

Aryan Age

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Sensex, Nifty fall for 4th day amid fresh tensions in Middle East PG.8

Supreme Court gets five new Judges as President approves appointments



New Delhi : The Supreme Court is poised to operate at near-full strength after the Centre on Monday cleared the appointment of five judges, taking the court's effective strength to 37 against its recently increased sanctioned strength of 38.

In separate notifications issued by the Department of Justice under the union Law Ministry, senior Supreme Court advocate Venkita Subramani Mohana and four High Court Chief Justices—Justice Sheel Nagu of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Justice Shree Chandrashekhar of the Bombay High Court, Justice Sanjeev

Sachdeva of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, and Justice Arun Palli of the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court—were appointed as judges of the Supreme Court.

They will be Judges of the Supreme Court of India with effect from the date they assume charge of their office, the notification added.

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended five names to the Centre for appointment as judges of the apex court. The recommendations were made during Collegium meetings held on May 22 and 27.

The proposed elevation of senior advocate Mohana is expected to

improve women's representation in the Supreme Court, which currently has only one woman judge, Justice BV Nagarathna. No woman has been appointed to the apex court since August 2021.

The sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court was recently increased by four, taking the total number of judges, including the Chief Justice of India, to 38.

At present, the apex court is functioning with 32 judges, while two more vacancies are set to arise in June following the retirement of Justices JK Maheshwari and Pankaj Mithal.

Amit Shah to attend Bhumi Pujan of Taj Pushpabanta Palace in Tripura on June 5



New Delhi : Bhumi Pujan ceremony of Taj Pushpabanta Palace in the much-awaited transformation of Agartala's historic Pushpabanta Palace (Old Raj Bhawan) into a luxury heritage hotel is scheduled on June 5, by union Home Minister Amit Shah.

This project marks a significant milestone in Tripura's tourism and heritage development initiative, combining the state's rich royal legacy with the hospitality expertise of a Tata Group enterprise. The luxury heritage property is a collaboration with the Government of Tripura and is expected to become one of the most prestigious hospitality destinations in Northeast. The iconic Pushpabanta Palace, known for its rich historical legacy, served as the official residence of the Tripura royal family and later as the Raj Bhawan. Under the ambitious redevelopment project, the heritage structure is being

carefully restored while preserving its original architectural grandeur and historical significance. Retrofitting and restoration work on the existing palace structure has already begun, with special emphasis on maintaining the heritage character of the building while integrating modern luxury amenities. Upon completion, Taj Pushpabanta Palace will offer approximately 100 luxurious rooms, including four exclusive royal suites and signature accommodations inspired by the grandeur of the erstwhile Manikya dynasty. The interiors, furnishings, and design elements are expected to reflect the royal aesthetics and cultural heritage of Tripura's historic rulers. The project aims to provide guests with an immersive royal experience, blending heritage architecture, traditional design motifs, and contemporary hospitality standards synonymous with the Taj brand.

PM hails PM SVANidhi scheme on sixth anniversary, says it has transformed lives of street vendors

New Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday highlighted the impact of the Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme as it completed six years, saying the initiative has transformed the lives of countless street vendors by providing access to collateral-free credit, financial inclusion and opportunities for growth.

In a post on social media platform X, the Prime Minister extended his greetings to beneficiaries of the scheme and praised their contribution to the country's economy.

"Today we mark #6YearsofPMSVANidhi, a scheme which has transformed the lives of countless street vendors by ensuring access to collateral-free credit, financial inclusion and new opportunities for growth. This scheme is all about trust, dignity and empowerment. My best wishes to all beneficiaries whose determination and



enterprise continue to strengthen our nation's economy," Modi said.

Launched by the union government in June 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, PM SVANidhi was designed to support street vendors whose livelihoods were severely affected by lockdowns and economic disruptions. The scheme enables eligible vendors to avail working capital loans without the need for collateral, helping them restart and expand their businesses.

Over the years, the programme has emerged as a key initiative aimed at promoting financial inclusion among street vendors by bringing them into the formal

banking system. Beneficiaries are also encouraged to adopt digital transactions and are eligible for incentives linked to timely loan repayment.

Government officials have described PM SVANidhi as a transformative welfare measure that has empowered millions of small entrepreneurs across urban areas, enabling them to improve their income and strengthen their financial resilience. The Prime Minister's remarks came as the government marked six years of the scheme, underscoring its role in supporting grassroots entrepreneurship and fostering self-reliance among street vendors nationwide.

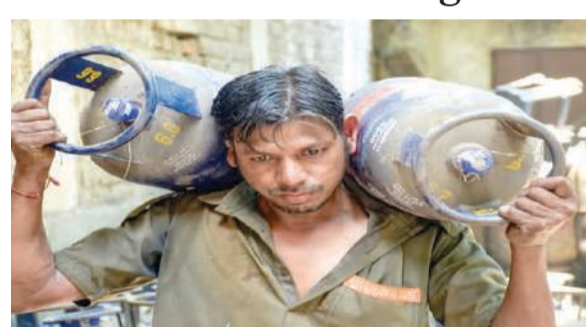
Commercial LPG prices increased; domestic cooking gas rates remain unchanged

New Delhi : Commercial LPG cylinder prices were increased across the country on Monday, raising operating costs for hotels, restaurants, caterers, and other businesses that depend on cooking gas. However, domestic LPG prices for households have remained unchanged.

The price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder in Delhi has been increased by Rs 42, taking the retail price to Rs 3,113.50 per cylinder. Kolkata witnessed the steepest hike of Rs 53.50, while prices in Mumbai and Chennai were raised by Rs 43.50 and Rs 46, respectively.

Oil marketing companies have also raised the price of 5-kg Free Trade LPG cylinders by Rs 11.

The latest increase follows a series of upward revisions in commercial LPG rates in recent months. Rising international energy prices and supply concerns have continued to exert pressure on fuel markets, leading to higher



input costs for commercial users.

The hike is expected to impact businesses in the hospitality and food service sectors, where LPG is a major operational requirement. Industry observers believe that continued increases in fuel costs may add pressure on margins for restaurants, hotels, and small food vendors.

In contrast, domestic LPG prices have remained unchanged. A 14.2-kg household LPG cylinder continues to cost Rs 913 in Delhi, Rs 912.50 in Mumbai, Rs 939 in Kolkata, and Rs

928.50 in Chennai.

The government and oil marketing companies have maintained that adequate LPG stocks are available across the country. Efforts are being made to ensure an uninterrupted supply of cooking gas and other petroleum products despite volatility in global energy markets.

The latest revision highlights the continuing pressure on commercial fuel users, even as household consumers have been shielded from any increase in cooking gas prices.

Corruption in Maha police dept has led to flood of illegal business: Raju Shetty

Kolhapur : Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana (SSS) national president and former MP Raju Shetty has alleged that corruption in the Maharashtra police department has led to a flood of illegal business.

In a press release, Shetty while justifying Shinde Shiv Sena MLA Nilesh Rane's statement in Sindhudurg yesterday, said that "Rane has presented a very real incident to the society. The burning truth that illegal business have flourished in the state is being seen with open eyes by the entire society".

He had said just last week that Maharashtra's progress has become like that of "Uda Punjab".

Shetty said that the corruption statistics was higher in Kolhapur, Sangli, Pune, Mumbai, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Nagpur, Solapur, Thane, Navi



Mumbai, Nashik than given by Nilesh Rane in Sindhudurg district.

The "installments culture" of the police department has led to increase in huge illegal business in the state.

He said that the police's "installment" rates have been fixed at Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 per month for continuing matka; Rs 10,000 to 15,000 per month for illegal liquor sales; Rs 75,000 to 1.5 lakh per month for drug sales; Rs 25,000 to 50,000 per month for illegal liquor sales, and Rs 10,000 to 15,000 per month for running illegal lodge business.

"Terrorist targets" in Beirut's Dahieh will be struck: Netanyahu

Teکل Aviv : Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday ordered further attacks on Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Lebanon's capital, Beirut, describing the targets as "terrorist targets" and escalating a conflict that gives Iran additional leverage to complicate diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the broader U.S.-Iran war.

Netanyahu called the attacks in response to strikes on Israeli civilians and other violations of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire which has failed to bring an end to the fighting.

Israel has carried out limited strikes on Dahieh since the ceasefire in Lebanon was announced on April 16, following heavy bombardment during the early stages of the war. However, fighting has continued in southern Lebanon.

Netanyahu, along with Defence Minister Israel Katz,

directed the Israeli military to target Hezbollah. A statement from Netanyahu's office said the operation was a response to ongoing hostilities.

On Sunday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke to Netanyahu and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun.

As per the talks, the first condition includes that Lebanese officials should pressure Hezbollah to stop its attacks on Israel and that, in return, Israel would refrain from escalation in Beirut.

It came after Israeli troops occupying southern Lebanon crossed the Litani river to seize the 900-year-old Beaufort Castle that sits on top of a strategically important ridge.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said their campaign was "not over" and that they were "determined to crush Hezbollah's power".

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Israeli strikes in Lebanon were contributing

to delays in diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the US-Iran conflict, reiterating Tehran's position that any Lebanon ceasefire is an integral part of a broader agreement.



The latest escalation follows intensified clashes over the weekend, including Israeli troop advances and reports of the capture of Beaufort Castle. Netanyahu also ordered expanded ground operations, aiming to deepen Israeli control over areas previously held by Hezbollah.

Lebanese authorities say

the conflict has killed more than 3,370 people since March 2, when Hezbollah opened fire on Israel in support of Iran amid US-Israeli military pressure.

Castle, a 12th-century fortress located on a strategic hill overlooking Nabatieh in southern Lebanon. The site previously came under Israeli control in 1982 before being withdrawn from in 2000. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz described its capture as a "significant tactical victory."

Hezbollah, meanwhile, accused Israel of repeated ceasefire violations and said it carried out 21 operations on Sunday, including rocket fire toward Israeli military infrastructure in Nahariya.

France has called for an emergency session of the UN Security Council in response to the escalating violence.

The United States has been facilitating indirect diplomatic talks between Israel and Lebanon. A U.S. official said Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently spoke with both Netanyahu and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and proposed a phased de-escalation plan.

Veteran Singer Suman Kalyanpur laid to rest with full state honours in Mumbai

Mumbai : The last rites of veteran playback singer and Padma Bhushan awardee Suman Kalyanpur was performed at Santacruz crematorium here with full state honours on Monday.

A larger number of dignitaries, government officials, and the cultural fraternity gathered to pay their floral tributes.

The iconic singer passed away at the age of 89 late Sunday evening at her residence in Mumbai, bringing an end to a remarkable musical journey that spanned several decades. Her voice bore such a striking similarity to that of melody queen Lata Mangeshkar that common listeners sometimes mistook one for the other.

Her journey in cinema began with films such as 'Shukrachi Chandni' and 'Mangu' (1954). Over the years, she lent her voice to several timeless classics,



including 'Sharaabi Yeh Saawan Ka Mausam', 'Ajkal Tere Mere Payar ke charhe har Zuban par', 'Na Na Karte Pyaar', 'Na Tum Hamein Jaano', and 'Nimbonichya Zhaada Maage'.

Born as Suman Hemmady on January 28, 1937 Suman Kalyanpur is most notable for her work in Hindi cinema. She recorded songs for movies in several other languages including Bengali, Marathi, Assamese, Gujarati, Kannada, Angika, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Odia and Punjabi.

Suman Kalyanpur's career started in 1954 and she went on to become a popular singer in the 1960s and 1970s. Married a Mumbai-based businessman Ramanand Kalyanpur in 1958. He used to accompany her for every recording session after their marriage. She has a daughter named Charul Agny who is settled in the United States after marriage. Her granddaughter Aashani Agny returned to India and opened an NGO in Mumbai in her grandmother's name.

Opposition Slams Maha Govt Over Removal of 80 Lakh Beneficiaries From Its Popular Ladki Bahin

Mumbai : The Maharashtra government's decision to remove nearly 80 lakh women beneficiaries from the Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana over non-compliance with e-KYC requirements has evoked sharp criticism from opposition leaders today.

Senior Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) leader Jayant Patil alleged that the move reflects the state's worsening financial condition.

In a post on social media, Patil claimed that the scheme was launched on a large-scale ahead of the State Assembly elections following the ruling alliance's poor performance in the Lok Sabha polls. He argued that disqualifying

such a large number of beneficiaries now raises serious questions about the government's intentions.

Patil further stated that Maharashtra is facing a significant fiscal deficit, worsened by the global economic slowdown, and warned that more women could be excluded from the scheme in the future on various grounds. He suggested that if the government gradually winds down the programme, it would not come as a surprise.

According to him, better planning at the outset could have prevented the current situation.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Vijay Wadetiwar also criticized the decision while speaking to reporters in Nagpur. He alleged that the

scheme had served its electoral purpose and questioned the government's commitment to women beneficiaries after the elections.

Wadetiwar accused the ruling dispensation of neglecting women who had depended on the financial assistance provided under the scheme.

The issue is expected to intensify political debate in Maharashtra, with the opposition seeking answers from the government over the large-scale exclusion of beneficiaries from one of its flagship welfare programmes.

Congress Demands Action Over Alleged Irregularities in Ladki Bahin Scheme
The Maharashtra Congress has

demanding strict action against officials allegedly responsible for approving and disbursing benefits under the Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana to beneficiaries who were later found ineligible.

In a statement here on Monday, senior Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Gopaladada Tiwari questioned how nearly 81 lakh beneficiaries were declared ineligible only after financial assistance had already been sanctioned and distributed under the scheme. He alleged that the Women and Child Development Department and the Finance Department failed to properly verify applications before approving the monthly assistance of rupees 1,500.

Tiwari called for the suspension of the concerned IAS officers, secretaries and administrative officials, along with the registration of criminal cases against those found responsible. He also demanded recovery of the allegedly misused public funds, along with interest, from the officials concerned.

The Congress leader said that administrative authorities are expected to function according to constitutional and legal responsibilities and should not take decisions under political pressure.

He alleged that the approval and disbursement of benefits to ineligible applicants amounted to a serious loss to the state exchequer. Referring to reports that



thousands of beneficiaries were later found to be over the age limit or otherwise ineligible under the scheme's criteria, Tiwari questioned the effectiveness of the verification process and held the administration accountable for the alleged lapses.

The Maharashtra Congress has urged the state's Chief Secretary, the Governor, and, if necessary, the judiciary to take cognizance of the matter and

initiate an inquiry. The party warned that if prompt action is not taken, Congress workers would intensify their agitation against the officials and authorities involved.

The Ladki Bahin Scheme, launched by the Maharashtra government, played a significant role in public welfare outreach ahead of the Assembly elections and continues to remain a major political issue in the state.

'Prepare farmers for possible drought conditions': Reddy reviews monsoon preparedness

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday directed officials to sensitise farmers about possible drought-like conditions during the upcoming monsoon season and promote cultivation practices that require less water consumption.

Chairing a high-level review meeting on monsoon preparedness at the Secretariat, the Chief Minister stressed the need to educate farmers on crop diversification and crop rotation to minimise risks arising from uncertain rainfall patterns.

Officials from the Agriculture, Irrigation, Urban Development, Panchayat Raj, Health, Home, Hydrology, Disaster Management, and Fire Services departments attended the meeting.

