performances," Neuer said. "In our goalkeeping team, we stick together and try to raise the bar higher and higher, to keep pushing each other and prepare as well as possible for matches." Bayern president Herbert Hainer said Neuer occupied "a very special place" among the club's outstanding goalkeepers, calling him "the face not just of one.

Mexican defender Reyes says Mexico World Cup spots open

Mexico City: Mexico defender Israel Reyes has highlighted the intense internal competition within the national squad ahead of the FIFA World Cup, stressing that even established players cannot afford to become complacent as the final squad selection approaches.

The Club America centre-back was named in Mexico's extended 55-player provisional roster for the tournament, which will be jointly hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada, with the competition set to begin on June 11. National team coaches must finalize their 26-player squads by June 1, making the coming weeks crucial for players on the fringe as well as regular starters. Reyes emphasized that the fight for places is as demanding as the tournament itself, given the depth of talent available to Mexico. He noted that players are constantly being evaluated and must maintain peak performance levels in every training session and appear-

ance. Speaking to reporters on Friday, the 25-year-old defender said that no player can afford to relax regardless of their reputation or experience. He explained that the pressure comes not just from teammates but from the overall standard required to compete against the world's top national teams. According to Reyes, the internal battle for selection is effectively a battle against "three national teams that are part of the world elite," underscoring the scale of competition within the squad and the high standards expected by the coaching staff. Mexico will open their World Cup campaign against South Africa before facing South Korea and the Czech Republic in Group A, a lineup that presents a mix of physicality, technical ability, and tactical discipline. Reyes pointed out that playing at home brings both motivation and responsibility, as the team looks to capitalize on strong local support during the tourna-

ment hosted in part on Mexico soil.

He described the atmosphere within the squad as highly competitive but also unified, with players pushing each other to improve while sharing a common goal of making the final World Cup roster. The defender added that this internal pressure helps maintain intensity and focus, ensuring that no training session is taken lightly during the buildup to the tournament. Reyes stressed that the objective is to build a team capable of remaining unbeaten in the group stage, a target he believes is achievable with proper preparation and focus. He also noted that the team's confidence is boosted by the expected support of home fans, which he believes can play a decisive role in key moments of matches. According to him, the squad wants to send a strong message from the opening match that Mexico will be a difficult opponent, especially in home conditions.

Yao Miao claims women's 50km title at Ultra-Trail Australia by UTMB

Sydney: Chinese trail runner Yao Miao delivered a commanding performance at the 2026 Ultra-Trail Australia by UTMB on Saturday, clinching the women's 50km title in one of the most closely watched races of the event. Her victory added another major milestone to her rapidly growing reputation in international trail running.

The race, held in Australia's Blue Mountains National Park, attracted a strong elite field from across the world, making it one of the standout competitions in the UTMB World Series calendar. Conditions across the rugged terrain tested endurance, climbing ability and race strategy.

In the women's 50km category, all eyes were on the highly anticipated duel between Yao Miao and New Zealand's Ruth Croft, both of whom have established themselves among the most consistent performers in

global ultra-trail racing.

Yao, 29, entered the race as one of the favourites following her impressive win in the OCC 50km category at the 2025 UTMB Mont-Blanc. She has also made history as the first Asian woman to win three titles across different UTMB categories, underlining her versatility and endurance credentials.

Croft, meanwhile, came into the competition with significant momentum of her own after winning the 2025 UTMB 100-mile category. Known for her strong finishing ability and tactical racing, she was expected to challenge Yao deep into the course.

From the outset, Yao took an aggressive approach, quickly moving to the front of the pack after the start. Her early pace immediately signaled intent, as she looked to establish control over the race rather than respond to



others.

By carefully managing her effort through the opening stages, Yao maintained a steady lead and executed a disciplined strategy through the midsection of the race. Her pacing allowed her to conserve energy for the demanding climbs later in the course.

After crossing the 40km mark, Yao had built a lead of nearly three minutes over her

closest competitors. At this point, she appeared firmly in control, though the challenging terrain still left room for dramatic shifts in momentum.

Yao later revealed that she did not approach the event with a purely competitive mindset. She described it as a "high-quality intensity session," noting that her coach had instructed her to remain conservative during

the first 25km to avoid early burnout.

