

# Aryan Age

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## LPG Cylinder Price Hike Hits Households Again, Cost Rises by Rs 29



**New Delhi:** As prices of daily essentials continue to rise across the country, the Central Government has delivered another blow to household budgets. From Sunday morning, the price of domestic LPG cylinders has been increased by ₹29. The hike applies to the 14.2-kg household LPG cylinder and is expected to put additional pressure on middle-class and lower-income families.

This is the second increase in domestic LPG prices within the last three months. Following the latest revision, the price of a 14.2-kg LPG cylinder in Delhi has gone up from ₹913 to ₹942. Similar increases of ₹29 have been implemented across the country. In Mumbai, the price of a 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder has risen from ₹912.50 to ₹941.50. Earlier, on March 7, domestic LPG cylinder prices had already been increased by ₹60. With fuel prices and the cost of everyday goods already high, the latest LPG hike is expected to further strain household finances.

According to reports, government-owned oil companies are still bearing a loss of around ₹703 on every

domestic LPG cylinder sold. As a result, concerns are being raised that domestic LPG prices could see further increases in the coming months.

Recently, petroleum companies had also increased the price of commercial LPG cylinders. On June 1, the price of commercial LPG cylinders was raised by ₹42. Over the past five months, the price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder has nearly doubled. Before January 1, the cylinder cost ₹1,580, while on June 1 its price reached ₹3,113.50.

The 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder saw a series of hikes throughout the year, including ₹111 in January, ₹49 in February, ₹28 in March, ₹114.50 on March 7, ₹195.50 in April, ₹993 in May, and ₹42 in June. These increases had already pushed up costs for hotels and food businesses, leading to higher food prices. With petrol, diesel, LPG, and food prices continuing to rise, inflation concerns are growing. Experts also warn that if rainfall remains below expectations this season, inflationary pressures could increase further.

## INDIA Bloc Meeting today to Be Attended by 23 Parties, Says Jairam Ramesh

**New Delhi:** Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said that 23 political parties have confirmed their participation in a meeting of the INDIA alliance, or INDIA Janbandhan, scheduled to be held at the Constitution Club in New Delhi on June 8.

In a post on social media platform X, Ramesh said the meeting would take place at 12 noon and would bring together a broad spectrum of Opposition parties united against what they describe as the Narendra Modi government's attacks on democratic institutions, constitutional values and citizens' rights.

"23 political parties have

confirmed participation in the INDIA Janbandhan meeting at Constitution Club, New Delhi on Monday June 8, 2026, at 12 noon," Ramesh said.

He added that while some parties would not be able to attend the meeting, they had nevertheless communicated their opposition to the policies and actions of the BJP-led central government.

"There are some parties who have expressed their inability to attend this particular meeting for their own reasons — even though they have conveyed their strong opposition to the Modi Government's policies and actions," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader alleged

that the government was "snatching away the right to vote for millions



of Indians," "assaulting the Constitution daily," and "attacking Opposition leaders through investigative agencies." He also accused the Centre of damaging livelihoods, fuelling inflation, undermining employment prospects for young people, hurting

the investment climate and compromising national interests through its foreign policy.

The meeting comes amid renewed efforts by Opposition parties to strengthen coordination ahead of a series of political and electoral battles. The INDIA alliance, formed in 2023 as a coalition of Opposition parties seeking to challenge the BJP nationally, has continued to project itself as a platform committed to protecting constitutional institutions, federalism and democratic processes.

Ramesh sought to underscore the alliance's cohesion despite differences among its constituent parties, saying diversity remained

its strength. "Like India, the INDIA Janbandhan continues to stand united through its diversity," he said.

The June 8 meeting is expected to deliberate on a range of political issues, including electoral processes, governance concerns, economic challenges and the Opposition's future strategy against the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre. Leaders from participating parties are likely to discuss ways to coordinate their response to issues they contend are affecting democratic institutions and the lives of ordinary citizens across the country.

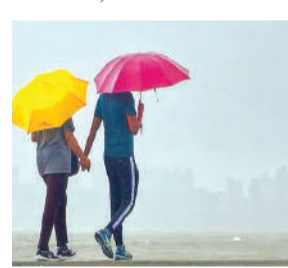
## Monsoon Reaches Konkan, But Widespread Rain Still Unlikely Before June 15

**Mumbai:** The southwest monsoon has entered South Konkan, bringing hopes of relief for Maharashtra. However, weather experts say the monsoon is not yet fully active across the state, and widespread rainfall is unlikely before June 15.

According to forecasts, parts of Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri districts are expected to receive moderate to heavy rainfall until June 9. After that, the overall intensity of rain and the speed of monsoon advancement are likely to slow down significantly.