During the review, officials from the Meteorological Department gave a PowerPoint presentation on rainfall trends associated with the Southwest



Monsoon, the impact of El Niño conditions, and other related factors. Revanth Reddy also reviewed

the status of maintenance works being undertaken for irrigation projects across the state. He directed officials

to complete repairs of project gates and all related maintenance works on a war footing.

The Chief Minister ordered the immediate release of funds required for irrigation maintenance activities to ensure uninterrupted water management during the monsoon season.

He further instructed officials to utilise the Rs 1,000 crore corpus available with the Disaster Management Department strictly as per prescribed regulations.

The CM also directed the immediate release of funds for repairing damaged roads and reconstructing collapsed bridges in vulnerable areas.

Emphasising the importance of disaster response, Revanth Reddy instructed officials to act swiftly in cases involving loss of human life, property, or livestock during natural calamities, according to an official statement.

Congress following BRS model of corruption, alleges BJP leader NVSS Prabhakar

Hyderabad: Senior BJP leader and former MLAN, V. S. S. Prabhakar on Monday alleged that the Congress government in Telangana was continuing the same "corrupt and irregular practices" followed by the previous BRS regime, pushing the state into a severe crisis.

Addressing the media at the state party office, Nampally, Prabhakar claimed that the present government was repeating mistakes committed in key departments such as Irrigation, Power, Municipal Administration, and Civil Supplies.

He accused successive governments of failing to streamline grain procurement, allowing middlemen to exploit farmers.

He also criticised the state government for allegedly remaining inactive de-



spite the threat posed by unseasonal rains to standing crops.

Prabhakar further alleged that Telangana's power distribution companies had accumulated losses exceeding Rs 69,000 crore and claimed there were no accurate records of domestic, agricultural.

And industrial power consumption.

The BJP leader also ac-

cused both the Congress and BRS governments of politicising Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) while appointing retired officials as advisors, alleging misuse of public funds.

He alleged that the Congress government was weakening welfare measures such as free electricity and fee reimbursement despite claiming to establish "Indiramma Rajyam."

Ladakh Haj Committee urges Centre to airlift pilgrims' luggage directly to Srinagar

Srinagar: The Ladakh Haj Committee has urged the Centre to airlift the luggage of returning Haj pilgrims directly to Srinagar, saying that the proposed road transportation of nearly 30 kg baggage per pilgrim from Ahmedabad would cause "serious hardship", particularly for elderly pilgrims returning to Ladakh after completing Haj in Saudi Arabia.

In a formal representation to union Minister for Minority Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijju, Chairman of the Haj Committee, UT Ladakh, Ghulam Abbas Abidi, said several Ladakh pilgrims currently in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) have expressed serious concern over the new baggage arrangement communicated by the Jammu and Kashmir Haj Committee and the Haj Committee of India.

The pilgrims, who have completed their Haj rituals, are scheduled to return from Jeddah to Srinagar International Airport on June 14, 15 and 16 through three sepa-

rate flights before proceeding to their respective destinations in Ladakh.

Abidi said according to the communication received by the pilgrims, only one 7-kg hand bag and one 5-kg checked-in bag would be allowed on the Jeddah-Srinagar flight, while the remaining baggage of around 30 kg per pilgrim is proposed to be transported separately by road from Ahmedabad to Srinagar.

Abidi pointed out that under the Haj Policy 2026 issued by the Haj Committee of India, every pilgrim is entitled to carry up to 47 kg of baggage, including two checked-in bags of 20 kg each and one hand bag of 7 kg. He said the proposed arrangement has caused anxiety and inconvenience among the pilgrims, particularly the elderly, as transportation of baggage by road could take several days.

"The Ladakh pilgrims cannot remain in Srinagar for an extended period waiting for their luggage due to accommodation constraints

and the need to return to their respective districts in Ladakh immediately after arrival," the letter to union Minister read.

The Ladakh Haj Committee has requested the union Minister to examine the matter and explore the possibility of transporting the baggage by air cargo directly to Srinagar instead of by road.

Abidi further requested that the luggage be airlifted either directly from Jeddah or from Ahmedabad to Srinagar so that it reaches simultaneously with, or shortly after, the arrival of the pilgrims.

He said timely delivery of baggage is of great importance to the pilgrims and their families and expressed hope for early intervention by the Centre in the matter. Haj pilgrims from Jammu and Kashmir have already expressed concern over the arrangement where in their luggage would be transported separately by road from Ahmedabad days after their return.

Telangana CID busts 'DafaBet Betting Network'; Afghan National among 11 Arrested

Hyderabad: The Telangana Crime Investigation Department (CID) on Monday arrested 11 people, including two alleged key organisers from Gujarat and an Afghan national, in connection with an online betting racket linked to the DafaBet platform.

The network operated through a complex web of mule bank accounts, fake firms, and technical support teams spread across multiple states, according to a top CID official.

Addressing a press conference, Telangana CID Director General Charu Sinha said the investigation was launched after the state government constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe online betting applications and related fraud cases.

The probe gained momentum following a complaint lodged by a Karimnagar resident who allegedly lost nearly Rs 10 lakh through betting activi-

ties on the DafaBet platform.

According to Ms Sinha, DafaBet was launched in the Philippines in 2004 before shifting its operations to the United Kingdom. The two principal organisers arrested in the case reportedly operated offices in both Delhi and Dubai.

The accused allegedly earned commissions of around 1.5 per cent on transactions, generating estimated profits of Rs 8 lakh to Rs 10 lakh per day, she said.

The CID traced the money trail through eight layers of transactions involving 46 mule bank accounts. Investigators relied on forensic analysis of mobile phones, email accounts, and banking records to identify the suspects.

The operation took nearly six months, during which six special CID teams comprising about 40 personnel conducted searches in Gujarat, Punjab,

and Delhi. The accused frequently changed mobile phones, SIM cards, and locations to evade detection, Ms Sinha said.

Those arrested have been identified as Monish



Singh (24) and Abhishek Singh (26), the alleged key organisers; Ajith Singh (27), Vijay Patidar (25), Yugal Patidar (25) and Prateek Praveen Bhai (25), all technical support personnel from Gujarat; Igneshious Dass (27), Abhishek Wadhava (27) and Afghan national Mohd Halim (24), all based in New Delhi; and Love Kumar and Simarpreet Singh from Punjab.

The CID chief said the accused played distinct roles within the network. While two acted as organis-

ers, three allegedly arranged mule bank accounts for commissions, two created fake firms to channel betting proceeds, and four provided technical support for the operation.

Mohd Halim, the Afghan national arrested in the case, was allegedly involved in arranging mule bank accounts, she added.

During the operation, investigators seized three luxury vehicles — a BMW, a Mercedes-Benz, and a Kia Seltos — along with eight laptops, two iPads, 26 mobile phones, five passports, and cash.

Ms Sinha said DafaBet attracted users through betting on cricket matches, online casino games, and the Aviator gaming platform. Victims were allegedly lured with initial winnings before being encouraged to place larger bets, ultimately suffering substantial financial losses. Citing data from the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP),

she said 225 complaints and 73 cases have been registered against DafaBet across Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.

In Telangana alone, around 414 cases linked to the platform have been recorded, according to CID data.

Appealing to citizens to stay away from online betting, Ms Sinha described the activity as illegal and highly addictive.

She also indicated that the role of celebrities and social media influencers endorsing betting applications remains under examination, although no immediate action has been announced.

The investigation is continuing, with officials expected to examine the complainant and analyse newly obtained evidence to uncover the wider interstate and international network behind the operation, she added.

Mahanadi Banchao Andolan plans human chain ahead of PM's Odisha visit

Bhubaneswar: A human chain will be organised in Bhubaneswar ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to Odisha to press for the protection of the Mahanadi river and draw attention to concerns over water availability in the river basin.

The decision was taken at a brainstorming session on the Mahanadi water dispute held under the banner of the Mahanadi Banchao Andolan (Save Mahanadi Movement) on Sunday.

The meeting, chaired by former Director General of Police Amiya Bhusan Tripathy, was attended by representatives of almost all major political parties in the state, barring the ruling BJP.

Leaders from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Congress, CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc, SUCI, CPI(ML), Odisha Janata Congress Party, Sa-

matra Kranti, and Rashtriya Janata Dal, along with experts, retired engineers, former administrators, and intellectuals, participated in the deliberations.

Participants stressed the need for an independent examination of the data submitted before the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal by nationally reputed engineers and water resource experts. They expressed concern that the alleged restriction of the river's natural flow by Chhattisgarh could pose a serious threat to Odisha's water security as well as the ecological sustainability of the Mahanadi basin.

Former Irrigation Minister Niranjana Patnaik said the Odisha government should intensify efforts to conserve water in the downstream areas of the Mahanadi below the Hirakud Dam. BJD MLA Niranjana Pu-

jari, a member of the high-level committee constituted by the state government to address the Mahanadi dispute, said the government had initially proposed resolving the issue through dialogue. However, he alleged that little progress had been made and claimed that committee members had not been kept informed about the data being submitted before the Tribunal.

Senior journalist Rabi Das cautioned that failure to take timely corrective measures could have severe long-term consequences, warning that large parts of Odisha might face desertification-like conditions in the future.

Former senior administrators Sanjeeb Hota and Aravinda Behera also underlined the need for an independent verification of water-related data pertaining to

the dispute.

Congress leader and former MLA Santosh Singh Saluja announced his party's support for the programmes of the Mahanadi Banchao Andolan, stating that the movement was aimed at protecting both the river and the interests of the people of Odisha.

Former Odisha Finance Minister Panchanan Kanungo, senior advocate Shibananda Ray, former Chief Engineer of the Water Resources Department Ramesh Tripathy, former Deputy Director General of the Geological Survey of India Dr. Subhranshu Ray, and former Head of the Physics Department at Sambalpur University Prof. Surya Nayak also addressed the gathering. They emphasised that Odisha's water requirements during the non-monsoon period must receive due consideration. Prominent environ-

mentalist Prafulla Samantara called for a broader campaign to safeguard all rivers in Odisha in addition to the Mahanadi.

The meeting adopted three resolutions. It decided to organise a national-level conference in New Delhi involving experts to assess the actual quantity of water available in the Mahanadi river system. It also resolved to form a human chain in Bhubaneswar before the Prime Minister's visit to Odisha and to organise conferences across river-basin districts along with a Mahanadi Yatra to create public awareness on the issue.

Mahanadi Banchao Andolan convenor Sudarshan Das and adviser Er. Lalit Mohan Patnaik presented a preliminary overview of the water dispute and the data submitted before the Tribunal.

RSP revives API-grade pipe production after 12-yr hiatus

Bhubaneswar: In a significant boost to India's steel manufacturing sector, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) has successfully revived the production of American Petroleum Institute (API)-grade pipes after a gap of 12 years.

The achievement marks a major milestone in product development, technological advancement and market expansion for the plant's Electric Resistance Welded (ERW) Pipe Plant. The revival of API-grade pipe production is being viewed as an important step in strengthening the plant's presence in the high-value pipeline steel segment, which caters to critical sectors such as oil, gas and energy infrastructure. The accomplishment demonstrates the plant's ability to meet stringent international standards and emerging industry requirements. According to RSP sources, the ERW Pipe

Plant concluded the financial year 2025-26 with several noteworthy achievements that showcased its enhanced manufacturing capabilities and operational efficiency. These milestones have reinforced the plant's reputation as a producer of high-specification steel pipes designed for demanding industrial applications.

One of the most significant achievements was the successful production and dispatch of approximately 8.2 kilometres of API 5L X52 PSL1 pipes. The entire production and delivery process was completed within a remarkably short period of seven days, highlighting the plant's operational readiness and production flexibility.

The production run achieved an impressive yield rate of nearly 99 percent, reflecting high levels of process control and manufacturing efficiency. In addition,

the operation recorded more than 80 percent fixed-length compliance, a critical quality parameter in pipeline manufacturing that ensures uniformity and ease of installation.

The successful execution of the API-grade pipe order resulted in an estimated financial benefit of ₹1.11 crore for the plant. Beyond the financial gains, the achievement demonstrated RSP's capability to re-enter a specialised market segment that demands strict adherence to quality and performance standards.

In another major breakthrough, the ERW Pipe Plant manufactured and supplied nearly 14 kilometres of 273.1 mm x 12 mm Fe450 ERW pipes. This marked the first time in the history of the plant that pipes of this specification and thickness were produced, representing a significant expansion of its manufacturing portfolio.

Kavitha warns against 'attack on Telangana identity'

Hyderabad: Kalvakuntal Kavitha, president of Telangana Rakshana Samiti (TRS), on Monday launched a sharp attack on Andhra-based political parties and the Telangana government, alleging a conspiracy to undermine Telangana's identity and self-respect. Addressing a round table conference on "Aspirations and Achievements of Telangana Activists" at the Telangana Rakshana Sena office in Banjara Hills, Kavitha said the people of Telangana would not tolerate any attempt to impose "Andhra politics or culture" on the state. "We fought and achieved Telangana statehood through great sacrifices. If anyone attempts to attack our identity again, we will strongly resist it," she



saKavitha alleged that Andhra leaders were engaging in diversionary politics because they had failed to develop their own capital city even after the bifurcation of the state. She also criticised Andhra Pradesh leaders including Pawan Kalyan and Nara Lokesh, over their remarks concerning Telangana. Taking strong

exception to the installation of statues of Andhra leaders in Telangana, Kavitha said her party would remove them also once it came to power. She also accused Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of acting in favour of Andhra politicians. Referring to the Telangana movement, she recalled the sacrifices made by students and activists.

Public grievances must be resolved within stipulated timeframe; accountability should be fixed in case of delays: CM Yogi

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday held a Janata Darshan programme, where he met people from different parts of the state, heard their grievances and assured them of prompt action. The interaction reflected the government's continued emphasis on direct engagement with citizens and swift resolution of public issues.

During the public outreach programme, the Chief Minister personally received applications from citizens and listened to their concerns on a wide range of matters. People approached him with issues related to revenue administration, policing, welfare schemes and other public services.

After reviewing the applications, CM Yogi directed

the concerned departments and officials to take immediate action. He emphasized that all public grievances should be addressed within the stipulated timeframe and that delays in resolving genuine concerns would not be tolerated.

A significant number of complaints presented during the Janata Darshan were related to revenue and police matters. Taking serious note of these cases, the Chief Minister instructed officials to ensure that investigations and administrative processes are completed without unnecessary delay.

He specifically directed authorities to dispose of pending revenue cases within the prescribed timeline. Stressing the importance of efficiency in governance, he ordered a comprehensive re-

view of cases that have remained unresolved for more than six months.

The Chief Minister also



underlined the need for accountability in public administration. He instructed that responsibility should be fixed on officials if delays occur without valid reasons and that appropriate action should be taken against those

found negligent in performing their duties.

Highlighting the government's commitment to public welfare, CM Yogi said that ensuring timely assistance to every needy person remains a top priority. He noted that citizens should not be forced to make repeated visits to government offices to seek justice or access services.

The Chief Minister further directed officials to handle public grievances with sensitivity and compassion. He emphasized that every complaint should be examined fairly and that justice must be delivered without any discrimination.

He also instructed the administration to ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive the benefits of government welfare schemes without ob-

stacles. According to him, welfare programmes can achieve their objectives only when assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries in a timely manner.

Addressing issues related to healthcare, CM Yogi directed officials to make proper medical treatment available to those in need. He said that no deserving person should be deprived of healthcare support due to administrative delays or procedural hurdles.