Despite Yao's strong position, Ruth Croft mounted a determined comeback in the final stages of the race. The closing nine kilometers proved particularly brutal, featuring approximately 800 meters of climbing that tested even the strongest athletes.

The final kilometer included extreme gradients reaching up to 41 percent, significantly reducing speeds and forcing runners into power hiking and technical climbing efforts. It was during this section that Croft narrowed the gap dramatically.

Under mounting pressure, Yao was forced to respond to Croft's surge. The Chinese runner acknowledged later that she could feel her competitor closing in, describing the final kilometers as the most difficult portion of the race.

Adani Ports acquires 51 pc stake in Argentina's Meridian to expand South America maritime operations

Mumbai: Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZL) has officially informed the stock exchanges that it has acquired a 51% majority stake in Argentina-based shipping cargo logistics and nautical services company Meridian Transportes Maritimos SA.

According to the APSEZL statement, the deal aims to establish a joint venture for nautical services, leveraging existing contracts with Southern Energy SA, which is a strategic step to scale the company's maritime operations within the South American market.

"We wish to inform that the Adani Harbour International FZCO ("TAHID"), a step-down subsidiary of the company, has entered into a share purchase agreement on May 15, 2026, for the acquisition of a 51% stake of Meridian Transportes Maritimos SA from Logistica y Servicios Maritimos SA and Simpo SA," the APSEZL informed the stock exchanges.

The acquisition serves as a key pillar in the company's strategy to strengthen its maritime presence in South America. By forming



this joint venture, the entity will provide specialized nautical services.

A significant part of the deal involves leveraging an existing 10-year contract that Meridian Transportes Maritimos S.A. holds with Southern Energy SA (SESA) for the supply of six vessels, which was executed in late December 2025.

The development comes after APSEZL's marine platform, Astro Offshore, recently contracted with Oceaneering International Inc, a US-based engineering

and applied technology company, to pursue specialised offshore and subsea opportunities in Europe.

Subsea activities involve specialised underwater engineering critical to offshore energy and marine infrastructure projects, including cable laying, pipeline installation, underwater construction, inspection, maintenance, and intervention in deepwater environments. These projects require advanced vessels, remotely operated vehicle (ROV) systems, and high-

end operational capabilities.

The deal marked a significant step in APSEZL's expansion into ultra-deepwater operations and international markets, further supporting its strategy to build one of the world's largest integrated marine platforms.

APSEZL's marine platform Astro Offshore has strengthened its deepwater fleet with the addition of Energy Savannah (to be renamed Astro Atlas), a modern 2021-built 97-metre DP2 multipurpose support

vessel. Equipped with a 150-tonne subsea AHC crane, a 25-tonne secondary crane, a moonpool, and accommodation for up to 100 personnel, the vessel is designed to support a wide range of offshore operations, including subsea construction, cable laying, and pipeline installation.

With the capability to operate in water depths of over 3,000 metres, Astro Atlas will enable Astro Offshore to enter the ultra-deepwater segment, unlocking access to more complex, high-value offshore projects. Its advanced DP2 system and robust design support safe and efficient operations in challenging environments. This development aligns with APSEZL's strategy to build one of the world's largest integrated marine platforms spanning logistics, offshore support, underwater engineering, and deepwater infrastructure services. As part of its long-term roadmap, the company is targeting a 200-vessel fleet along with marine revenue of Rs 6,000 crore and planned capex of Rs 13,000 crore by FY31.

RIFAH Chamber of Commerce annual conference held

Chennai: The annual conference of the RIFAH Chamber of Commerce (RCC) was held in Chennai on Saturday, bringing together a large gathering of business leaders, entrepreneurs, and invited speakers from across India and abroad. The event highlighted themes of inclusive growth, entrepreneurship, and collaborative economic development.

The conference witnessed participation from more than 500 business professionals, along with over ten speakers, influential thinkers, and distinguished guests representing various sectors. Discussions throughout the event focused on strengthening community-driven business networks and expanding opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs.

RCC State President Younus Sait delivered the inaugural address, setting the tone for the conference. He emphasized the importance of collective progress and cooperation among entrepreneurs to drive sustainable economic growth within Tamil Nadu and beyond.

During the event, five companies that have made notable contributions to the commercial development of Tamil Nadu were honoured with the RIFAH Awards. According to an RCC release, the awards were presented in recognition of their role in strengthening regional business activity and supporting economic progress.