Current weather models suggest that until at least June 15, Vidarbha, Marathwada, Khandesh, and parts of Central Maharashtra may

continue to experience afternoon cloud formation and scattered thunderstorms. However, these isolated



showers are not expected to provide the kind of widespread rainfall needed for large-scale sowing operations.

Weather experts have therefore advised farmers not to rush into sowing based solely on these scattered rain

events. Conditions are still not favorable for dependable monsoon-based agricultural activity across most regions.

At the same time, high temperatures are expected to persist in many parts of Maharashtra until at least June 12. Maximum temperatures in Vidarbha and Khandesh are likely to remain above 40 degrees Celsius, while Marathwada could continue recording temperatures between 35 and 40 degrees Celsius.

With the monsoon's progress slowing after its initial arrival in Konkan, farmers and residents across Maharashtra are closely watching weather developments in the coming days.

## Fuel, LPG price hike due to war fallout, PM managed crisis effectively: Fadnavis

**Nagpur:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday defended the recent hike in fuel and LPG prices, attributing it to disruptions caused by ongoing global conflicts and asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had handled the situation effectively.

Reacting to Opposition criticism over rising inflation and escalating prices of essential commodities, Fadnavis said the surge in petrol, diesel and cooking gas rates was a global phenomenon driven by prevailing international conditions.

"No nation has remained untouched by the impact of the ongoing war situation.

Fuel and gas prices have risen across the world. In India, the Prime Minister has taken several measures to keep



inflation under control," Fadnavis told reporters in Nagpur.

His statement came in response to criticism by NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, who earlier accused the Centre of burdening citizens with repeated price hikes and

warned that the ruling dispensation would have to pay a "political cost" for inflation.

The Chief Minister said the Central government was keeping a close watch on developments and would take appropriate decisions based on the evolving situation.

He also expressed confidence that prices would ease once global market conditions improve and supply-demand dynamics stabilise.

Notably, domestic LPG cylinder prices were recently raised by Rs 29, marking the second revision in the past three months amid continued pressure from global energy markets.

## Storms and Heavy Rain Damage Crops Across Maharashtra, Farmers Worried

**Mumbai:** Pre-monsoon rains accompanied by strong winds have caused widespread disruption across several parts of Maharashtra, damaging crops, orchards, infrastructure, and power supply. Farmers are increasingly worried as the untimely weather has affected standing and newly planted crops.

In Satara district, heavy rain, thunderstorms, lightning, and strong winds created havoc on Sunday. The weather changed suddenly in the afternoon, bringing intense showers across several areas. In Wai taluka's Bhuiinj and

Joshivihir regions, heavy rainfall disrupted traffic on the highway for some time, while trees and branches collapsed at multiple locations.

The agricultural sector has also suffered losses in Jawali and Mahabaleshwar talukas. Newly planted strawberry mother plants and tomato crops have reportedly been damaged. The losses come at a time when tomato farmers were benefiting from strong market prices, adding to their concerns.

In the Shivthar area, strong winds and heavy rain brought down an electricity pole, cutting off power to the entire village and leaving

residents in darkness. Overall, the severe weather affected transportation, electricity supply, and agriculture across Satara district, prompting authorities to remain on alert.

On the Pune-Satara National Highway near Raigaon Phata, heavy waterlogging on the service road trapped a car. Local residents acted quickly and used a jeep and pickup vehicle to safely pull the car out. The incident once again highlighted concerns over inadequate drainage infrastructure along the highway.

Heavy rain also lashed Jalgaon district. Strong

winds caused metal sheets at the Nashirabad toll plaza on the Mumbai-Nagpur National Highway to be blown off and collapse. Fortunately, no injuries were reported. However, one side of the toll plaza suffered damage, forcing authorities to close two lanes.

In Baramati taluka of Pune district, heavy rainfall damaged agricultural crops. Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar visited Karhati village to inspect damaged banana plantations. During her visit, she instructed officials to conduct crop-loss assessments and assured farmers that the government would provide



assistance after evaluating the extent of the damage. Speaking to reporters, Sunetra Pawar also said that several names are being discussed for the vacant Rajya Sabha seat and that clarity on the candidate could emerge by Sunday evening or Monday morning.

Parbhani district was also hit by powerful winds on Saturday evening. Several trees were uprooted, disrupting transportation and temporarily blocking roads.

## CBI raids 6 locations in Rs 661-Cr Govt funds scam linked to IDFC First Bank, AU Finance Bank

**New Delhi:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Sunday conducted raids at six locations across Chandigarh, Panchkula and Delhi-NCR in connection with a massive Rs 661-crore government funds misappropriation case linked to IDFC First Bank and AU Finance Bank.

The raids targeted the premises of senior Haryana government officials and Noida-based Vipam Consultancy Pvt Ltd and its director.