The Chief Minister reiterated that bringing relief and happiness to the lives of the underprivileged is the responsibility of both the government and the administration. He called upon officials to work proactively to resolve public problems and improve the quality of life of citizens.

Massive Turnout for Mumbai MHADA Housing Lottery as Selection Process Awaits June Clearance

Mumbai : The Mumbai Housing and Area Development Board's latest computerized lottery has generated massive public interest, drawing an impressive 75,366 applications for the 2,640 residential apartments put up for sale. Data indicates a high competitive ratio, averaging roughly 28.54 hopeful buyers vying for each available housing unit across the metropolis. While the administrative groundwork is complete, the final draw schedule will only be made public after the current Model Code of Conduct concludes on June 25, 2026.

The temporary freeze on major state announcements is tied to the ongoing Maharashtra Legislative Council elections, during which the Election Commission mandates a complete halt to promotional draws until the political process concludes. Consequently, housing authorities will reveal the exact venue, time, and date of the live selection draw once these regulations are officially dismantled. In the meantime, the housing



board is thoroughly organizing the application database to ensure absolute transparency.

The expansive property portfolio includes newly constructed complexes, apartments handed over by private builders under statutory re-development clauses, and vacant inventory from previous cycles. The intense rush for these homes—sparked by an advertisement campaign launched in late March—is largely driven by price

points that sit comfortably below current market valuations. Additionally, modern amenities, dedicated parking structures, and strategic locations across prime sectors of the city significantly amplified public demand before the entry deadline closed in late May.

To maintain transparency, the provisional directory of qualified participants will be uploaded to the official MHADA portal on June 10, 2026, at 3:00 PM. This will open a short window for ap-

plicants to submit grievances or rectify documentation mismatches online, which closes strictly on June 12. Following a meticulous review of these disputes, the definitive list of verified participants will be made public on June 16, 2026, setting the stage for the highly anticipated final draw.

The real estate units are distributed across multiple socioeconomic brackets, including 145 homes reserved for the economically weaker section, 858 for low-income

families, 798 for middle-income groups, and 839 designated for high-income buyers. Geographically, the projects span key urban clusters such as Vikhroli, Goregaon, Borivali, Chembur, Bandra, and Dadar. To further incentivize buyers, authorities implemented a 7.5 percent price slash on over a thousand under-construction flats in Vikhroli, a move that successfully spiked application rates among middle and high-income professionals.

To maximize citizen convenience and ensure a smooth experience for the thousands of hopeful applicants, detailed announcements regarding the exact time, venue, and digital streaming links for the computerized draw will be prominently displayed on the official MHADA web portal in due course. This final phase of communication is intended to keep the entire process completely accessible to the public, allowing participants to track the allocation of their potential future homes transparently from any location.

Green Makeover Planned for Mumbai's Key Gateways

Mumbai : Major entry points into the city at Airoli Naka and Vashi Naka are set for a major environmental overhaul. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation plans to develop aesthetically pleasing, eco-friendly zones at these vital transit points. According to an announcement by Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde, the green project will kick off symbolically on June 5, 2026, to mark World Environment Day, with the Mayor personally planting the initial saplings.

The initiative follows a comprehensive site review conducted by Mayor Tawde at both locations on June 1, 2026. During her visit, she assessed the proposed sites and instructed municipal officials to launch a structured plantation and beautification drive. Her directives include clearing out wild undergrowth, cleaning up the surrounding spaces, and establishing systematic tree patches along both sides of the highway corridors.

To maximize visual appeal, the Mayor emphasized the intensive cultivation of flowering species. Furthermore, a targeted project will be launched to plant yellow allamanda along the creek-facing stretches of the Eastern Express Highway, spanning the area between Pantnagar and Mulund. This specific phase will be executed across the N, S, and T civic administrative wards.

Mayor Tawde expressed strong optimism that transforming these high-traffic gateways will significantly curb pollution, boost urban biodiversity, and offer citizens a much cleaner atmosphere. She noted that because thousands of commuters pass through these entry points daily, upgrading them with vibrant flora serves a dual purpose of aesthetic enhancement and ecological balance.

Under the project, overgrown shrubs, weeds, and unnecessary vegetation along the highways will be completely re-

moved to clear the path for the new green belts. The Mayor stated that this project, which combines the beautification of Mumbai's entry routes with environmental protection, has the potential to serve as a model initiative for the city's green development goals in the future.

Blasting Works at Dahisar Construction Site Fuel Severe Health and Safety Worries

Mumbai : High-impact construction activities at a real estate project near Pandurang Wadi in Dahisar have triggered widespread anxiety among local residents over deteriorating air quality and compromised safety. The panic intensified after a video surfaced on social media showcasing massive clouds of dust and smoke billowing from the site without any visible containment measures. Neighbors allege that the relentless pollution is actively inducing respiratory ailments and making it increasingly difficult for families nearby to breathe comfortably.

The constant deployment of explosives throughout the day and well into the night has further escalated public fear. Nearby residents report that the detonations are remarkably intense, sending powerful tremors through their homes and apartment build-

ings. This recurring ground vibration has sparked deep structural anxieties, with several homeowners worried that their building foundations could suffer long-term degradation or critical damage over time.

Fearing for their physical safety, the community is demanding that municipal bodies conduct immediate structural integrity audits on all residential properties flanking the development zone. They point out that the air pollution has transitioned into a full-blown public health hazard, with numerous vulnerable citizens reporting an increase in breathing difficulties. Social media channels have been flooded with similar complaints, with one resident revealing that a family member has been struggling with chronic breathlessness due to the continuous particulate matter.

Public outrage has also shifted toward regulato-

ry oversight, with citizens questioning whether the builders obtained legal clearances to execute heavy blasting in such a heavily populated sector of Mumbai. Activists and residents have taken to online platforms to tag top political leaders, including Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, in a bid to secure direct state-level intervention.

The neighborhood is collectively urging civic regulatory bodies to launch a transparent probe into the site's operations. They are calling for strict enforcement of environmental guidelines and safety codes to eliminate the risks posed to the surrounding community. Locals emphasize that the current state of affairs is entirely unsustainable and requires immediate corrective measures from the developers and the city administration.

Maharashtra Road Transport Mapping Full Shift to Electric Buses by 2047

Mumbai : The public transportation framework of Maharashtra is on the verge of a sweeping environmental transformation, with the state aiming to completely transition its Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation fleet to electric vehicles by 2047. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis led a high-level review meeting in the capital city on Monday to evaluate the comprehensive blueprint for this clean energy shift. The state's strategy focuses on minimizing vehicular emissions while simultaneously upgrading passenger comfort.

The long-term transition will be executed in structured phases under the Developed Maharashtra vision document. The transport corporation has set an interim milestone to make half of its total bus fleet electric by 2029, escalating that target to 80 percent by the year 2035, before achieving the absolute 100 percent electrification mark by 2047. Chief Minister Fadnavis ordered administrative heads to fast-track the deployment of charging stations and related power infrastructure. Advanced technology will play a central role in this massive rollout. The Chief Minister instructed teams to leverage Artificial Intelligence to analyze commuter data and pinpoint optimal routes for electric bus deployment. To prevent operational bottlenecks, a strict rule was established re-



quiring all newly delivered buses to undergo thorough technical inspections within seven days of arrival. Additionally, the state will explore replacing private transport options on heavily trafficked routes with these new eco-friendly state buses, backed by current EV policies that offer a 10 percent subsidy per vehicle for up to 1,500 units. The broader project currently oversees the integration of 5,150 electric buses under a specialized operational model, which will provide commuters with modern, comfortable, and pollution-free travel options. The expansion of the charging network will happen in tandem with the growing electric fleet to ensure completely uninterrupted transit services across the state. Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik and top bureaucrats were also present at the high-level meeting to finalize the operational support systems and maintenance facilities required for the ecosystem.

Slippery Oil Spill Sparks Commuter Chaos and Safety Hazards on Western Express Highway

Borivali : A massive commercial oil spill on the Western Express Highway near the Magathane flyover in Borivali turned a busy morning commute into a highly dangerous ordeal for hundreds of motorists. A thick layer of industrial oil coated a substantial portion of the south-bound lanes, creating a treacherous surface that caught many unsuspecting drivers completely off guard. The hazardous road conditions posed an immediate threat to life and limb, particularly for two-wheeler riders navigating the high-speed corridor.

Eyewitness footage circulating across digital neighborhood forums captured the immediate fallout of the spill, showing multiple motorcyclists losing traction and wiping out on the asphalt. In one instance, a dazed biker is seen being helped to his feet by a fellow commuter after his scooter violently skidded out from under him on the slick

surface. The footage underscores the extreme vulnerability of light vehicles when high-traffic highways are contaminated by slick fluids.

As the danger escalated, a civic-minded citizen took it upon himself to stand on the hard shoulder well ahead of the spill zone, waving his arms to warn approaching drivers to slow down and steer clear of the invisible hazard. His rapid actions were widely credited with preventing a massive chain-reaction pileup before emergency services arrived on the scene. Despite his efforts, the unexpected bottleneck caused significant traffic delays as vehicles slowed to a crawl to safely pass the affected zone.

Municipal cleaning crews and highway maintenance trucks rushed to the site shortly after the reports peaked, deploying heavy loads of sand and chemical absorbents to neutralize the slick

and restore normal road friction. While the physical cleanup progressed rapidly to open up the blocked lanes before the evening rush hour, no official agency has released a statement explaining how the spill occurred. Investigating officers suspect a malfunctioning commercial tanker may have leaked the fluid while transit was heavy.

The incident has reignited serious conversations regarding road maintenance protocols and the speed of emergency responses on Mumbai's arterial routes. Transport experts emphasize that even a minor patch of oil can prove fatal on a highway, requiring instant automated warning systems to alert drivers in real-time. Commuters are urging local authorities to utilize highway traffic cameras to track down the vehicle responsible for the hazardous leak and hold the operators financially accountable.

Vasai Virar Expands Authorized Animal Feeding Zones Following Resident Disputes

Vasai-Virar : In a bid to balance animal welfare with public safety, the Vasai-Virar City Municipal Corporation has introduced a standardized regulatory framework for feeding stray dogs. The legislative shift strictly mirrors the directives established by the Supreme Court of India and comes as a direct response to a worrying surge in local dog bite cases. Civic authorities are working to defuse growing friction between animal lovers and residents concerned about public health.

The municipal framework originally mapped out 45 authorized feeding coordinates distributed evenly across nine separate ward administrative committees. Currently, approximately 40 of these locations have been successfully locked down and operationalized. However, the system faced immediate friction in Ward Committees A and B, where neighboring communities submitted four official objections against the selected spots, forcing administrative teams to scout alternative venues to restore local harmony.

The necessity for a more robust urban blueprint became a central talking point during a recent general body meeting, where public representatives asserted that 45 spots were hopelessly inadequate for a city of this size. They warned that insufficient



feeding stations would inevitably drive stray animals back into crowded residential pockets in search of food.

Responding to these concerns, Assistant Commissioner Jitendra Naik confirmed that the local government has actively begun searching for 110 additional sites to vastly expand the network.

This aggressive expansion strategy is designed to ensure that strays can be sustained in designated, low-traffic perimeters without encroaching upon schools, playgrounds, or busy residential pathways. By segregating these activities, the municipality hopes to systematically lower the instances of territorial canine behavior that often leads to street confrontations while establishing a highly organized stray management system that respects judicial guidelines and prioritizes the well-being of citizens.

Forest Rescuers Save Critically Wounded Leopard in High Stakes National Park Operation

Thane : In a meticulously coordinated wildlife operation, forest department officials successfully captured and saved a severely injured five-year-old male leopard from the Yeoor sector of Sanjay Gandhi National Park. The wild feline is currently under the care of specialized veterinarians at the Borivali Leopard Rescue Center, where it is fighting for survival. The emergency response began on the evening of May 30, when guards spotted the limping animal seeking refuge high up in a tree canopy within the Pachpakhadi protected forest zone.

Recognizing the extreme peril of attempting a wildlife extraction in pitch-black conditions, the responding units prudently decided against a night rescue. Instead, tactical teams from the Forest Department, the Maharashtra State Security Corporation, and prominent wildlife rescue groups established a tight, silent perimeter around the tree to monitor the animal's movements overnight. This strategic patience prevented



the panicked leopard from fleeing deeper into inaccessible terrain or wandering toward nearby human settlements.

The tactical extraction team resumed their mission at the first break of dawn on Sunday, tracking the leopard as it traveled roughly 80 meters before collapsing from exhaustion in a patch of thick brush. Seizing the opportunity, veterinary professionals moved in silently to deliver a precise tranquilizer dart, successfully sedating the large carnivore without causing further trauma. A subsequent medical assessment revealed that the animal had suffered horrific physical trauma before its rescue.

Doctors discovered deep, infected

lacerations across all four of the leopard's paw pads, alongside a massive tear on one of its hind limbs that left the underlying bone completely exposed to the elements. Range Forest Officer Mayur Survasé pointed out that the sheer severity of the trauma meant the animal would have likely perished in the wild without immediate human intervention. He expressed profound gratitude to the combined volunteer and state teams whose swift actions averted a tragic loss. The seamless execution of this high-pressure rescue has drawn immense praise from conservationists across Maharashtra, who lauded the collaboration between state officials and non-profit groups. The leopard remains under constant medical surveillance in a specialized quarantine enclosure designed to minimize stress and promote healing. Environmentalists emphasize that tracking down the root cause of such severe injuries remains a priority to ensure other wildlife in the Yeoor zone are safe from similar hazards.

Editorial

The Digital Whirlwind and the Youth's Roar of Dissent!

Against the backdrop of rising unemployment, economic instability, and growing mistrust in the system, the nation's youth have now chosen a new avenue digital media to voice their indignation. Last week, an unprecedented and astonishing political event unfolded in the national capital, Delhi. The Central Government which prides itself on possessing a "56-inch chest" and considers itself immensely powerful was so shaken by a social media concept centered on a "cockroach" that even the country's political analysts were left completely bewildered, unable to fathom what had suddenly transpired. The spark for this entire political controversy was ignited by a contentious remark made by Supreme Court Justice Surya Kant. During a hearing at the Supreme Court, a claim went viral on social media alleging that he had directly referred to the nation's educated, unemployed youth as "cockroaches" and "parasites." While one would expect a high-ranking judicial official occupying the nation's highest constitutional office to demonstrate empathy and compassion toward the poor and unemployed youth, the extreme statement he actually made has landed the Central Government in deep trouble and has provoked a fierce outburst of anger among the youth across the entire country. In today's digital era dominated by "Gen Z" and Millennials an innovative and satirical movement named the "Cockroach Janata Party" (CJP) suddenly emerged on social media to protest this statement. Abhijit Deepke, the founder of this movement, has officially claimed that within a mere ten days, a staggering 23 million (2.3 crore) young people have joined this unique campaign. Objecting to this surging popularity, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijju leveled a serious allegation, claiming that foreign powers are behind this movement and that the majority of the social media accounts linked to it are foreign-based. However, Abhijit Dipke refuted this claim with concrete statistics, clarifying that 94 percent of the individuals associated with the campaign are Indian citizens who are fully committed to conducting a digital protest through entirely peaceful means. Significantly, Dipke is a young man hailing from the Marathwada region of our own Maharashtra. Much in the same vein as Manoj Jarange Patil another youth from Marathwada who had brought the entire Maharashtra government to its knees over the issue of Maratha reservation the digital 'cockroach' movement spearheaded by Dipke is now haunting the established ruling powers at every turn.