The conference also featured a series of special addresses by prominent speakers on diverse themes related to business, development, and social responsibility. Umar Mukhtar, CEO of Go Buttons Group, spoke on the importance of unity in business with his address titled "Let Us Grow Together as One Community."

Ahmed Bukhari, President of UEF, presented his vision for regional development in a talk titled "A Better Vision for the Development of Tamil Nadu," focusing on long-term economic planning and inclusive growth strategies.

International guest Dato Veera Shahul Dawood addressed participants on "Building International Business Partnerships,"

highlighting opportunities for cross-border collaboration and global market expansion for Indian entrepreneurs.

Mrs. Janaki Maya, Founder of Cake Square, spoke on "Creating Women Entrepreneurs," emphasizing the growing role of women in business and the need for stronger support systems to encourage female entrepreneurship.

Maulana Muhammad Hanifa Manbai, State President of Jamaat-e-Islami, delivered a speech on "The Perspective of Jamaat-e-Islami on the Contribution of Muslims to the Development of Tamil Nadu," focusing on community participation in state development. Maulana Khalil Ahmed Munceri addressed the gathering on "An Integrated Sustainable Development Plan," discussing long-term frameworks for balanced economic and social progress. Fathi delivered a talk on "Expanding Business - A Social Responsibility," highlighting ethical entrepreneurship and the importance of social impact alongside profit generation.

Fuel price revision a course correction, but more needs to be done: Crisil Intelligence

New Delhi: India's recent decision to raise retail prices of petrol and diesel by ₹3 per litre represents a significant, though still partial, step towards addressing the prolonged under-recovery pressures faced by (OMCs), according to Sehul Bhatt, Director at Crisil Intelligence. Bhatt described the move as a meaningful correction in a long-standing cycle of fuel under-recoveries, which has placed sustained financial strain on state-owned fuel retailers over recent periods. He noted that at their peak, OMCs were absorbing losses in the range of ₹23-₹30 per litre on petrol and diesel, which translated into massive daily cumulative losses of around ₹1,300-₹1,400 crore across petrol, diesel, and LPG operations. Such high under-recoveries, he explained, had created a significant burden on the balance sheets of fuel retailers,

forcing them to operate under compressed margins for an extended period. According to Bhatt, earlier government intervention through excise duty relief of around ₹10 per litre helped reduce the intensity of these losses, narrowing the under-recoveries to roughly ₹14-₹17 per litre on petrol and diesel. This relief measure, he added, brought some stability to the system but did not fully eliminate the structural gap between global cost pressures and domestic retail pricing. With the latest ₹3 per litre hike, combined with a marginal softening in crude oil prices, estimated residual under-recoveries have now eased further to around ₹10-₹13 per litre. Bhatt said this adjustment will provide Oil Marketing Companies with a degree of operational breathing room, helping them better manage cash flows and near-term finan-

cial stress. He also pointed out that cumulative losses since the onset of global supply disruptions and geopolitical tensions had already reached approximately ₹70,000 crore across petrol, diesel, and LPG segments by April. These losses, he warned, are projected to cross the ₹1 lakh crore mark by the end of May if pressure conditions persist without further corrective pricing adjustments. According to Bhatt, the recent price revision should not be interpreted as a move to restore full marketing margins, but rather as a measure aimed at containing incremental balance sheet stress. He emphasized that the adjustment reflects a broader policy recognition that sustained cost absorption by OMCs is not viable indefinitely and that some level of pass-through to consumers is necessary to maintain financial stability.

Rupee fall reflects sentiment-driven weakness, not macro fundamental deterioration: N ArunaGiri

New Delhi: The recent depreciation of the Indian rupee, marked by it breaching successive psychological levels, is being viewed more as a sentiment-driven phenomenon rather than a reflection of any deep structural weakness in India's macroeconomic fundamentals, according to N Aruna Giri, CEO of TrustLine Holdings.

He cautioned that while the underlying economic indicators remain broadly stable, continued erosion of investor confidence could trigger a self-reinforcing cycle of weakness, further pressuring the currency beyond what fundamentals justify.

Giri noted that India's macroeconomic position does not indicate any immediate cause for alarm. He pointed out that the current account deficit remains

within manageable limits, foreign exchange reserves are at comfortable levels, and the import cover of around eight to nine months provides a strong external buffer.