Investigators suspect collusion between public servants and bank officials in opening accounts, transferring government funds and diverting the money for illegal

gains. According to the CBI, the fraud impacted eight Haryana government departments and two Chandigarh UT departments — Municipal Corporation Chandigarh and CREST Chandigarh. The agency alleges that government funds were siphoned off through a well-planned conspiracy involving bank officials and public servants.

During the searches, the CBI seized incriminating documents, digital devices and property-related records.

Investigators have also found evidence suggesting that Vipam Consultancy received proceeds of crime, which were later transferred to the personal account of its director.

# India's Ease of Doing Business reforms drive investor confidence, digital transformation

**New Delhi:** India's sweeping reforms in governance, regulation and digital infrastructure have significantly strengthened the country's business ecosystem, making it easier to start, operate and expand businesses while boosting investor confidence and global competitiveness.

According to a government review released on Saturday, sustained efforts to simplify regulations, reduce compliance burdens and digitise public services have transformed India's business landscape over the past decade. The reforms have helped improve transparency, efficiency and ease of access to markets, credit and government services for entrepreneurs, startups and businesses of all sizes.

The impact of these measures is reflected in

India's rise in global rankings. The country improved its position in the World Bank's Doing Business Report from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in 2019. India has also strengthened its standing in the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking, moving up from 43rd place in 2021 to 41st in 2025.

A major pillar of the reform agenda has been the promotion of entrepreneurship. Since the launch of the Startup India initiative in 2016, the number of recognised startups has surged from just 502 to over 2.23 lakh by March 2026, generating more than 23.3 lakh direct jobs. Nearly half of these startups have at least one woman director or partner, underlining the growing inclusivity of India's startup ecosystem.

Business registration has also become significantly

easier through digital platforms such as the SPICe system and MCA21 Version 3, which have streamlined company incorporation and compliance processes. For micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the Udyam Registration Portal has enabled paperless and self-declaration-based registration, helping millions of enterprises enter the formal economy.

Property registration and land governance have undergone a digital overhaul through the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme. More than 97 per cent of cadastral maps have been digitised, while over 36 crore land parcels have been assigned a Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN), enhancing transparency and reducing disputes.

The government has also

focused on reducing procedural hurdles in obtaining business permits and clearances. The National Single Window System now integrates approvals across multiple central and state



departments, while the PARIVESH portal has substantially reduced the time required for environmental clearances.

Market access has improved through initiatives such as the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), PM

GatiShakti and advanced logistics platforms. GeM alone has recorded a cumulative transaction value of Rs 18.4 lakh crore, providing opportunities to startups, women

entrepreneurs and MSMEs to participate in government procurement.

On the financial front, easier access to credit has emerged as a key reform area. Schemes such as the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE), Emergency Credit Line Guarantee

Scheme (ECLGS) and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) have expanded formal financing to millions of businesses. Since its launch in 2015, PMMY has sanctioned loans worth over Rs 40 lakh crore through more than 57 crore accounts.

India's tax ecosystem has also become more business-friendly through the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), faceless tax assessments and a revamped income tax e-filing system. GST registrations have expanded from around 60 lakh taxpayers in 2017 to more than 1.64 crore in 2026, reflecting deeper formalisation of the economy.

Digital public infrastructure has further strengthened the business environment. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI),

now recognised by the International Monetary Fund as the world's largest real-time payment system by transaction volume, processed over 24,000 crore transactions worth nearly Rs 314 lakh crore during FY 2025-26. The platform currently serves over 540 million users and 100 million merchants.

To create a more trust-based regulatory framework, the government has undertaken extensive decriminalisation and compliance reduction measures. The Jan Vishwas reforms have rationalised hundreds of legal provisions, while more than 47,000 compliances have been simplified, digitised or removed.

Insolvency resolution has also been strengthened through amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy

Code, introducing faster timelines and improving creditor participation, making debt resolution more predictable and efficient.

Officials said the combined impact of digital governance, regulatory simplification and infrastructure modernisation is helping position India as a globally competitive investment destination. The reforms are expected to further accelerate entrepreneurship, attract investment and support long-term economic growth.

"India's Ease of Doing Business framework today reflects the combined strength of digital infrastructure, policy reforms and trust-based governance," the government said, highlighting the country's ongoing efforts to build a transparent and facilitative business environment.

## DK Shivakumar flags fuel inflation, seeks report as LPG prices rise again

**Bengaluru:** The Karnataka government on Sunday waded into the growing controversy over rising fuel costs, with Chief Minister DK Shivakumar seeking a detailed report on the latest LPG price hike and warning that steep increases in industrial gas and diesel prices could have far-reaching consequences for both households and businesses.

The intervention comes after the Centre approved a Rs 29 increase in the price of a 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder, the second hike in just three months, intensifying concerns over the mounting burden on consumers already grappling with inflationary pressures.

Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Shivakumar said the impact of the revision extended beyond household kitchens.