The irony and paradox of this entire episode lie in the fact that, over the past 12-13 years, the BJP had perfected a technique of utilizing social media in an extremely effective, aggressive, and systematic manner to completely neutralize its political opponents on an ideological level. Yet, the ruling party has been left utterly bewildered by the sudden emergence of a social media 'cockroach' that, within a mere few hours, has transformed into the country's newest political superstar. The BJP's modus operandi has, by its very nature, always been characterized by a heavy-handed and brash approach. Consequently and as has been repeatedly demonstrated in this instance where a delicate issue calls for the precision of a goldsmith's small hammer, these rulers instead wield a blacksmith's heavy sledgehammer, thereby rendering the situation even more fragile and convoluted. The social media following of the 'Cockroach Janata Party' surged so rapidly within the span of a single week that it has now posed a formidable political crisis for the BJP.

Despite being an unregistered entity in the eyes of the Election Commission itself, the 'Cockroach Janata Party' has completely shaken up the entire landscape of Indian politics; this is because their memes and satirical campaign methods are resonating immensely with the public. Alarmed by this unexpected challenge, the government imposed a ban within India on the CJP's official 'X' (formerly Twitter) handle; however, this act of suppression backfired, causing the movement to spread even more rapidly. The situation spiraled so far out of control that Ladakh's Lieutenant Governor, V.K. Saxena, issued a stern warning directly to a prominent figure like Sonam Wangchuk, cautioning him to distance himself from the Cockroach Janata Party while simultaneously reiterating the age-old allegation that foreign powers are backing the party. In essence, the government appears utterly at a loss as to how to effectively handle this unique crisis. The judiciary, too, has taken cognizance of this issue of digital freedom; however, government counsel are currently attempting to thwart efforts in court to lift the ban on the CJP's handle. Furthermore, the elderly parents of Abhijit Dipke a resident of the Marathwada region have been receiving threats and have subsequently been provided with police protection by local authorities.

Amidst this political turmoil, the state of the nation's economy is becoming increasingly alarming and precarious with each passing day. Renowned economists such as Surjit Bhalla, Sanjay Baru, and Arvind Subramanian who were once staunch supporters and vocal admirers of the Modi government—are now publicly expressing their deep dissatisfaction. They have explicitly stated that despite the nation's economic stability slipping away, the government is failing to take any concrete measures to rectify the situation. Some among them have even gone so far as to demand radical and immediate changes within the Union Finance Ministry, asserting that the time has come to promptly remove Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her advisors from their posts and send them packing. Former Finance Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg's criticism of the government has intensified, and former Governors of the Reserve Bank, too, have expressed deep concern over the current economic downturn. Currently, 65 percent of India's population is under the age of 35; in his public interactions in 2019, the Prime Minister had specifically highlighted the potential of this 'Gen Z' generation. Today, this generation is no longer merely a demographic that voices its opinions on social media; it has evolved into a potent political force capable of influencing and even altering governments on a global scale. Digital movements such as the US 'Occupy Wall Street' movement of 2011, France's 'Yellow Vest' protests of 2018, and Asia's 'Milk Tea Alliance' have all delivered massive shocks to established power structures. Even in neighboring Bangladesh, student-led anti-reservation protests and in Sri Lanka in 2022, the fierce youth-led agitation against the economic crisis directly compelled the respective heads of state to resign and flee their countries. In Chile, a student-led movement paved the way for Gabriel Boric a young leader to rise directly to the presidency. However, these global examples underscore a harsh reality: while it may be relatively easy to topple established regimes through street protests or digital dissent, it is immensely difficult to subsequently utilize the ideals of such movements to revitalize a debt-ridden economy and fulfill the employment aspirations of the youth. In the Indian context, however, the local 'Gen Z' generation is not driven by the intent to dismantle the existing system; rather, its focus lies on reforming the system and strengthening the power of rational discourse. Therefore, instead of attempting to stifle the voices of the youth merely through a barrage of appeals or by banning digital accounts, both the ruling party and the failed opposition must engage in introspection and recognize that providing the youth with their rightful employment along with ensuring transparency in the examination system is the only sustainable solution to this problem.

'Vocal for Local' and 'Local to Global'



Under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Khadi and Village Industries sector has surpassed an extraordinary journey of growth and transformation over the last 12 years. In the financial year 2025-26, the sales of Khadi and Village Industries products reached a historic level of Rs.1,87,105 crore, marking the highest sales figure to date and stands as a powerful testament to rural India's growing entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and economic empowerment. Inspired by national campaigns such as 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', 'Vocal for Local', and 'Local to Global', Khadi presently is no longer merely a traditional product however; it has evolved into a vibrant symbol of the 'New India's' self-reliant, indigenous pride, and rural prosperity. Creating new benchmarks in production, marketing, and employment generation, the Khadi and Village Industries sector has brought new energy and direction into the country's rural economy.

KVIC Releases Provisional Data for Financial Year 2025-26

While releasing the provisional data for the financial year 2025-26 at the KVIC'S office located at Gandhi Darshan, Rajghat, New Delhi, Shri Manoj Kumar Chairman KVIC stated that the Commission has established new records in the fields of production, sales, and employment generation. He highlighted that, compared to the year 2013-14, a remarkable growth of 501 percent in sales, 380 percent in production, and 56 percent in employment generation has been recorded over the last 12 years. Highlighting the growths of

previous years, he noted that in the financial year 2024-25, sales grew by 447 percent and production by 347 percent in comparison to 2013-14; similarly, in the financial year 2023-24, a growth of 400 percent in sales and 315 percent in production was recorded in comparison to 2013-14. **Sales of Khadi and Village Industry Products Surpasses Rs.1.87 Lakh Crore Mark**

Chairman Shri Manoj Kumar stated that this remarkable performance by KVIC is not only accelerating the resolution of 'Viksit Bharat@2047' but is also making a significant contribution towards positioning India among the world's leading economy. He recognized this achievement to the effective guidance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the inspiration drawn from Mahatma Gandhi, and the hard work of millions of artisans working in the remote rural areas of the country. The KVIC Chairman further informed that while the production of Khadi and Village Industry products remained at Rs.26,109 crore in the financial year 2013-14, it surged nearly fivefold, registering a jump of 380 percent, to reach Rs.1,25,296 crore in the financial year 2025-26. While sales stood at Rs.31,154 crore in the financial year 2013-14, it surged nearly six fold, registering an unprecedented growth of 501 percent which reached Rs.1,87,105 crore in the financial year 2025-26, marking the highest sales figure until now.

Unprecedented Growth in the Production and Sale of Khadi Textiles
Remarkable progress has also been noted in the

Khadi textiles sector. Production, which stood at Rs.811 crore in 2013-14, soared to Rs.3,974 crore in the financial year 2025-26, marking an increase of approximately 390 percent. Simultaneously, sales has increased from Rs.1,081 crore to reach Rs.7,869 crore, reflecting a growth of approximately 628 percent. The positive impact of the Prime Minister's sustained promotion and propagation of Khadi is clearly evident in the sector's growing acceptance and market expansion.

New Records in Production and Sales within the Village Industries Sector



Substantial progress has also been witnessed in the village industries sector. While the production of village industry products was Rs.25,298 crore in 2013-14, it has grown to Rs.1,21,322 crore in the financial year 2025-26, an increase of approximately 380 percent. Similarly, sales has increased from Rs.30,073 crore to Rs.1,79,236 crore, reflecting a growth of approximately 496 percent. The village industries sector has also made a significant contribution to employment generation. While 1.19 crore people were employed in this sector in 2013-14, this figure increased to nearly 1.99 crore in the financial year 2025-26, highlighting the sector's growing role in creating rural livelihoods. Driven by the impact of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's campaigns such as 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Ghar-Ghar Swadeshi', the demand for village industry products has witnessed a continuous upward trend; consequently, this sector has emerged as a vital pillar for the expansion of rural industries, market consolidation, and employment

generation.

KVIC's Historic Achievement in Employment Generation

KVIC has also achieved a remarkable milestone in the realm of employment generation. While cumulative employment in activities related to Khadi and Village Industries stood at 1.30 crore in the year 2013-14, it has augmented to 2.04 crore in the financial year 2025-26, marking a growth of 56 percent, thereby highlighting KVIC's vital role in generating rural livelihoods.

PMEGP Gives New Momentum to Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship

Under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), 66,494 new units were established during the financial year 2025-26 and for these units, a margin money subsidy of Rs.2,457 crore was disbursed against loans amounting to Rs.7,375 crore. Through these units, employment opportunities were provided to 7,31,434 people. Since the start of the scheme, a total of 10,84,679 units have been established, for which a margin money subsidy of Rs.29,623 crore has been disbursed against loans totalling to Rs.80,705 crore. Through this initiative, employment has been provided to approximately 97.95 lakh people till date.

Empowering Artisans through Tool-Kit Distribution under the Gramodyog Vikas Yojana

Under the Gramodyog Vikas Yojana, so far 51,230 electric pottery wheels, 2,46,099 bee-boxes and bee colonies, 2,674 automatic and pedal-operated Agarbatti manufacturing machines, 7,669 footwear manufacturing and repair tool-kits, 836 paper plate and dona making machines,

7,571 tool-kits for AC repair, mobile repair, tailoring, electricians, and plumbers; 5,138 machines for turn-wood, waste wood crafts, and wooden toy making and 1,789 machines for palm jaggery, Oil Ghani extraction, and tamarind processing machines have been distributed. During the financial year 2025-26, 37,769 machines, toolkits, and equipment have been distributed under this scheme. A review of the last four years indicated that 21,874 units were distributed in 2022-23, 29,540 in FY 2023-24, 38,904 in FY 2024-25, and 37,769 ma-

chine and equipment in FY 2025-26. Thus, under the Gramodyog Vikas Yojana, KVIC has so far distributed a total of 3,23,000 machines, toolkits, and equipment, thereby making a substantial contribution towards the realization of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

Promoting Women's Empowerment through

notable increase in the sales of National Flags, rising from Rs.0.87 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 2.35 crore in the financial year 2025-26. This growth emphasizes the impact of mass campaigns such as 'Har Ghar Tiranga' in the country, as well as the increasing public engagement with Khadi.

There has also been a remarkable increase in the remuneration paid to artisans, which has increased from Rs.4 per hank in 2013-14 to the current rate of Rs.15 per hank, marking an increase of approximately 275 percent.

Growth in Government Procurement, Exhibition Sales, and Demand for National Flags

Alongside, government procurement of Khadi and Village Industries products has increased to Rs.92.08 crore, reflecting the sector's growing acceptance and increasing institutional demand. Similarly, sales amounting to Rs.30.83 crore were recorded through exhibitions and marketing initiatives for Khadi products, thereby reinforcing market expansion and consumer engagement. Additionally, there has been a



KVIC'S Efforts

KVIC has played a vital role in the sector of women empowerment as well. During the financial year 2025-26, 79,682 trainees received training under various KVIC training programs; notably, 47,382 of these trainees were women, accounting for approximately 59 percent of

notable increase in the sales of National Flags, rising from Rs.0.87 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 2.35 crore in the financial year 2025-26. This growth emphasizes the impact of mass campaigns such as 'Har Ghar Tiranga' in the country, as well as the increasing public engagement with Khadi.

India-Japan Seminar Marks New Momentum in Workforce Cooperation

A high-level joint seminar on workforce mobility cooperation between India and Japan was held in Tokyo on May 25, bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, academic institutions and workforce development stakeholders from both countries. The event was jointly organised by the Embassy of India in Japan and ASEAN ONE Co. Ltd., Japan, with a focus on strengthening bilateral collaboration in skilled workforce mobility and human resource development.

The seminar served as a platform for discussing long-term strategies to address Japan's growing demand for skilled workers while creating global employment opportunities for India's expanding talent pool. Participants explored ways to build a structured, transparent and mutually beneficial framework for workforce exchange between the two nations. The keynote address was delivered by Vandana Gurnani, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India. In her address, she highlighted India's emergence as a trusted global workforce partner and underscored the government's commitment to promoting ethical, transparent and scalable labour mobility pathways that can benefit both workers and destination countries. Gurnani emphasised that India's demographic advantage, coupled with its rapidly expanding skilling ecosystem and ongoing institutional reforms, has positioned the country as a reliable source of skilled manpower for global economies. She noted that India is increasingly being recognised for its ability to supply trained professionals across diverse sectors, including those facing workforce shortages in countries such as Japan. The Secretary also outlined the extensive workforce preparation mechanisms available in India. She high-



lighted the contributions of higher education institutions, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), apprenticeship programmes, digital skill training platforms and career guidance services that collectively support the development of a highly skilled and employable workforce. Drawing attention to India's labour mobility architecture, she spoke about several key initiatives that facilitate overseas employment opportunities. These included the Ministry of External Affairs' eMigrate platform, the National Career Service portal, Model Career Centres and the broader skilling ecosystem driven by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in collaboration with state governments and educational institutions. A major theme of the discussion was the need to further strengthen workforce readiness for Japan. Gurnani stressed the importance of expanding Japanese language training, improving sector-specific skill development programmes, enhancing testing in-

frastructure and promoting skill mapping to ensure that Indian workers are aligned with the specific requirements of Japanese industries. She also advocated for stronger occupational alignment, structured demand aggregation and ethical recruitment practices. According to her, deeper institutional collaboration between India and Japan would help create more efficient workforce mobility channels while ensuring that workers receive adequate support and protection throughout the migration process.

The seminar attracted several prominent dignitaries from both countries. Among those present were Members of Japan's House of Representatives, including Yamashita, former Minister of Justice; Ino, State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry; and Nakamura, State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Senior Japanese officials and business leaders also participated in the discussions. Other distinguished attendees included Tadashi

Maeda, Chairman of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation; Kengo Otsuka, Deputy Director-General of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Nagma Mohamed Mallek, Ambassador of India to Japan. Their participation reflected the growing strategic importance attached to workforce mobility cooperation in the broader India-Japan partnership. The event also featured special messages from Japanese Prime Minister, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and the Director of IIT Guwahati. These messages outlined a medium- and long-term vision for strengthening personnel exchange between the two countries and highlighted the importance of preparing a globally competitive workforce capable of meeting international standards.

Speakers drew attention to the increasing role being played by Indian states and higher educational institutions in creating internationally employable talent. The discussions highlighted how state govern-

ments are actively designing programmes to equip young professionals with language skills, technical expertise and cross-cultural competencies required for overseas employment.

The seminar witnessed participation from around 250 representatives of leading Japanese companies, including senior executives and human resource managers. Many of these companies expressed interest in establishing structured partnerships with India's skilling ecosystem to address labour shortages and secure access to qualified talent.

Participants identified significant opportunities for India-Japan cooperation across a wide range of sectors. These included manufacturing, caregiving, construction, automobile maintenance, hospitality, agriculture, information technology, digital services and emerging green economy industries. The discussions reflected a shared understanding that workforce mobility can contribute to economic growth and innovation in both countries. The role of digital public infrastructure and employment facilitation systems was also highlighted as an important enabler of transparent and scalable workforce mobility pathways. Participants agreed that technology-driven platforms can help improve matching between employers and workers while enhancing transparency, efficiency and accountability in recruitment processes. As part of the roadmap for future cooperation, both sides discussed expanding Japanese language and testing centres across India, strengthening collaboration between Japanese employers and Indian training institutions, improving visibility of labour demand from Japan, and promoting skill recognition frameworks.