He also highlighted that the fiscal deficit trajectory has remained relatively stable, suggesting that government finances are not under acute stress.

In his view, these indicators collectively do not justify the sharp pace of rupee depreciation seen in recent trading sessions.

According to him, currency movements are often influenced as much by perception and sentiment as by economic data. He explained that when foreign investment inflows weaken or markets begin to anticipate capital outflows due to geopolitical or global uncertainties, such expecta-

tions themselves can exert downward pressure on the currency.

Giri warned that if negative sentiment is allowed to build unchecked, it can evolve into a self-fulfilling cycle where expectations of depreciation lead to actual outflows, thereby intensifying currency weakness.

He stressed that this is precisely why timely and proactive intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) becomes crucial in maintaining stability and restoring market confidence.

Drawing a parallel with past crises, he referred to the 2013 "Taper Tantrum" episode, when emerging market currencies, including

The Indian rupee, faced sharp depreciation following global financial shocks and shifting US monetary

policy expectations.

During that period, then RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan introduced measures such as the FCNR(B) foreign currency deposit scheme, which attracted significant NRI inflows, along with tighter monetary steps and liquidity management tools aimed at stabilising the rupee.

Giri suggested that similar confidence-building measures may be required if current pressures persist, arguing that decisive action can help break negative market psychology before it becomes entrenched.

He emphasized that the RBI cannot afford to remain passive in the current environment, as inaction could allow speculative pressures and sentiment-driven movements to deepen further volatility in the currency market.

One of the possible measures he proposed includes the reintroduction or expansion of FCNR dollar deposit schemes to attract foreign currency inflows, thereby easing pressure on the rupee in the near term.

On the fiscal and policy side, he also suggested that the government could consider steps such as tax concessions for foreign institutional investors, including reductions in TDS on bond transactions and adjustments in capital gains taxation to improve capital inflows.

Giri concluded that while fundamentals remain supportive, restoring confidence quickly is essential, and policy signals at this stage could play a decisive role in stabilising sentiment and preventing further unwarranted depreciation of the rupee.

Telangana to Formulate Comprehensive Cooperative Policy for Modernisation of Sector

Hyderabad : The Telangana Government is formulating a comprehensive State Cooperative Policy aimed at providing strategic direction for the growth and modernisation of the cooperative sector, Secretary Agriculture and Cooperation Surendra Mohan said on Friday.

The proposed policy will focus on professional management, financial sustainability, digital transformation.

And expansion into

emerging sectors, he said during a meeting of the State Cooperative Development Committee held at the Secretariat here.

The meeting was jointly presided over by union Secretary Ministry of Cooperation Ashish Kumar Butani along with Telangana Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao to review measures for strengthening the cooperative sector across the State.

Presenting a comprehensive overview of the cooperative sector, Surendra

Mohan highlighted its significant role in the socio-economic development of rural communities.

He informed that as many as 60,925 cooperative societies are currently functioning across Telangana, reflecting the widespread reach and strength of the cooperative movement.

The Secretary stated that the Telangana Government is fully aligned with the Centre's initiative for computerisation of Primary Agricultural Cooperative

Societies (PACS) to improve transparency, efficiency and service delivery.

As part of efforts to diversify and strengthen rural economic activities, the Telangana Cooperative Union is supporting the transformation of 311 PACS into Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), enabling farmers to access better markets.

Value addition opportunities and collective bargaining mechanisms, he added.

Government imposes import curbs on silver

Mumbai: Within days of increasing customs duties on precious metals, the Central Government on Saturday introduced fresh import restrictions on silver, marking a significant tightening of trade controls in the segment.

Earlier on May 13, the government had raised import duties on precious metals from 6% to 15%, a move aimed at regulating inflows and addressing broader concerns related to trade balance and domestic market stability.

Building on that decision, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) announced that the import policy for silver, including silver plated with gold and platinum, has been revised from "free" to "restricted" with immediate effect.

Under the revised framework, silver imports will now require prior government approval, meaning importers must obtain a licence before bringing the metal into the country. This represents a major shift from the earlier open import regime, where no such approval was needed.

The policy change is expected to significantly impact traders and importers who deal in precious metals, particularly those reliant on global supply chains for bullion and industrial-grade silver.