"I have heard the report on the increase in LPG prices. More worrying is the alarming rise in industrial gas and industrial diesel prices. I am seeking a detailed report and will speak on the issue tomorrow," he said.

His remarks signal that the Congress government may seek to sharpen its attack on the Centre over rising fuel prices, a politically sensitive issue with implications for household budgets, transport costs and industrial production.

The latest increase follows a Rs 60 hike announced on March 7, taking the cumulative rise in domestic LPG prices to Rs 89 in three months.

Industry observers say higher industrial fuel costs could trigger a ripple effect across sectors, potentially



pushing up manufacturing, logistics and food prices at a time when businesses are already facing cost pressures.

The Centre, however, has defended the revision, citing a sharp rise in global LPG prices amid continuing tensions in West Asia. It has maintained that cooking gas prices in India remain among the lowest in the world despite recent increases.

Government sources have also pointed out that state-owned oil marketing companies were incurring losses of about Rs 703 on every domestic LPG cylinder sold before the latest revision.

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## UP Tourism showcases Lucknow's Heritage to future civil administrators

**Lucknow:** The Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (UP-STDC) organised a special Lucknow Darshan familiarisation tour for 107 State Service Trainee Officers participating in the 88th Basic Training Programme for Promoted Deputy Collectors, providing them with an opportunity to explore the cultural, historical and tourism heritage of the state capital.

The initiative was designed to offer trainee officers an immersive understanding of Uttar Pradesh's rich legacy, enabling them to experience firsthand the historical monuments, architectural marvels and cultural traditions that have shaped the identity of Lucknow over centuries. The familiarisation tour formed part of a broader effort by the state government to integrate cultural awareness into administrative training. Officials believe that future administrators who possess a deeper understanding of the state's heritage can contribute more effectively to its preservation, promotion and development.

Addressing the significance of the programme, Uttar Pradesh Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said such exposure visits help officers appreciate the vast cultural wealth of the

state while also familiarising them with the tourism potential that exists across different regions of Uttar Pradesh.

He noted that Uttar Pradesh is home to a unique blend of history, culture, spirituality and architectural excellence. According to the minister, firsthand exposure to these assets allows officers to better understand their value and importance in shaping the state's identity and economic prospects.

During the tour, the trainee officers visited several of Lucknow's most iconic landmarks, beginning with the historic Lucknow Residency, a site closely associated with the events of the Revolt of 1857. The visit offered participants insights into one of the most significant chapters of India's freedom struggle.

The officers also explored the renowned Bara Imambara, one of Lucknow's most celebrated architectural masterpieces. Known for its grand design, intricate construction and historical significance, the monument provided participants with an opportunity to appreciate the engineering brilliance of the Nawabi era.

Another major attraction on the itinerary was the majestic Roomi Gate, often described as the symbol of Lucknow. The imposing gateway, built during the

reign of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula, showcased the city's rich architectural heritage and reflected the grandeur of Awadhi culture.

The tour further included visits to the Chota Imambara, the historic Picture Gallery and the Clock Tower. These monuments offered trainee officers a comprehensive understanding of Lucknow's artistic traditions, royal history and distinctive architectural styles that continue to attract tourists from across the country and abroad.

In addition to the city's historical monuments, the participants also visited the Kukrail Picnic Spot. The visit provided them with a different perspective of Lucknow, highlighting the city's natural and recreational attractions alongside its heritage landmarks.

Officials said the inclusion of Kukrail in the itinerary was aimed at showcasing the importance of ecological conservation and sustainable tourism, while also allowing participants to experience one of the city's popular green spaces. The familiarisation programme received a positive response from the trainee officers, many of whom expressed keen interest in learning about Lucknow's historical evolution, cultural traditions and heritage conservation efforts.

## Integrated residential schools are 'temples of vision': Bhatti Vikramarka

**Khammam:** Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Malu Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday described the Integrated Residential Schools being constructed across the state as "temples of vision" that would shape a brighter future for coming generations.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who inspected the construction works of the Integrated Residential School at

Lakshmiapuram in Bonakal Mandal under Madhira Assembly Constituency in Khammam district, said the Indiramma People's Government was according top priority to education.

During the visit, Bhatti Vikramarka reviewed the progress of various construction works, including the Junior Hostel, Junior and Senior academic blocks, Administrative Block, and

laboratory buildings meant for Mechanical, Science, Mathematics, and Computer studies.

He directed officials and contractors to ensure high-quality construction without compromising on standards and instructed them to expedite the works and complete the project within the stipulated timeframe.

Stating that every rupee spent on education was an

investment in future generations, the Deputy Chief Minister said the government was committed to providing world-class educational infrastructure to students.

He also offered several suggestions to officials regarding the quality and timely completion of laboratory facilities and instructed contractors to make the campus ready for students at the earliest.