Continuously coordinating with Karnataka govt to prevent major floods: Minister Prakash Abitkar

Kolhapur: Maharashtra Minister Prakash Abitkar has said that the state government is taking proactive measures ahead of the monsoon season, including close coordination with neighbouring Karnataka to manage flood-related risks associated with major river systems and dams.

Addressing a press conference at the district collector's office following a District Planning Committee meeting, Abitkar stated that a high-level meeting was recently held between officials of Maharashtra and Karnataka to discuss flood management and water regulation issues.

The discussions primarily focused on the flow of Krishna river floodwaters and the management of water levels at key irrigation structures located in Karnataka, including the Almatti Dam and Hippargi Barrage.

According to the minister, both states are working towards better coordination and information-sharing mechanisms to prevent flood-like situations in downstream regions during periods of heavy rainfall.

He said that effective management of reservoir levels before and during the monsoon season is essential to minimize the risk of flooding in vulnerable districts of Maharashtra situated along the Krishna river basin.



Abitkar, who also serves as the guardian minister of the district, said that district authorities have been directed to undertake a comprehensive review of infrastructure that may be vulnerable during the monsoon.

Special emphasis has been placed on assessing the condition of wooden bridges and small rural bridges, many of which are crucial for connectivity in villages but may face safety risks during heavy rains and rising water levels.

The minister said officials have been instructed to gather detailed information about such structures

and conduct technical studies to determine whether repairs, strengthening work or preventive measures are required before the onset of the monsoon.

Apart from flood preparedness, the issue of pollution in the Panchganga river also figured prominently during the District Planning Committee meeting. Abitkar said concerns regarding the deteriorating condition of the river were discussed extensively, and directions have been issued to municipal authorities and other concerned departments to intensify efforts aimed at improving

water quality.

To ensure regular monitoring, he said the concerned agencies have been instructed to hold review meetings every 15 days and implement corrective measures in a time-bound manner.

The minister also reviewed the district's development programme and announced that the District Planning Committee has approved a development plan worth Rs 642 crore.

According to him, around 60 per cent of the allocated funds have already been utilised for various developmental projects, while the remaining funds will be spent on priority works across the district.

Abitkar emphasized that the distribution of development funds would be carried out fairly and equitably, ensuring that no region or community is deprived of its rightful share of resources.

Responding to criticism by Congress MLA Satej Patil regarding the affairs of the Gokul Milk Producers Association, the minister dismissed the remarks as politically insignificant.

He asserted that the ruling Mahayuti alliance remains confident about its position in the cooperative sector and expressed optimism that the alliance would strengthen its influence in the Gokul Milk Producers Association in the future.

Sanjay Raut should be ashamed for abandoning Balasaheb's ideology for power: BJP

Mumbai: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday intensified its political attack on Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, with state spokesperson Navnath Ban accusing him of abandoning the ideology of Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray and altering his political positions for personal and political gain.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP state office, Ban alleged that Raut's political narrative has undergone a dramatic transformation over the past several years, particularly after the political developments that followed the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly elections. According to the BJP spokesperson, between 2014 and 2019, Raut had repeatedly praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and publicly acknowledged his leadership as well as the developmental initiatives undertaken by the Union government. Ban claimed that during this period, Raut frequently spoke positively about the BJP-led government and expressed support for several decisions taken by the Prime Minister. However, he alleged that Raut's position changed

significantly after 2019 when political realignments in Maharashtra resulted in the formation of a coalition government led by Uddhav Thackeray. The BJP leader argued that Raut shifted his political stance primarily to facilitate Uddhav Thackeray's elevation to the post of Chief Minister and to secure political advantages within the new power structure. Ban further alleged that despite Raut's current criticism of Prime Minister Modi and his appreciation of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, the people of Maharashtra remain aware of his earlier statements supporting the BJP and the Prime Minister.

He claimed that Raut's current political positions are motivated by personal ambition rather than ideological conviction, and alleged that aspirations related to political appointments, including a Rajya Sabha berth, have influenced his approach. The BJP spokesperson also took exception to Raut's recent comments concerning NCP (SP) leader Prajakt Tanpure, accusing the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader of attempting to target leaders from other opposition

parties while overlooking challenges within his own organisation.

Ban alleged that Maharashtra's electorate is aware of what he described as Raut's role in weakening his own party through political decisions and internal strategies pursued in recent years. He further claimed that workers and leaders from the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction are increasingly leaving the party and joining the BJP as well as the Shiv Sena led by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

According to Ban, the BJP welcomes individuals who join the party on the basis of ideology and commitment to its principles, rather than for short-term political considerations. The BJP leader also addressed the debate surrounding the Maharashtra government's Ladki Bahin Yojana, a welfare initiative aimed at supporting women beneficiaries across the state. He criticized opposition parties for questioning the scheme and alleged that leaders from the Congress had previously opposed the programme despite its popularity among beneficiaries.

Discontent in Ajit Pawar-Led NCP Over Legislative Council Nomination

Pune: Internal differences have come to the fore within the Nationalist Congress Party led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, commonly known as NCP-AP, over the party's nomination for the upcoming Pune Legislative Council election.

The controversy erupted after the party nominated Vikram Kakade, son of former Member of Parliament Sanjay Kakade, as its candidate for the Legislative Council seat, triggering resentment among a section of party workers and local leaders.

In a significant development, Parvati constituency president Ramdas Gade resigned from his post, expressing strong dissatisfaction with the party leadership's decision.

Gade argued that the nomination overlooked several long-serving party leaders who had remained committed to the organisation for years and had worked extensively to strengthen the party at the grassroots level.

He specifically cited the names of Deepak Mankar and Sunil Tingre, stating that they were more deserving

candidates for the ticket due to their long association with the party and contribution to its growth.

According to Gade, the party should have rewarded loyalty and commitment rather than giving preference to what he described as "outsider" candidates who were relatively new to the organisation. He also questioned the leadership's decision to induct Sanjay Kakade into the party, alleging that the former MP had previously played a role in encouraging defections among NCP corporators.

Former MLA Ulhas Pawar Escapes Unhurt in Highway Accident; Neelam Gorhe Raises Road Safety Concerns

Pune: Former MLA Ulhas Pawar had a narrow escape on Monday after the vehicle in which he was travelling met with an accident near Nerle village at Peth Naka on the Pune-Kolhapur Highway, where bridge construction work is currently in progress.

According to preliminary information, Pawar was travelling from Pune towards Kolhapur when the incident occurred. While he escaped unhurt, the rear portion of his vehicle sustained damage after it was

struck by another vehicle from behind.

Officials said there were no reports of serious injuries in the accident, and Pawar was able to continue after the incident. However, the collision once again drew attention to safety concerns along the busy highway stretch undergoing construction and infrastructure upgrades.

The Pune-Kolhapur Highway is currently witnessing extensive road and bridge development work at several locations, resulting in diversions, narrowed

carriageways and traffic management challenges for commuters.

Following the incident, Shiv Sena leader and Legislative Council Deputy Chairperson Neelam Gorhe contacted Pawar over the phone to enquire about his condition and express concern for his safety.

During the conversation, Gorhe reportedly advised him to take necessary precautions while travelling through construction zones and wished him well following the accident.

The incident has reignited discussions regarding road safety measures on stretches where major infrastructure projects are underway, particularly on highways carrying heavy volumes of passenger and commercial traffic.

Motorists travelling through construction areas often face difficulties due to lane restrictions, sudden diversions, uneven road surfaces and reduced visibility, especially during nighttime and adverse weather conditions.

Highlighting these concerns, Gorhe stressed the need for stricter enforcement of safety protocols at road and bridge construction sites across the state. She emphasized that adequate warning signage, proper illumination, reflective markers, barricading and effective traffic management systems are essential to reduce the risk of accidents in such zones. According to her, ensuring commuter safety must remain a priority alongside the timely completion of infrastructure projects.

Maharashtra secures Rs 2 lakh cr AirTrunk Data Centre investment; mega Raigad project set to boost digital economy

Mumbai: Maharashtra received a major boost to its ambitions of becoming India's leading data centre destination after Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday welcomed AirTrunk Chief Executive Officer Robin Khuda and exchanged a Letter of Intent (LoI) for land allotment for a large-scale data centre project in the state.

The proposed investment is estimated at around ₹2 lakh crore and will have a power capacity of 3 GW, making it one of the largest commitments made to Maharashtra's data centre sector.

Sharing details of the development through a post on X, Fadnavis said he was pleased to welcome Khuda to Maharashtra and noted that the LoI had been exchanged for land allotment at the Raigad Pen Growth Centre, also known as Orange City.

He stated that the proposed facility would repre-

sent a massive ₹2 lakh crore investment with a planned capacity of 3 GW.

The Chief Minister also highlighted that AirTrunk is backed by global investment firm Blackstone and said the project would contribute significantly to Maharashtra's digital future. Australian Consul General Paul Murphy was also present during the meeting.

The proposed project will be located at the strategically positioned Raigad Pen Growth Centre, an emerging smart city and business destination being developed by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA).

Spread across more than 1,200 acres in Pen taluka of Raigad district, the development forms part of the broader "Mumbai 3.0" or "Third Mumbai" vision. Situated near the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport, the growth centre is being planned as a hub for technology companies, fin-

tech enterprises, Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and major digital infrastructure investments.

AirTrunk is recognised as one of the leading hyper-scale data centre platforms in the Asia-Pacific region. The company is backed by Blackstone, which acquired AirTrunk in one of the largest data centre transactions undertaken globally.

The investment comes at a time when demand for data centre infrastructure is rising rapidly due to the expansion of artificial intelligence, cloud computing services and digital transformation initiatives across India.

Officials believe the project will create substantial direct and indirect employment opportunities while further strengthening Maharashtra's role in the country's digital economy.

The announcement also aligns with Maharashtra's wider efforts to achieve its data centre policy objectives. The state has developed a

project pipeline valued at more than ₹16 lakh crore across several locations. Key data centre clusters have already emerged in Navi Mumbai and Talaja, with expansion now extending into the Raigad-Pen region.

The government has been accelerating approvals, land allocation and infrastructure support for such projects, particularly following investment agreements and memoranda of understanding signed during international events, including the World Economic Forum in Davos.

The presence of Australian Consul General Paul Murphy at the meeting highlighted the growing technology and infrastructure partnership between Maharashtra and Australia. Fadnavis has repeatedly emphasised the state's commitment to promoting green and sustainable data centres, ensuring reliable power availability and maintaining investor-friendly policies.

Rais Shaikh urges govt to fill 406 Minority dept vacancies, places 12 demands before Sunetra Pawar

Mumbai: Raising a series of long-pending concerns related to the Muslim community, Samajwadi Party MLA Rais Shaikh has urged Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar to urgently fill 406 vacant posts in the State Minority Development Department, stating that prolonged vacancies have severely affected the implementation of several welfare schemes.

In a detailed letter addressed to the Deputy Chief Minister, Shaikh also called for swift action on multiple pending proposals, including strengthening the Minority Research and Training Institute and expediting the Urdu Ghar project in Bhiwandi.

The appeal comes as Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar convened a meeting of Muslim legislators on Monday to review issues related to the implementation of a calling attention motion. The meeting assumes significance as it marks her first formal interaction with Muslim MLAs since assuming charge of the Minority Development Department.

Highlighting administrative gaps, Shaikh pointed out that 406 sanctioned posts have remained vacant for several years. He further noted that 36 newly created positions in the Minority Commissionerate and 85 posts in dis-

trict-level offices are yet to be filled. According to him, these shortages have hindered the department's functioning and delayed key welfare initiatives.

Shaikh also drew attention to the slow progress of the Minority Research and Training Institute, stating that the institution has not yet become fully operational.

Referring to cultural and educational initiatives, he said a proposal for establishing an Urdu Ghar in Bhiwandi had already been submitted but work on the project has yet to commence. He additionally called for the immediate relaunch of the Urdu edition of the Lokrajya magazine.

Among the other issues raised by the Samajwadi Party legislator was the long-pending demand to ease eligibili-

ty norms for educational loans offered through the Maulana Azad Financial Development Corporation. He further stated that the Superintendent and Executive Officer of the Urdu Sahitya Academy have not been granted financial powers, while renovation work at the academy's office remains pending.

The MLA also expressed concern over delays in a socio-economic survey of Muslims assigned to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).

He said that despite the project being entrusted to the institute four years ago, the survey has yet to begin.

He maintained that all the issues raised are directly linked to the educational, social, and economic development of the Muslim community and require urgent attention from the government. Shaikh also stated that he would be unable to attend the Monday meeting convened by the Deputy Chief Minister, as June 1 coincides with his birthday and he has prior commitments in his constituency. In his letter, he urged Sunetra Pawar to carry forward and complete the pending work of the Minority Development Department, noting that the late Ajit Pawar had consistently worked to ensure adequate support and justice for the department.



Rohit Pawar Alleges Govt Is Gradually Dismantling Ladki Bahin Scheme as 81 Lakh Women Removed After Verification Drive

Mumbai: Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) MLA Rohit Pawar on Monday launched a sharp attack on the Maharashtra government, accusing it of deliberately weakening the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana' by removing a large number of beneficiaries under the guise of mandatory electronic Know Your Customer (e-KYC) verification.

In a strongly worded message posted on social media platform X, Pawar alleged that the Mahayuti government had significantly reduced the number of women receiving benefits under the flagship welfare programme. According to him, nearly 81 lakh women have been excluded from the scheme, bringing down the beneficiary count from the approximately 2.47 crore

women who had been enrolled before the Assembly elections.

Pawar contended that the insistence on e-KYC was merely a pretext and claimed that the actual objective was to gradually phase out the scheme by systematically deleting beneficiaries in stages. He questioned the government's approach, noting that the same administration had aggressively promoted and implemented the programme before the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly elections without enforcing stringent verification norms. He argued that the current exercise amounted to a betrayal of women who had been assured continued financial assistance and described the situation as an example of poor governance.

Posting from his X handle, Pawar also cautioned

the government against taking action to recover funds already distributed under the scheme. Referring to the expenditure incurred on the programme, he said that if the government intended to recover the nearly Rs 15,000 crore spent so far, the responsibility should rest with ministers and officials rather than women beneficiaries. He warned that any attempt to harass recipients or seek repayment from them would eventually prove politically damaging for the government. His social media campaign included hashtags supporting the scheme and criticising what he termed an injustice towards women beneficiaries.

The controversy has emerged against the backdrop of a statewide verification exercise undertaken by the Maharashtra

government. Introduced in July 2024, the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana' offers eligible women between the ages of 21 and 65 years from families earning less than Rs 2.5 lakh annually a monthly financial



assistance of ₹1,500, transferred directly into their bank accounts. With enrolment exceeding 2.4 crore women at its peak, the programme

became one of Maharashtra's most prominent welfare initiatives and was widely viewed as a significant factor in the electoral success of the Mahayuti alliance.

Following complaints regarding ineligible recipi-



ents, the government initiated mandatory e-KYC verification along with additional scrutiny of eligibility conditions. These checks included

verification of income limits, ownership of four-wheelers, and duplication of benefits through other government schemes. The deadline for completing e-KYC formalities expired on April 30, 2026.