Officials noted that placing silver under the restricted category effectively brings tighter regulatory oversight, allowing authorities to monitor and control import volumes more closely.

The move comes at a time when global precious metal prices have been volatile, and governments are increasingly seeking to manage external trade exposure linked to commodities.

Analysts say such restrictions typically aim to curb excessive imports, protect domestic markets, and reduce pressure on foreign exchange outflows, although they can also raise compliance requirements for businesses. With silver now requiring licensing, import timelines may become longer and more procedural, potentially affecting supply dynamics in the short term. The combined impact of higher duties and licensing requirements signals a broader policy tightening in the precious metals segment by the government.

Adani Airports, IHG to develop five hotels across airport cities

Mumbai: Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL) has officially announced that it has inked a deal with global hospitality firm IHG Hotels & Resorts to develop five hotels across key airport-linked and high-growth urban destinations, including Mumbai, Nav Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram.

Presently, AAHL operates airports in Mumbai, Nav Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Guwahati, Mangalore and Thiruvananthapuram.

Speaking about the development, Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL) Director Pranav Adani said, "As the Adani Group expands its presence across hospitality and airport-led urban infrastructure, our vision is to create world-class destinations that seamlessly integrate travel, stay and urban experiences around India's rapidly

growing aviation ecosystem". The portfolio includes a Kimpton hotel in Jaipur, as well as Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express hotels within upcoming hospitality-led mixed-use development projects as part of the Adani Airport cities. "We are building this platform in partnership with leading international hotel brands that bring global standards, operational excellence and scale. Our collaboration with IHG Hotels & Resorts and the development of five hotels across key gateway destinations marks an important step in strengthening high-quality hospitality infrastructure aligned with India's long-term travel and economic growth," Pranav Adani said.

Known globally for its design-led hotels, chef-driven dining experiences and boutique luxury positioning, Kimpton's entry reflects the

growing demand for premium lifestyle hospitality experiences in India.

"Our partnership with Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL) reflects the scale of opportunity we continue to see in India's hospitality sector, particularly across gateway cities and airport-led developments that are witnessing strong demand from business, leisure and transit travellers alike," IHG Hotels & Resorts Managing Director, South West Asia, Sudeep Jain said. IHG Hotels & Resorts currently operates 52 hotels across six brands in India and has a pipeline of 98 additional hotels expected to open over the next three to five years. AAHL also stated that it is reimagining airports as integrated urban ecosystems which combine aviation with hospitality, retail, commercial and social infrastructure.

Indian Crypto Industry Sees Major Global Regulatory Shift

Mumbai: The United States Senate Banking Committee on Thursday cleared the Digital Asset Market Clarity Act, advancing what is being described as the most comprehensive cryptocurrency legislation in American history and triggering reactions across global digital asset markets.

The bill, if enacted into law, will formally define which digital assets fall under the jurisdiction of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and which come under the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), ending years of uncertainty over regulatory authority in the sector, a financial analyst said.

The proposed legislation also addresses regulation of

stablecoins, protections for decentralised finance and bankruptcy safeguards for crypto customers. Following the committee's approval, both Bitcoin and Ethereum registered gains in the market.

The bill must still pass a full Senate floor vote before being sent to the President for final approval.

Indian cryptocurrency industry leaders said the development carries significance beyond the United States market.

Ashish Singhal, co-founder of CoinSwitch, said the bill addresses a major structural issue that has affected the global crypto ecosystem.

"The CLARITY Act is a significant moment for the



global crypto industry because it finally attempts to address one of the ecosystem's biggest unresolved challenges — regulatory clarity around digital assets. Despite over 40 per cent of Americans already having exposure to crypto, the industry has largely operated without a clearly defined legislative framework for near-

ly a decade," Singhal said.

He added that the market views the legislation as a strong indication that cryptocurrency regulation in the United States is entering a more mature phase and that such frameworks could eventually become important global reference points for integrating digital assets into the broader financial

system. Nischal Shetty, founder of WazirX, said the absence of regulatory clarity in the US had directly affected market growth.

"For years, exchanges operating in the US did not know which regulator they answered to. Both the SEC and the CFTC claimed authority over the same assets, with no clear boundary between them. Platforms caught between them could not build products with confidence. Institutions stayed out," Shetty said.

He said the development also offers lessons for India, where millions of virtual digital asset holders continue to operate without a comprehensive regulatory framework.