## Kamarhati TMC MLA Madan Mitra claims attack on convoy amid midnight protest

**Kolkata:** Trinamool Congress MLA from Kamarhati, Madan Mitra, has alleged that his vehicle was attacked and vandalised by protesters when he visited an area in Kamarhati, in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, following reports of unrest.

According to Mitra, the incident took place late Saturday night in Ward No. 14 of the Kamarhati Municipality, where protests had been underway outside the residence of local councillor Arindam Biswas over alleged cut-money issues.

Mitra said he was on his way to meet the councillor when he was confronted by a large crowd.

Speaking in a Facebook Live video after the incident, the MLA claimed that around 100 to 150 people armed with sticks surrounded his vehicle and aggressively advanced towards him.

He alleged that protesters raised slogans against him, hurled eggs at his vehicle and vandalised it. Mitra also claimed that his driver was assaulted during the incident.

The MLA said he narrowly escaped

serious harm and credited local women residents for helping him take shelter inside a house, where he remained hidden for nearly an hour while the situation remained tense.

Videos of the incident circulated on social media showing scenes of vandalism and people throwing eggs at the vehicle. However, the authenticity of the videos was not independently verified. Mitra alleged that the attack was carried out by BJP-backed miscreants. He claimed that the attackers raised "Jai Shri Ram" slogans and threatened to kill him.

## Union Minister Kishan Reddy slams Revanth Reddy over 'Hitler' remarks

**Hyderabad:** Union Coal and Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy on Sunday launched a sharp attack on A. Revanth Reddy over his reported remarks concerning HYDRAA and the ongoing demolition drives in Hyderabad, accusing the Telangana Chief Minister of endorsing authoritarian methods and displaying an anti-democratic mindset. In a post on social media platform X, Kishan Reddy alleged that the Congress party had historically demonstrated what he described as an "Emergency mindset" and claimed that its leaders continued to exhibit intolerance toward

dissent and criticism. He argued that the party's political approach reflected a tendency to suppress public opinion rather than engage with democratic discourse. The Union minister said that from the period of the Emergency to the present day, the Congress had repeatedly sought to silence voices that disagreed with it. According to him, recent comments attributed to the Telangana Chief Minister reflected the same political culture and raised serious concerns about the government's attitude towards citizens. Kishan Reddy alleged that Revanth Reddy had openly claimed

inspiration from authoritarian figures while discussing the establishment and functioning of HYDRAA, the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency. He contended that such remarks were inappropriate for a leader holding a constitutional position. The BJP leader further criticised comparisons reportedly made between demolition drives in Hyderabad and scenes witnessed in conflict-hit regions. He said references to countries such as Iran and Israel while describing civic enforcement actions in Hyderabad were disturbing and unnecessary.

## Kavitha alleges 'match-fixing politics' in Patancheru, vows fight against pollution and corruption

**Hyderabad:** Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) President K Kavitha on Sunday alleged that "match-fixing politics" was prevailing in Patancheru and vowed to fight for a Telangana free from corruption, collusion, and pollution.

During her visit to Patancheru constituency headquarters, Kavitha garlanded the statue of Dr B R Ambedkar and later hoisted the TRS flag. She also visited the Patancheru Police Station and interacted with local residents and party workers.

Addressing the gathering, Kavitha said Patancheru, once known as Asia's largest industrial corridor, had become synonymous with severe pollution due to the negligence of successive governments over the last three decades.

"The government is indifferent even though the entire region is severely affected by pollution. Pollution has entered the soil up to a depth of one kilometre, making it difficult to construct buildings, drill borewells, or cultivate crops," she alleged.

She said the Manjira River had also been polluted due to industrial waste flowing through Nakka Vagu.



While there was discussion about relocating industries, no attention was being paid to the livelihoods of thou-

sands of workers dependent on them, she added.

Kavitha alleged that both ruling and opposition

leaders had colluded on several issues in the constituency.

"It is not even clear which party the local MLA belongs to. Leaders are becoming financially stronger while the people continue to suffer," she said.

Referring to a recent incident involving the demolition of a school using a bulldozer, Kavitha questioned whether such an act could have taken place without political support and administrative failure. She claimed the district administration responded only after public protests intensified.

## Modern technology, strong prosecution and better coordination will take railway security to new heights: CM Yogi

**Lucknow:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to modernise and strengthen the railway security system across the state, emphasising that it should be technology-driven, efficient and result-oriented. Chairing a high-level review meeting of the Government Railway Police (GRP) on Saturday night, the Chief Minister said Uttar Pradesh handles the largest railway traffic network in the country and therefore requires an advanced security framework capable of ensuring passenger safety at all times.

Highlighting the importance of rail transport in the state, Adityanath noted that lakhs of passengers travel daily through Uttar Pradesh's vast railway network. He said passenger safety, protection of women, prevention of crime and immediate police assistance should remain the top priorities of all agencies associated with railway security and management.