Official figures and media reports indicate that the number of beneficiaries has since fallen to between 1.66 crore and 1.77 crore women. The exclusions, estimated at between 69 lakh and 80 lakh beneficiaries, have been attributed to failure to complete e-KYC procedures, non-fulfillment of age or income criteria, and other discrepancies identified during the verification process. The government has also stated that no fresh enrolments or extensions are currently being considered, although verified beneficiaries will continue receiving assis-

tance under the scheme.

Opposition parties, including the NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) and Shiv Sena (UBT), have intensified criticism of the government over the issue. They have accused the administration of attempting to reduce expenditure amid financial pressures and argued that the verification process is being used as a mechanism to cut beneficiary numbers. The controversy gained further traction after reports suggested that budgetary allocations for the scheme had been reduced in the 2026-27 state budget following the decline in the number of eligible recipients.

The government, however, has rejected allegations that it intends to discontinue the scheme. Senior leaders, including Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde,

have defended the verification exercise, maintaining that it is necessary to ensure that benefits are restricted to genuinely eligible women. Government representatives have repeatedly stated that the programme will continue and that the objective is to eliminate irregularities rather than shut down the welfare initiative.

Pawar's remarks have added further political intensity to a debate surrounding a scheme that directly affects millions of women across Maharashtra. As both sides continue to trade accusations, the central question remains whether the large-scale exclusions are the outcome of a legitimate verification process or an indication of a gradual rollback of one of the state's most politically significant welfare programmes.

Kunal Thakur shares adorable BTS glimpses with Saba Azad from the Sets of Who's Your Gynac? Season 2

Mumbai : Actor Kunal Thakur is set to surprise audiences once again with a completely different on-screen avatar after earning appreciation for his powerful performance as the fierce boxer Raka in the series Glory.

The actor recently gave fans a glimpse into his latest project by sharing a collection of behind-the-scenes moments from the sets of Who's Your Gynac? Season 2, offering an inside look at the camaraderie and fun that marked the shoot.

Taking to Instagram, Kunal posted a series of candid photographs featuring his co-star Saba Azad along with other members of the cast and crew.

The images showcased the strong bond shared among the team members, capturing cheerful interactions, laughter-filled moments and the easy camaraderie that often develops during an extended filming schedule.

The behind-the-scenes photographs quickly attract-



ed attention from fans, who were delighted to see the relaxed and friendly atmosphere on the sets of the upcoming season.

Sharing the pictures, Kunal accompanied the post with a light-hearted caption that reflected his positive experience while working on the series. "The diagnosis? An amazing cast, an incredible crew, and memories for life. Who's Your Gynac? S2 BTS," he wrote, summing up the memorable journey of filming the show.

The social media update comes at a significant point in Kunal's career, as he continues to expand his repertoire through diverse and contrasting roles.

Viewers recently saw him portray the intense and rugged boxer Raka in Glory, a character that demanded physical transformation, emotional depth and a commanding screen presence.

In contrast, Who's Your Gynac? Season 2 presents an entirely different challenge, with Kunal stepping into the

role of a pediatrician, a character far removed from the gritty world of professional boxing.

The stark difference between the two roles highlights the actor's versatility and willingness to explore varied genres and personalities on screen.

Industry observers note that such transitions are often seen as a mark of an actor's range, requiring the ability to adapt not only in appearance but also in mannerisms, emotional expression and perfor-

mance style.

Fans who appreciated Kunal's intense portrayal in Glory have already expressed excitement about seeing him in a more grounded, warm and relatable role in the upcoming series.

His interactions with Saba Azad and the rest of the cast in the BTS photographs have further fueled anticipation among viewers waiting for the new season to premiere.

The actor's ability to move seamlessly between dramatically different characters has become one of the defining aspects of his growing career in the entertainment industry.

From portraying a hard-hitting boxer battling challenges inside and outside the ring to playing a caring pediatrician navigating a completely different world, Kunal Thakur continues to demonstrate his commitment to exploring diverse storytelling opportunities and pushing the boundaries of his craft.

I'm working on four or five different projects: Kiran Rao

Mumbai : Fresh from the critical and commercial success of Laapataa Ladies, filmmaker Kiran Rao has revealed that she is currently developing multiple projects spanning diverse genres, signaling an ambitious new phase in her creative journey.

In a recent interaction, Rao shared that she is simultaneously working on several stories that differ significantly in tone, style and subject matter, reflecting her desire to explore a wider cinematic landscape.

Among the projects currently in development is a genre film rooted in the supernatural-horror space. Rao described it as her own interpretation of the genre, suggesting that it will carry her distinct storytelling sensibilities while venturing into territory she has not explored before. The filmmaker expressed particular excitement about the horror project, indicating that it offers an opportunity to experiment with narrative forms and themes outside the social realism and character-driven



storytelling often associated with her work. Alongside the supernatural film, Rao is also developing a noir-inspired project that incorporates elements of social commentary. The film is expected to blend suspense and atmosphere with observations about contemporary society. She indicated that the noir project would use genre conventions not merely for entertainment but also as a vehicle to examine broader social issues and human behaviour. The third film currently being written is a comedy-drama that Rao de-

scribed as being somewhat closer in spirit to Laapataa Ladies, combining humour, emotion and relatable characters. This project is expected to draw upon the strengths that made Laapataa Ladies resonate with audiences, including its grounded storytelling, social observations and gentle comedic touch. Rao revealed that all three films are being developed simultaneously, a process that allows her and her collaborators to explore different creative directions at the same time.

Taapsee Pannu says a little belly bulge is healthy, urges women to stop "torturing" themselves for the perfect midriff

Mumbai : Is the continuous pressure to achieve a flawless physique doing more physical damage than good? Bollywood actor Taapsee Pannu recently challenged the cultural fixation on maintaining a flat midriff by sharing her personal struggles with body image. In a candid revelation on Instagram as reported by Hindustan Times, the actor detailed how she overpushed her physical limits before understanding the biology of female fitness. Pannu explained that she grew up highly fit but remained confused by persistent lower belly fat, prompting a gruelling exercise routine that ultimately backfired. Pannu recalled her experience and said, "When you over-push yourself, it rings an alarm in your brain that your body needs protection." The actor explained that overexertion triggers a defensive mechanism where the female body stores fluids instead of shedding weight.



Warning her followers against overexerting their bodies, Pannu noted, "So instead of actually losing water retention, the body starts retaining it and then that lower belly fat, which might actually not just be fat, it's also water retention, it stays, and it

increases by overworking out, which I really believe people should not do." Her perspective shifted after consulting health expert Munmun Ganerival, who explained that minimal lower abdominal fat protects internal systems. Pannu noted, "It's actually important to have that little bit of fat, a little bit of water retention under the belly because that's

where your reproductive organs are, and they need protection." She strongly urged women to prioritize biological health over curated social media aesthetics. Pannu emphasized, "So just to get those picture-perfect Instagram pictures, please don't torture yourself. It's supposed to be healthy to have that little bit of bulge and have that fat there.

The actor, who enjoys a massive, fiercely loyal fan following for his charming on-screen personas and relatable off-screen attitude, sent waves of excitement through his fanbase with a cryptic teaser. He recently took to his official social media handles to share an incredibly tender, adorable moment dedicated exclusively to who he termed the absolute "love of his life."

Predictably, the intriguing announcement sparked immediate curiosity across major social media platforms, as fans speculated on who the mystery individual could be. Much to the absolute delight and amusement of his followers, the big reveal turned out to be

none other than his beloved, remarkably photogenic pet dog, Haru. Sharing a wholesome, beautifully sun-kissed glimpse of Haru on his Instagram Stories, Rohit playfully put all speculation to rest by describing the gorgeous mountain dog with the popular internet acronym "loml"—which translates directly to "love of my life." The candid snapshot perfectly captured the serene, peaceful dynamic between the actor and his pet. The heartwarming post quickly caught the viral attention of netizens and entertainment media alike, who were left gushing over the young actor's deeply affectionate bond with his four-legged friend. Within minutes of uploading, the story was reposted across various fan pages, sparking a wave of collective adoration for the duo. Known throughout the industry to be an incredibly avid dog lover, Rohit has never shied away from documenting the ups and downs of his life as a devoted pet parent. He officially introduced Haru to his followers as a special birthday



gift to himself in December 2025, marking the beautiful beginning of a brand-new emotional chapter in his life. Since that milestone winter day, the actor has frequently and generously posted heartwarming daily moments featuring his furry companion. These updates range from cozy, lazy cuddle sessions inside his Mumbai home to leisurely morning walks and playful, chaotic outdoor adventures that show a completely different side of the star. Rohit's authentic bond with Haru has deeply resonated with animal lovers and

able shooting schedules. While his latest social media update has fans completely swooning over Haru's undeniable charm, Rohit is simultaneously juggling an incredibly busy and exciting line-up of major projects on his professional front. The actor is transitioning into a highly demanding phase of his career with diverse roles across multiple languages. The actor is currently gearing up for The Revolutionaries, which is widely touted to be one of the most anticipated premium streaming series of the coming year. Directed by the visionary filmmaker Nikhil Advani, the high-stakes period drama is based on Sanjeev Sanyal's highly acclaimed, deeply researched non-fiction book Revolutionaries: The Other Story Of How India Won Its Freedom. Scheduled to premiere globally on Prime Video later in 2026, the ambitious series dives deep into the lives of brave, young Indian freedom fighters who firmly believed that armed resistance was essential to overthrow British colonial rule.

pet parents all over the internet, offering a much more grounded and personal look at the actor. This raw glimpse stands in beautiful, refreshing contrast to the otherwise heavily curated glamour and fast-paced nature of the Indian entertainment industry. The actor's frequent digital updates do more than just entertain; they genuinely reflect the pure joy, grounding companionship, and unconditional love that pets bring into the lives of busy humans. For Rohit, Haru seems to act as an emotional anchor amidst his demanding, often unpredictable

Brown director Abhinay Deo reveals why the Karisma Kapoor starrer crime thriller captivated him; says "Kolkata becomes a character in the series"

Mumbai : With Brown generating curiosity among audiences, director Abhinay Deo has opened up about what drew him to the project, how the series evolved from its literary source material, and why Kolkata plays a far more significant role than merely serving as a backdrop. In a candid conversation, Deo spoke about the themes of morality, human nature, and the unique cultural fabric of the city that shaped the series. Speaking about what compelled him to direct Brown, Deo shared, "When I was first introduced to the subject, there was no cast attached to it. There was only a book and a loose script presented to me. When I read it, the one thing that stood out very distinctly was that, while it was a murder mystery and crime story, it was much more than that. What truly compelled me to direct it was the way the writers handled the story.

"At its core, it felt like a case study of people, individuals from different walks of life, social strata, castes, and communities. There is a Bihari, a Marwadi, a bhadrakol Bengali, along with Anglo-Indians and Chinese characters. All of them coexist within Kolkata, and what fascinated me most was how the story explored human nature, the gradual decay of morality, and how people evolve over time", he said.

Deo went on to share, "The two central characters Rita Brown, played by Karisma Kapoor, and Arjun, played by Surya Sharma navigate not only the decay around them, whether it is the city, social values, or morality itself, but also their own inner demons. Watching them emerge

as stronger, more human characters was what excited me the most. Another aspect that deeply intrigued me was Kolkata itself. The city becomes a character in the series — subtly, yet very powerfully. India is an incredibly diverse country in terms of states, languages, and cultures, but Kolkata is one place that seems to embrace every kind of person. Different communities and social classes coexist there in a way that feels unique. Even though it is a metropolitan city, it still carries the warmth, intimacy, and values of a small town, sometimes even a village. That contradiction is fascinating to me, I felt it was something we absolutely had to explore. Kolkata is one of the last cities that still retains such a strong sense of character and soul". "These are the reasons why I genuinely wanted to take on a subject like this. Of course, another exciting aspect was that I had never worked on a series like this before or explored storytelling at such a detailed, human level.

Diving into the nitty-gritty and minute complexities of human characters is what made this series such a rewarding experience for me", he continued. Deo also addressed the challenge of adapting the story from a book to a visual medium and explained how much of the original material was retained. He said, "When I read the book, I found it extremely compelling, especially because of its rich character details and the vivid portrayal of the city. There is always a difference between a book and a screenplay, or a book and a series. Because of that, a lot had to be changed and adapted. A book of

200–300 pages allows you to indulge deeply in details through words, but visual storytelling works very differently. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words, you can communicate so much more on screen while saying very little. As a result, several aspects had to be altered or reimaged for the series. Many characters are portrayed differently, and the storytelling approach has evolved significantly." "The best way to describe it is this: while the spine of the series comes from the book, the body is entirely something we have created. In fact, when you read the book and watch the series, you may hardly recognise the two as the same story," he added. Discussing his approach to portraying Kolkata on screen, the filmmaker explained why he wanted to move beyond the city's familiar tourist imagery.



Kiara Advani : "It takes a village to raise a mother"

Mumbai : Actor Kiara Advani has opened up about motherhood, personal transformation and the societal expectations women often face after childbirth,

describing the journey as one of the most enriching experiences of her life. In a recent interview, Kiara reflected on how becoming a mother has changed her outlook, both as an individual and as an artist, following the birth of her daughter with actor-husband Sidharth Malhotra in July 2025. Speaking about the impact of motherhood, the actress said the experience has expanded her understanding of life and the world around her, while also helping her discover new dimensions of her personality. Kiara expressed confidence that the emotional growth she has experienced through motherhood will positively influence her work as an actor, allowing her to bring greater depth and authenticity to future performances. "The experience is so enriching in every way; I feel directors who will work with me now will get the best version of me," she said, emphasizing that motherhood has opened a completely new chapter in her life. The actress also addressed the way society's perception of women often changes dramatically before and after childbirth, highlighting the pressures many mothers face regarding appearance and recovery. According to Kiara, pregnant women are frequently celebrated and admired during

pregnancy, but the focus often shifts immediately after delivery toward their physical appearance and how quickly they return to their pre-pregnancy form.

She pointed out that unrealistic expectations surrounding weight loss and physical recovery can place additional pressure on women during a period that is already emotionally and physically demanding. Kiara noted that while pregnancy is often viewed as a special and celebrated phase, the period after childbirth can be even more challenging because it requires women to adapt to entirely new responsibilities while recovering themselves. The actress stressed that postpartum recovery deserves greater understanding and empathy, arguing that women need support and care after delivery rather than judgment or scrutiny.

Reflecting on the transition into motherhood, she said the months following childbirth are a time when women are learning to balance multiple identities, including those of a mother, daughter, wife and professional. Kiara underscored the importance of emotional support systems, saying that the well-known phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" should also apply to supporting new mothers as they navigate a life-changing transition. She suggested that families, friends and communities all have an important

role to play in helping women adjust to motherhood and maintain their well-being during the postpartum period.

Kiara's remarks have resonated with many women and sparked wider discussions about postpartum recovery, body image, mental health and the societal pressures placed on new mothers.

Her comments also draw attention to the growing conversation around creating more supportive environments for women returning to work after childbirth and acknowledging the complexities of that transition.

Kiara and Sidharth's relationship remains one of Bollywood's most admired love stories. The couple reportedly grew close while working on the war drama Shershaah and later married in a widely celebrated ceremony at Suryagarh Palace on February 7, 2023. After announcing their pregnancy in February 2025, the couple welcomed their daughter on July 15, 2025, marking a new chapter in their personal lives. On the professional front, Kiara continues to balance motherhood with her acting career and is preparing for upcoming projects, including Toxic. Her recent reflections have added an important voice to conversations about motherhood, self-image and the support that women need during one of the most transformative periods of their lives.

Kohli credits RCB's shift from one-man burden to team-driven success

Ahmedabad: Royal Challengers Bengaluru's successful title defence in IPL 2026 was not built on a single defining innings or a solitary match-winning spell. Instead, it was forged through a transformation that Virat Kohli believes has fundamentally altered the franchise's identity — the emergence of a team where responsibility is shared rather than carried by one individual.

For much of RCB's history, Kohli often found himself at the centre of every conversation surrounding the franchise. The batting great shouldered expectations for nearly two decades as the team repeatedly fell short despite possessing some of the game's biggest stars.

This season, however, the script was different.

Reflecting on the campaign after RCB clinched their second consecutive title, Kohli pointed to the collective strength of the squad as the defining factor behind their success.

He noted that there was noticeably less pressure within the group compared



to previous years, with players consistently stepping up in crucial moments.

The sentiment was echoed throughout the dressing room. "I said to a few of the boys that there doesn't seem to be the same kind of pressure that was there last year. Composure of the guys shone through tonight."

After the break we had a couple of losses but we wanted to finish top.

The win against MI gave us a lot of confidence. Just to have a group of guys where you don't feel that you are the only guy who has to step up for the team is amazing,"

Kohli said.

Devdutt Padikkal spoke of how being surrounded by quality players had elevated his own game, while praising Kohli's relentless desire to score runs despite his legendary status.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar highlighted the extensive planning that went into the campaign, saying the trophy held greater value than any individual honour and crediting the team's preparation for its success in pressure situations.

Josh Hazlewood, one of RCB's key performers with the ball, praised the culture developed within the fran-

chise and said building such an environment was particularly impressive in a tournament where squads undergo major changes every few years.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Jitesh Sharma underlined the role played by the management, saying players were encouraged to remain positive and aggressive rather than becoming consumed by the challenge of defending a title.

He credited the support staff for backing individuals even during lean patches, creating an atmosphere of trust and confidence.

The significance of that

culture was perhaps best captured by all-rounder Krunal Pandya, who pointed to the emotional journey of the franchise and its talisman.

After waiting 18 years for a maiden IPL crown, RCB have now won back-to-back championships, completing one of the most remarkable turnarounds in the league's history.

Former Australia opener Matthew Hayden, who is part of Gujarat Titans setup, attributed much of that success to the calm and family-oriented environment cultivated behind the scenes, describing it as one of the team's greatest strengths.

Taken together, the comments offered a glimpse into the foundations of RCB's dominance. Talent and star power remain integral, but the franchise's greatest achievement may be creating a side where victories no longer depend on one player producing something extraordinary.

That shift, more than any statistic or trophy, appears to have turned RCB from perennial contenders into serial champions.

Construction begins on Brisbane's 2032 Olympic stadium

Sydney : Construction activity has officially commenced on the main stadium for the 2032 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Brisbane after the Australian government rejected key Aboriginal cultural protection applications relating to the proposed site. The development marks a major milestone in preparations for one of the world's largest sporting events.

On Monday, possession of the stadium site at Victoria Park in Brisbane's inner north was formally transferred from the city council to the Games Independent Infrastructure Coordination Authority (GIICA). The handover enables preliminary earthworks and site preparation activities to begin ahead of the stadium's construction.

The commencement of work comes nearly five years after 2032 Summer Olympics was awarded to Brisbane in July 2021. Since securing the hosting rights, authorities have been working on infrastructure plans aimed at transforming the city and preparing venues for the international sporting spectacle.

At the heart of these



preparations is the proposed 63,000-seat stadium at Victoria Park, which is expected to become the centrepiece of the Games. The venue will host the opening and closing ceremonies as well as athletics competitions during the Olympics and Paralympics.

The stadium forms part of the Australian government's Games Venues Infrastructure Program, a major investment initiative valued at approximately 7.1 billion Australian dollars. The project is intended to deliver world-class sporting infrastructure while also creating long-term community and recreational assets.

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli described Victoria Park as a future landmark for the state. He said the area would become a focal point for sport, culture and green space, creating a legacy that residents across Queensland

could take pride in long after the Games conclude. Authorities view the stadium project as a critical component of Brisbane's Olympic vision. In addition to hosting marquee events during the Games, the venue is expected to serve as a major sporting and entertainment hub for decades, supporting future national and international events. However, the project has also generated significant controversy and opposition from some Indigenous groups and community activists. Critics argue that parts of Victoria Park hold cultural and historical significance for Aboriginal communities and should be protected from large-scale development. In the lead-up to the transfer of the site, protesters had been occupying sections of Victoria Park to oppose the construction plans.

French Open: Title favourite Zverev cruises through

Paris: Alexander Zverev reinforced his status as one of the leading contenders for the French Open title after producing a composed and clinical performance to defeat Jesper de Jong in straight sets and secure a place in the quarter-finals at Roland Garros for the sixth consecutive year.

The world number three delivered a 7-6 (7-3), 6-4, 6-1 victory, overcoming an early challenge from the Dutchman before taking control of the match with his powerful baseline game, dominant serving and confident net play. The win further strengthens Zverev's bid to capture the first Grand Slam title of his career. Seeded second in the tournament, the 29-year-old German entered Roland Garros as one of the favourites and has steadily progressed through the draw. His latest victory continued a strong run of form on clay, a surface on which he has enjoyed considerable success throughout his career.

For several years, Zverev has been regarded as one of the most talented players of his generation and a future Grand Slam champion. Despite reaching finals at three of the sport's four major tournaments, the elusive major title has so far remained out of reach.

His closest opportunity came at the 2024 French Open, where he held a two-sets-to-one lead over Carlos Alcaraz in the final before ultimately falling short.

That defeat added to the frustration of several near misses at Grand Slam events.

This year's tournament, however, presents a potentially more favourable opportunity. The men's draw has opened



significantly following the early exits of world number one Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic, while defending champion Alcaraz is absent because of injury.

With several major contenders no longer in the competition, Zverev finds himself among the most experienced and highest-ranked players remaining in the draw. Many observers believe this could represent one of his best chances yet to finally secure a Grand Slam crown.

The match against De Jong was not entirely straightforward in its early stages. The Dutch player, ranked more than 100 places below Zverev, displayed impressive confidence and aggression

from the outset, putting the German under pressure.

De Jong raced into a 3-0 lead in the opening set and continued to challenge his higher-ranked opponent with aggressive shot-making and fearless play. His strong start demonstrated why he had progressed this far in the tournament despite entering as an underdog.

The first set ultimately proved decisive. After forcing a tie-break, De Jong surged ahead 3-0 and appeared poised to claim the advantage. However, Zverev responded with remarkable composure, winning seven consecutive points to take the tie-break and seize momentum.

Having survived the early scare, the German gradually imposed his authority on the contest. His powerful groundstrokes and improved consistency began to wear down De Jong, who struggled to maintain the same intensity as the match progressed.

The second set remained competitive, with few opportunities available on either player's serve. Zverev displayed patience and discipline, waiting until the tenth game to capitalize on one of only two break-point chances he created during the set. That crucial break enabled him to secure the second set and move within one set of victory. From that point onward, the outcome appeared increasingly inevitable as the German raised his level further.

Kostyuk stuns Swiatek as Cirstea ends 17-year wait for French Open quarterfinal

Paris : Four-time French Open champion Iga Swiatek was knocked out in the fourth round, while Romania's Sorana Cirstea returned to the Roland Garros quarterfinals for the first time in 17 years.

The biggest upset of the day came on the women's side, where 15th-seeded Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk defeated third-seeded Swiatek 7-5, 6-1 in one hour and 39 minutes.

Swiatek, who entered the tournament among the favorites, struggled to regain control after a tightly contested opening set.

"I lost control of the match, and there was no way for me to come back, because I felt worse and worse," she said.

The Pole credited Kostyuk for capitalizing on her opportunities while acknowledging her own struggles with tension.

"I lost today because Marta used the opportunity, and I was super tense," Swiatek noted. "I need to believe that I can work through this and not be thrown off so quickly."



Kostyuk advanced to a quarterfinal clash with fellow Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, who rallied past Switzerland's Belinda Bencic and won the deciding set 6-0. The winner will become the first Ukrainian woman in the Open Era to reach the French Open semifinals, according to Xinhua. Elsewhere in the women's draw, Cirstea defeated China's Wang Xiyu 6-3, 7-6 (4) to reach the quarterfinals at Roland Garros for the first time since 2009.

The result marks the third Grand Slam quarterfinal appearance of Cirstea's career and comes during

what she has described as her final season on tour.

"I came into my last year, wanted to go out on the front door of the sport, wanting to really do well, but I didn't really think it was going to go that well," she said.

The Romanian will next face Russia's Mirra Andreeva, who advanced with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Switzerland's Jil Teichmann, reaching her third consecutive French Open quarterfinal.

Despite the defeat, the tournament marked a milestone for Wang, who reached the last 16 of a Grand Slam for the first time.

The 2018 U.S. Open girls' champion has battled shoulder and elbow injuries in recent years and only returned to competition in March. After rebuilding her ranking through lower-tier events, Wang came through qualifying in Paris and won six consecutive matches before her run ended on Sunday.

"I gave everything I had today," Wang said. "The result is disappointing, but it's understandable. Cirstea is a very strong opponent. Her shots are powerful and consistent, and she moves extremely well on clay."

Wang added that improving the consistency and rhythm of her serve would be a focus in future training.

On the men's side, second-seeded Alexander Zverev advanced comfortably with a straight-sets victory over Dutchman Jesper de Jong.

Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca defeated 15th-seeded Casper Ruud 7-5, 7-6 (6), 5-7, 6-2 in a match lasting nearly four hours, to reach his first Grand Slam quarterfinal.

SAFF Championship: Blue Tigresses blank Bangladesh

Margao: India defeated Bangladesh 3-0 to secure top spot in Group B of the SAFF Women's Championship 2026 at the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Margao, Goa, on Sunday, May 31, 2026.

It was the Blue Tigresses' first win over Bangladesh in seven years after losing their previous two matches against them in the 2022 and 2024 editions of the tournament. Pyari Xaxa opened the scoring in the first half in the 36th minute before second-half goals from Lynda Kom Serto (78' p) and Malavika P (90' 1') sealed an impressive victory.

With a perfect six points from two matches after their earlier 11-0 demolition of Maldives, India emerged as Group B toppers and will now face Bhutan in the semi-final on June 3 at 20:00. Meanwhile, Bangladesh will take on Nepal in the other semi-final earlier in the day at 16:00.

Both teams began the contest with purpose and intensity. Bangla-

desh nearly stunned the hosts in the second minute when a momentary lapse in concentration from Shilky Devi Hemam allowed the Anika Rania Siddiqui an early opening. India goalkeeper Panthoi Chanu Elangbam, however, kept the danger at bay.

That early scare appeared to settle India. The hosts gradually assumed control of the contest through crisp passing combinations and intelligent use of the flanks. Their midfield dictated the tempo, while aerial deliveries repeatedly tested the Bangladesh defence.

India created several promising opportunities before eventually taking the lead. Sanfida Nongrum was presented with a good chance in the 22nd minute after controlling the ball brilliantly on the right wing, but she rushed her effort and dragged it wide despite having plenty of space to advance further.

Five minutes later, Pyari Xaxa squandered what looked like a

straightforward opportunity. A teasing cross found the striker completely unmarked inside the box, but she failed to direct her header on target. Pyari, however, made amends in style in the 36th minute. Shilky launched a long ball towards the Bangladesh penalty area, and a poor clearance from Kohati Kisku fell invitingly into Pyari's path. The striker showed great composure, taking a moment to steady herself before firing a powerful right-footed effort into the bottom corner beyond goalkeeper Mile Akter. The goal gave India confidence, and they comfortably managed the remainder of the first half to carry a deserved 1-0 lead into the interval. India resumed with the same attacking intent after the break and nearly doubled their advantage in the 51st minute. Bangladesh goalkeeper Mile Akter spilled a dangerous cross into the six-yard area, but Pyari was denied by a desperate defensive intervention as Bangladesh threw bod-

ies in the way.

Substitute striker Lynda Kom Serto almost made an immediate impact after replacing Aveka Singh in the 66th minute. Just two minutes later, she raced through on goal following a well-weighted pass but saw her fierce effort pushed away by Mile.

India finally secured breathing space in the 78th minute. Sanfida, who had been influential throughout, found substitute Malavika near the edge of the penalty area. As Malavika drove into the box, she was brought down by Mst Surma Jannat, leaving the referee with little hesitation in awarding a penalty. Lynda stepped up confidently and drilled her spotkick into the bottom-right corner.

The hosts completed a memorable evening in stoppage time. Sangita Basfore's superb cross from the right was expertly controlled by Malavika, who then calmly slotted home from close range in the 91st minute.

Volpato in as Australia unveils FIFA World Cup squad

Sydney: Football Australia on Monday announced the final squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, unveiling a blend of experienced campaigners and emerging talent as the Socceroos prepare for football's biggest tournament.

The squad reflects a significant generational transition, with as many as 17 players selected for their first FIFA World Cup. The inclusion of a large number of debutants highlights Australia's efforts to build a new core group capable of com-

peting on the global stage while maintaining a balance of experience and youthful energy. One of the most notable selections is 22-year-old attacking midfielder Cristian Volpato, who has officially switched his international allegiance from Italy to Australia. The talented playmaker, who currently plays club football in Italy, is poised to make his senior international debut during the World Cup campaign. Born in Australia, Volpato previously represented Italy at youth international level and



was regarded as one of the country's promising young talents. His decision to com-

mit to Australia is viewed as a significant boost for the Socceroos, providing addi-

tional creativity and attacking options in midfield. Another fresh face in the squad is striker Tete Yengi, who has yet to earn a senior international cap. Yengi, currently playing club football in Japan, has impressed selectors with his performances and development, earning a place in the final World Cup roster despite his lack of senior international experience. The inclusion of Volpato and Yengi underlines the coaching staff's willingness to invest in emerging talent.

Ireland stun Pakistan on eve of T20 World Cup

Dublin: Ireland delivered a powerful statement ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, registering a memorable seven-wicket victory over Pakistan in their ongoing tri-series clash. The hosts produced a record-breaking run chase to strengthen confidence within the squad less than two weeks before the global tournament begins.

The victory was particularly significant because it marked Ireland's highest-ever successful run chase in women's T20 International cricket. Chasing a challenging target after Pakistan posted 176 for 6, Ireland reached the total with three wickets down and five balls to spare, showcasing impressive batting depth and composure under pressure.

The result provided a major boost to Ireland's World Cup preparations, demonstrating the team's ability to successfully pursue a substantial target against quality international opposition. The performance also highlighted the growing confidence and maturity of Ireland's batting unit.

Leading the charge was Rebecca Stokell, who produced one of the finest innings of her international career.

The right-handed batter remained unbeaten on 60, registering her highest score

in international cricket and anchoring the chase from start to finish.

Stokell's innings came at a crucial moment for Ireland. Facing a daunting target, she displayed patience, temperament and shot selection to ensure the innings remained on track despite the pressure of a high-scoring chase.

At the top of the order, opener Amy Hunter laid a strong foundation with an excellent 56. Her aggressive yet controlled approach allowed Ireland to maintain the required run rate and prevented Pakistan's bowlers from gaining control during the early stages of the innings.