The Chief Minister reiterated the state government's policy of zero tolerance towards crime and anti-social activities. He stated that railway stations, trains and railway premises must remain free from criminal elements and disruptive activities, directing officials to enforce the law firmly and ensure swift action against offenders.

Stressing the role of technology in modern policing, Adityanath instructed authorities to maximise the use of advanced technological tools to strengthen surveillance and security arrangements. He said modern equipment, digital monitoring systems and smart policing methods should be integrated into daily operations to improve effectiveness and response time.

During the meeting, the Director General (Railway) briefed the Chief Minister on the organisational structure of the GRP. Officials informed him that the force, established in 1867, currently

operates through six railway sections, 65 police stations and 89 temporary outposts across Uttar Pradesh. The GRP is responsible for safeguarding more than 3,031 trains, around 1,550 railway stations and over 30 lakh passengers every day.

Reviewing railway track and train security measures, Adityanath directed officials to further enhance coordination among the Railway Administration, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and local police units. He stressed that seamless communication and joint operations among these agencies would significantly improve security preparedness and crime prevention efforts.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that several modern security measures are already being implemented for track protection and train safety. These include joint patrolling exercises, drone-based monitoring, CCTV surveillance, digital verification systems,

inspection of suspicious individuals through a dedicated Inspection App, strengthening informer networks and close monitoring of scrap markets and other sensitive



locations.

Expressing concern over incidents of stone-pelting on trains and railway premises, Adityanath directed the GRP to launch a special campaign aimed at completely eliminating such occurrences. He said even isolated incidents can endanger passengers and damage public property, making preventive action

and community engagement essential.

The meeting was informed that awareness campaigns conducted by the GRP have yielded encourag-

ing results in curbing stone-pelting incidents. Officials highlighted initiatives such as security chaupals, counselling programmes for parents and youth, the Rail Mitra Network, prompt prosecution of offenders and continuous monitoring mechanisms, all of which have contributed to a significant decline in such inci-

dents across several railway divisions. The Chief Minister also reviewed crowd management arrangements at railway stations, especially during festivals, large gatherings, recruitment examinations and other special occasions. He instructed officials to ensure that passengers do not face inconvenience due to overcrowding and directed them to maintain orderly movement within station premises.

To achieve effective crowd control, Adityanath suggested the adoption of measures such as regulated entry and exit points, systematic queue management, regular public announcements, round-the-clock CCTV monitoring and stronger coordination with railway authorities. He said proactive planning is necessary to prevent congestion and ensure smooth passenger movement.

Women's safety was another major focus of the review meeting. Calling it one of the highest priorities of

the state government, the Chief Minister directed officials to create a secure environment for women across the railway network. He emphasised the need for vigilant patrolling, rapid response mechanisms and increased sensitivity while handling complaints involving women passengers.

The Chief Minister also reviewed efforts to combat human trafficking and trace missing children. He directed officials to intensify ongoing rescue and rehabilitation campaigns. According to officials, under Operation Muskaan, the GRP recovered 860 children between January 1 and May 26, 2026. Various awareness and recovery drives have also helped reunite 2,325 missing persons with their families during the period under review. During the meeting, officials informed the Chief Minister that the Hardoi GRP Police Station has become the first ISO 9001-certified GRP police station in North India. The achieve-

ment was highlighted as a significant milestone in improving service quality, administrative efficiency and public confidence in railway policing. Reviewing the prosecution system, Adityanath stressed the importance of ensuring speedy and effective punishment for criminals. He directed the state government to provide necessary support for the deployment of additional manpower and procurement of modern equipment required for the expansion and modernisation of the GRP. He also instructed officials to engage with the Ministry of Railways and the Railway Board to address future requirements. Looking ahead to the proposed Haridwar Ardh Kumbh in 2027, the Chief Minister directed authorities to begin preparations immediately by formulating a comprehensive security and crowd management plan and ensuring timely coordination among all concerned districts and agencies.

## Mumbai Mayor Quickly Cleans Up Garbage-Filled Skate Park in Dadar

**Mumbai** : The municipal corporation quickly cleaned up a popular skate park under the Hindmata Bridge flyover in Dadar after Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde saw a complaint video posted by a young citizen on social media. The youth's video showed thick dust and trash covering the ground, pointing out that beautiful public spaces are built for kids but get ruined due to poor maintenance.

Taking quick action,

Mayor Ritu Tawde visited the spot along with civic officers to inspect the park. She immediately ordered the staff to clean up the mess right away. A special cleanliness drive was launched on the spot, clearing out all the garbage and making the area perfectly safe and ready again for children and young skating enthusiasts to practice their skills.

The local municipal corporation in the bustling metropolis of Mumbai has



recently executed a remarkably swift and highly effective cleanup operation at



a well-known recreational venue situated in the heart of the city.