The partnership between Hunter and Stokell proved to be one of the defining moments of the match. Together, they established momentum that enabled Ireland to remain competitive throughout the chase and laid the groundwork for the successful pursuit.

After Hunter's departure, Orla Prendergast contributed an important 33 runs.

Her innings provided stability during the latter stages of the chase and ensured Ireland did not lose momentum as the target drew closer.

Stokell later praised both Hunter and Prendergast for their contributions, ac-

knowledging the role they played in helping her maintain focus and confidence at the crease. She noted that building partnerships was crucial to the team's success.

Reflecting on her innings, Stokell admitted that she struggled initially but focused on supporting Hunter, who was timing the ball well from the outset. She explained that developing a productive partnership helped her settle into her own innings.

She also highlighted Prendergast's importance during the closing stages, describing her as an ideal batting partner in a pressure situation. The chemistry between the batters enabled Ireland to navigate the chase effectively and eventually secure victory.

Earlier in the day, Pakistan produced a competitive batting performance led by Muneeba Ali. The opener played an aggressive innings of 65 runs and helped her side post a formidable total of 176 for 6 from their allotted overs.

Muneeba's knock provided Pakistan with a strong platform and appeared likely to guide the visitors to their first victory of the series. Her innings featured confident stroke play and ensured Pakistan maintained a healthy scoring rate throughout much of their innings.

BSE Sensex		Nifty 50		Nifty 500		Nifty Next 50		Nifty 100		Nifty Bank		Nifty Midcap 100	
Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change	Close	Percent change
74,267.34	-0.68%	23,382.60	-0.70%	22,437.95	-0.97%	69,921.85	-1.62%	24,393.05	-0.88%	53,643.10	-1.10%	60,827.95	-1.45%
Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open	Previous close	Open
74,775.74	75,203.02	23,547.75	23,654.50	22,657.00	22,760.80	71,073.65	71,430.85	24,608.45	24,722.30	54,239.20	54,403.85	61,723.80	61,978.20
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
75,367.93	74,203.68	23,733.70	23,357.95	22,810.20	22,414.80	71,530.65	69,806.55	24,789.75	24,369.85	54,582.75	53,470.00	62,062.00	60,735.85

Top Gainers

Company	Current	% Gain
Tech Mahindra	1,543.20	4.00
Infosys	1,202.50	3.58
Coal India	472.60	3.21
TCS	2,297.40	1.70
JSW Steel	1,299.40	1.67

Top Losers

Company	Current	% Loss
HUL	2,084.30	-3.21
TATA Cons. Prod.	1,143.30	-2.98
Shriram Finance	919.05	-2.97
Max Healthcare	938.45	-2.76
ITC	279.65	-2.53

Commodities

Commodity	Price	Change (%)
Gold Jun 05	154,820.00	-755.00 -0.49
Silver Jul 03	267,941.00	943.00 0.35
Crudeoil Jun 18	8,614.00	333.00 4.02
Naturalgas Jun 25	317.40	1.40 0.44

India's manufacturing activity strengthens in May; PMI hits three-month high of 55.0

New Delhi: India's manufacturing sector gathered pace in May, with the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rising to a three-month high of 55.0, reflecting continued strength in industrial activity despite persistent global uncertainties and rising input costs. The latest data compiled by S&P Global pointed to resilient demand conditions and sustained expansion across the sector.

The May PMI reading was higher than April's figure of 54.7 and also exceeded the flash estimate of 54.3 released earlier. The increase signals that manufacturing activity continued to expand at a healthy rate, supported by stronger output, new orders and inventory accumulation.

The PMI is a widely watched indicator that measures the health of the manufacturing sector through variables such as new orders, production levels, employment, supplier delivery times and stocks of purchases. A reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a figure below 50 signals contraction.

With the index remaining comfortably above the 50-mark,

the latest data suggests that Indian manufacturers continued to benefit from robust domestic demand and improving business activity. The sector has now maintained a prolonged period of expansion, underscoring the resilience of the country's industrial base.

One of the key drivers behind the improvement was stronger output growth. Manufacturing firms reported higher production levels during May as they responded to rising order books and sought to build inventories amid uncertainty in global supply chains.

Purchasing activity also accelerated during the month, with companies increasing their procurement of raw materials and intermediate goods. The rise in buying activity indicated confidence among manufacturers regarding future demand and production requirements. The report noted a faster increase in stocks of finished goods, suggesting that some firms may have been engaging in precautionary inventory building. Businesses appear to be preparing for potential disruptions linked to geopolitical tensions and supply-chain uncertainties.

Sensex, Nifty fall for 4th day amid fresh tensions in Middle East

Mumbai: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty fell for the fourth straight session on Monday due to selling in FMCG, financial and auto shares amid elevated crude oil prices and uncertainty over the US-Iran 60-day ceasefire. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 508.40 points, or 0.68 per cent, to settle at 74,267.34. During the day, it hit a high of 75,367.93 and a low of 74,203.68, gyrating 1,164.25 points.

Falling for the fourth consecutive day, the 50-share NSE Nifty edged lower by 165.15 points, or 0.70 per cent, to end at 23,382.60.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance were among the major laggards.

Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services,

InterGlobe Aviation, HCL Tech and Tata Steel were the gainers. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 3.34 per cent higher at USD

ally came under sustained selling pressure as hopes of a near-term diplomatic breakthrough faded, reinforcing a cautious risk-off mood



94.16 per barrel.

"Indian equity markets ended lower as renewed hostilities between the US and Iran reignited concerns over regional stability, with the conflict now entering its fourth month and the Strait of Hormuz remaining closed." The Nifty opened marginally higher but gradu-

ally came under sustained selling pressure as hopes of a near-term diplomatic breakthrough faded, reinforcing a cautious risk-off mood

and Lebanon have exerted selling pressure on equity markets, reflecting heightened geopolitical uncertainty and a shift towards risk-off sentiment. However, as the conflict has now entered its fourth month, participants are increasingly anticipating potential diplomatic progress in the near term," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index settled lower. Markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended in the positive territory on Friday, the Sensex tumbled 1,092.06 points, or 1.44 per cent, to settle at 74,775.74. The Nifty dived 359.40 points, or 1.50 per cent, to end at 23,547.75.

GST collections rise to Rs 1.94 lakh cr in May; import revenues boost growth

New Delhi: India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections rose to Rs 1.94 lakh crore in May 2026, registering a 3.2 per cent increase over the same month last year, driven largely by strong growth in import-related revenues.

Gross GST revenue stood at Rs 1,94,184 crore during the month, compared with Rs 1,88,172 crore in May 2025. Collections from imports surged 19.1 per cent to Rs 59,654 crore, reflecting robust trade activity.

Net GST revenue, after refunds, increased 3.3 per cent to Rs 1,66,904 crore. Total refunds issued during

the month stood at Rs 27,281 crore, up 2.6 per cent from a year ago.

The government said the growth figures were affected by a one-time payment of around Rs 10,000 crore made by a telecom operator in May 2025 towards spectrum allocation.

Excluding this exceptional receipt, gross GST collections in May 2026 recorded an adjusted growth of about 9 per cent, while adjusted net collections grew 10.1 per cent.

Domestic GST collections stood at Rs 1.35 lakh crore during the month. Although domestic revenues



showed a decline on a headline basis due to the high base effect, the adjusted figures pointed to continued strength in consumption and business activity.

Among the states, Uttar Pradesh recorded a strong 13 per cent growth in GST collections during May, while Haryana and Telangana posted increases of 8 per

cent and 6 per cent, respectively. Collections in several other major states remained stable.

For the first two months of the current financial year, gross GST collections reached Rs 4.37 lakh crore, registering a growth of 6.2 per cent over the corresponding period last year. Net GST revenue during April-May stood at Rs 3.78 lakh crore, up 5.5 per cent.

The latest numbers indicate that GST revenues continue on a steady growth path, supported by improved compliance, resilient economic activity, and strong import tax collections.

Myanmar's President calls for expanding bilateral between India-Myanmar through multi-sectoral collaboration

New Delhi: Myanmar's President Min Aung Hlaing has called for deeper economic engagement between India and Myanmar, urging businesses from both countries to expand trade ties and explore new investment opportunities across a range of emerging sectors.

Speaking while chairing high-level India-Myanmar Trade and Investment Discussions, the Myanmar President emphasized the importance of strengthening bilateral economic cooperation to unlock the full potential of the longstanding relationship between the two neighboring countries.

During the discussions, Min Aung Hlaing invited Indian companies to increase their presence in Myanmar

by investing in key growth sectors.

He highlighted opportunities in agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy and the digital economy, describing them as areas with significant potential for future expansion.

The President noted that enhanced investment flows could contribute to economic development, job creation and technological advancement while helping both nations achieve stronger and more diversified trade relations.

The discussions brought together government representatives, business leaders and industry stakeholders from both countries to examine ways of expanding commercial engagement and ad-

ressing existing challenges in bilateral trade.

Among the key participants was Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Co-chair of the International Council at Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

He stressed the need for innovative measures to facilitate smoother trade transactions between the two countries.

Sahney advocated the introduction of a direct Rupee-Kyat trade settlement mechanism, arguing that such a system would significantly improve the efficiency of bilateral commerce. According to him, direct settlement in local currencies could reduce transaction costs and simplify cross-border payments.

Amazon boosts delivery speeds and local seller growth in Bihar

Patna: Amazon India on Monday highlighted the impact of its expanded operations network in Bihar following the launch of its first fulfillment center (FC) in the state in July 2024. The company said the investment has significantly strengthened its logistics infrastructure, improved delivery speeds and created new opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs.

The fulfillment center, located at Simli Murarpur near Patna, represents a major milestone in Amazon's efforts to deepen its presence in eastern India. The facility was established as part of the company's strategy to enhance supply-chain efficiency and better serve customers in emerging markets.

With a storage capacity of approximately 2.2 lakh cubic feet, the fulfillment center is equipped to handle a wide range of products across multiple categories. The facility enables faster inventory management and order processing, helping ensure timely deliveries to customers across Bihar.

Since becoming operational, the Patna fulfillment center has played a crucial role in strengthening Amazon's distribution capabilities in the state. By storing products closer to

customers, the company has been able to reduce delivery timelines and improve service reliability. The addition of the fulfillment center has expanded Amazon's overall operational network in Bihar. The company's infrastructure in the state now includes one fulfillment center, three sort centers and more than 100 last-mile delivery stations.

These facilities are spread across several important cities and commercial hubs, including Begusarai, Bhagalpur, Darbhanga, Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Purnia.

The wider network has enhanced connectivity and delivery reach across urban as well as semi-urban regions. According to the company, the expanded logistics infrastructure has enabled significantly faster deliveries in many parts of Bihar. Customers in several locations can now receive orders through same-day or next-day delivery services at rates much higher than before. Amazon stated that delivery speeds in some areas have improved by up to three times following the expansion. Faster deliveries are expected to enhance customer satisfaction and make a broader range of products available to consumers in a shorter time frame.



Commerce was a way of life, today we formalised that way of life between India-Oman: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi: Describing commerce as a "way of life" that has linked India and Oman for over five millennia, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday said the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which entered into force today, formalises a historic trading relationship and is poised to give fresh momentum to bilateral economic ties. Addressing a presser on the conclusion of India-Oman CEPA negotiations here, the Minister said, "The sea doesn't ask where you come from; it simply carries you forward. India and Oman have been carried by the Arabian Sea for over 5,000 years now. Commerce was a way of life. Today, we have formalised that way of life between India and Oman."

Calling the CEPA "not

simply a trade agreement but a statement of civilisational trust," the Minister expressed confidence that the pact would usher in a new phase of economic cooperation between the two countries.

Under the agreement, India will secure duty-free access from day one on 98 per cent of Oman's tariff lines, covering more than 99 per cent of India's exports to the Gulf nation.

"I am happy to note that more than ten consignments from different parts of India have already been shipped to Oman availing preferential duty access," Goyal said.

He noted that Indian workers, MSMEs and exporters in sectors such as textiles, sportswear, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, engineering goods, agricultural products, meat, plastics, automo-



biles and marine products would benefit from preferential market access in Oman, gaining an advantage over competing suppliers.

Highlighting four major outcomes of the agreement, Goyal said Oman has committed to lifting its decade-old ban on the export of unpolished marble blocks,

enabling craftsmen in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh to access the raw material directly. He further said that Indian generic medicines approved by the US FDA, European Medicines Agency (EMA) or the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) would now receive

market authorisation in Oman within 90 days, ensuring faster access to affordable medicines for Omani patients.

For the first time, India has secured a binding commitment for the protection of Indian workers employed in non-service sectors in majority Indian-owned enterprises in Oman, he added.

The Minister also said Oman would recognise India's National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) certification, opening its market to Indian organic products. Both sides will additionally work towards a Mutual Recognition Agreement for halal certification. Reiterating the government's export ambitions, Goyal said India is targeting exports worth USD 1 trillion in the current year and USD 2 trillion over the next five years.

Aditya Birla Health Insurance launches Activ Yuva: Wellness-First Health Insurance Plan for Young India in UP

Lucknow: Aditya Birla Health Insurance Co. Ltd. (ABHICL), the health insurance arm of Aditya Birla Capital, on Monday announced the launch of Activ Yuva, a health-focused insurance plan designed for the evolving lifestyle and wellness needs of young Indians in Uttar Pradesh as part of the offering, a comprehensive wellness programme has been introduced that builds on ABHICL's HealthReturns proposition, rewarding

individuals for everyday healthy behaviours across nutrition, fitness, and recovery. ABHICL has been redefining health insurance as health assurance through its HealthReturns model, rewarding healthier living through activities like walking 10,000 steps or more per day or burning 300 calories in one single exercise session. Customers with consistent activity levels and a strong Healthy Heart Score can earn up to 100 per cent of

their annual premium back.

The new Activ Yuva plan enhances this proposition with a broader behaviour-linked rewards programme built on three pillars: Eat, Move, and Heal, which rewards holistic healthy habits beyond physical activity for customers meeting the minimum Active Day criteria. Eat: Users who log any two meals a day for 21 days in a month on the app can unlock a 10 per cent boost in their monthly



HealthReturns Move: Users maintaining a monthly aver-

age of over 7,500 steps or burning 250 calories can earn 4 Bonus Active Dayz each month. Heal: Users maintaining 7-8 hours of sleep for 21 days in a month can unlock up to a 15 per cent boost in monthly HealthReturns. Speaking on the launch of Activ Yuva, Mayank Bathwal, Chief Executive Officer, Aditya Birla Health Insurance Co. Limited, said here on Monday that, "Health insurance must evolve with changing con-

sumer lifestyles and wellness habits. Younger consumers today actively invest in their well-being as part of their daily lives. This creates a clear opportunity to make insurance more relevant to how they live. Key highlights include Unlimited sum insured: Continuous financial protection for hospitalisation and treatment without worrying about exhausting coverage within a policy year; Yuva Credit - sum insured grows up to 11x in 11

years: Coverage expands over time in line with changing life stages and responsibilities; OPD cover (up to 5X): Covers consultations, diagnostics, medicines and wellness-related expenses; and Income protection: Fixed payout during extended hospitalisation to support recovery. It also includes Worldwide maternity cover: Allows individuals to start the waiting period early and carry forward benefits as life progresses.