The target of this intense civic intervention was a popular public skate park nestled directly beneath the expansive structure of the Hindmata Bridge flyover in the vibrant neighborhood of Dadar. This rapid response by the authorities was catalyzed entirely by a modern form of civic activism, showcasing the immense power of digital communication in addressing urban maintenance issues. The immediate transformation of the neglected

space has drawn widespread praise from local residents and urban enthusiasts alike, who value the preservation of dedicated recreational areas. The entire sequence of events began when a conscientious young citizen decided to utilize social media as a platform to voice a pressing grievance regarding the deteriorating state of the neighborhood infrastructure. The youth captured detailed video footage of the skate park, documenting a deeply

concerning scene where thick layers of accumulated dust, dirt, and assorted household trash completely blanketed the concrete surface.

This digital complaint did

not merely showcase the physical mess but also included a poignant commentary from the creator, who highlighted a tragic paradox found in many modern cities.

## Mayor Angry Over Extremely Slow Drain Cleaning Work in Bhiwandi

**Bhiwandi** : Following reports about slow pre-monsoon work, Mayor Narayan Choudhary went out to personally inspect several areas and expressed deep anger at municipal officials for the poor progress of drain cleaning. Even though the heavy monsoon rains are just a few days away, official records revealed that only about 30 to 34 percent of the desilting work has been completed.

During his visits to various locations, the Mayor found huge piles of mud, garbage, and waste blocking the drains, completely contradicting the smooth progress reports submitted by contractors. The Mayor gave a strict warning to the builders and officials about taking legal action for negligence. Public frustration is also rising, and local activists held protests to highlight how this delay will lead to severe street flooding across the city once the rains begin.

The local municipal administration in the industrial city of Bhiwandi has entered a state of intense political and bureaucratic turmoil following a critical intervention by the city's leadership regarding vital infrastructure preparedness. With the annual monsoon season looming just days away, Mayor Narayan Choudhary took the decisive step to launch an unannounced, firsthand field inspection across multiple vulnerable sectors of the city. This urgent tour was prompted by a flurry of alarming reports and mounting public complaints suggesting that the crucial pre-monsoon desilting and drain cleaning operations were lagging drastically behind schedule. Upon conducting these site visits, the Mayor's worst fears were confirmed, prompting an immediate and severe administrative backlash against the engineering and sanitation departments re-

sponsible for safeguarding the city from seasonal disasters.

The scale of the administrative failure became starkly apparent when Mayor Choudhary reviewed the official progress logs and compared them with the grim reality on the ground. According to the internal municipal records, a shockingly low thirty to thirty-four percent of the total required desilting and drain-clearing work had actually been executed across the urban limits.

This dismal statistic stands in direct violation of standard municipal timelines, which dictate that major drainage systems must be entirely cleared of obstruction well before the first monsoon showers hit the region. The revelation that nearly two-thirds of the city's drainage network remains clogged and unserved on the very eve of the heavy rains has sent shock-

waves through the local government, raising serious questions about systemic negligence and lack of oversight.

During his physical inspection of various critical drainage channels and major nullahs, the Mayor witnessed firsthand the severe structural blockages that threaten to paralyze Bhiwandi's urban transit during the rains. Instead of finding cleared pathways for water flow, the Mayor discovered massive, undisturbed mounds of thick mud, silt, accumulated plastic waste, and heavy household garbage choking the city's water veins. This widespread accumulation of solid waste completely contradicted the highly optimistic and smooth progress reports that private contractors had been systematically submitting to the municipal corporation to justify their timelines and secure their financial disbursements.

## Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde Inaugurates Mrinal Tai Gore Flyover in Goregaon

**Mumbai** : Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde today inaugurated the long-awaited 750-metre extension of the Mrinal Tai Gore Flyover in Goregaon, completing a key east-west link that officials say will cut peak-hour travel time to about 15 minutes.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's new four-lane stretch connects the Western Express Highway in Goregaon East directly to the Ram Mandir junction in Goregaon West. It allows motorists from Borivali, Versova and the Jogeshwari-Vikhroli Link Road to bypass three traffic signals on SV Road.

Speaking at the inauguration, Mayor Tawde highlighted that the project was the result of collective efforts towards the development of Mumbai's infrastructure and reflected the city's rapid progress.

Taking to her X account (formerly Twitter),

Ms Tawde said, "In our commitment to make Mumbai's journey faster and safer, today the grand inauguration of the expansion work of the 'Mrinal Tai Gore Flyover' at Goregaon was held. This flyover will serve as an important link connecting the Western Express Highway and S.V. Road."

The inauguration ceremony was attended by MLA Vidya Thakur, MLA Haroon Khan, MLA Amit Satam, Mumbai Deputy Mayor Sanjay Ghadi and other top state government as well as civic officials.

BMC officials said the Rs 248 crore project received administrative approval in 2018 and work began in March 2019, but construction of the approach arms was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, design changes near crematoriums and burial grounds, and night-only work over four major junctions.

## Angry Navi Mumbai Residents Protest Outside Police Station Over Power Cuts

**Navi Mumbai** : Intense frustration over non-stop electricity outages brought a large crowd of local residents out onto the streets to protest outside the Kamothe Police Station. A video that went viral online showed massive crowds gathering late at night to complain about how the constant power failures are completely disrupting their daily routines, household work, and sleep.

The situation became very tense as the crowd grew larger, but police teams quickly stepped in to manage the gathering. Officers were seen talking to the angry citizens, trying to calm them down and promising to look into the issue with the electricity board to prevent the protest from turning into a major law and order problem. Local residents stated that they have

been suffering from these sudden, long electricity cuts for several days.

The local township of Kamothe in Navi Mumbai became the epicenter of intense civic unrest recently when hundreds of deeply frustrated residents took to the streets in a spontaneous late-night demonstration. The massive gathering assembled directly outside the gates of the local Kamothe Police Station to voice their collective anger against the persistent and unpredictable electricity outages that have plagued their neighborhood for several consecutive days.

The sheer volume of citizens participating in the demonstration transformed the immediate vicinity into a highly charged zone, highlighting a growing crisis of public patience regarding basic urban infrastructure

and utility management.

The spark that amplified the visibility of this local grievance was a video captured during the demonstration that rapidly went viral across multiple social media platforms.

The widely shared footage depicted an immense crowd of citizens, including families and elderly residents, standing outside the police station well into the midnight hours under dimly lit streetlights.

The digital documentation served as a powerful testament to the community's desperation, as speakers in the crowd described how the relentless and unannounced power failures have completely shattered their daily routines, brought essential household chores to a standstill, and made peaceful sleep impossible during warm nights.

## Big Fire Tears Through Surbhi Hotel in Mira Bhayandar

**Mira Bhayandar** : A major fire broke out on the ground floor of Surbhi Hotel on Sunday afternoon, causing massive panic as huge flames and thick smoke covered the building. The incident happened around 3:30 pm on June 7, and video clips showed the blaze spreading incredibly fast across the lower sections of the structure.

Local authorities are looking into the situation, and it is strongly suspected that an illegally covered extra space with a temporary roof shed might have helped the fire spread so quickly. While the exact cause of the accident is still being officially checked, the incident has brought back serious worries about unauthorized building extensions in crowded areas. Such illegal structures



make fire hazards much worse and make it very difficult for rescue teams and emergency workers to do their jobs safely.

A major crisis unfolded in the dense suburban landscape of Mira Bhayandar when a sudden and massive fire broke out on the ground floor of the well-known Surbhi Hotel. The incident occurred during a warm Sunday afternoon, catching both hotel staff and near-

by citizens completely off guard as the initial smoke gave way to a violent blaze. Within minutes, what began as a localized spark evolved into a sprawling emergency situation, rapidly generating widespread panic across the busy commercial locality.

The emergency began strictly around 3:30 pm, a time when the surrounding marketplace was bustling with weekend activity.

## Photo of Man Sleeping Across Seats on New Metro Sparks Debate

**Mumbai** : A photograph of a man sleeping across multiple seats inside the newly opened Mumbai Metro 3 Aqua Line has gone viral, starting a huge online discussion about public discipline. In the picture, the commuter is seen lying down flat across four seats, making it impossible for anyone else to use the space around him.

Many citizens pointed out that while this casual behavior is common in old

local trains when they are empty, seeing it inside a brand-new, premium metro service shows a lack of civic responsibility. People online are questioning why passengers continue to treat clean, modern public transport like their personal bedrooms instead of respecting shared public spaces that are meant to provide a disciplined and organized travel experience for everyone.

A photograph capturing a male commuter sleeping

stretched out across multiple seats inside a train carriage on the newly inaugurated Mumbai Metro 3 Aqua Line has quickly gone viral across various social media platforms, igniting an intense public debate regarding the current state of civic discipline in urban spaces. The controversial image clearly shows the individual lying completely flat across a row of four consecutive passenger seats, a posture that effectively rendered the entire

seating section completely unavailable to any other commuters traveling in that specific compartment. This visual evidence of self-centered behavior has sparked widespread irritation among daily transit users who view it as a direct violation of basic commuting etiquette. The online discussion surrounding the photograph has brought to light deep-seated frustrations regarding how citizens interact with modern public infrastructure in

major metropolitan areas. Numerous commentators have pointed out a sharp contrast in passenger behavior, noting that while this highly casual approach to commuting is frequently observed on older, traditional suburban local trains during off-peak hours, it is entirely inappropriate to bring such habits into a brand-new, premium mass transit system. The public consensus indicates that seeing such a blatant disregard for shared

space inside a modern metro coach reflects a profound lack of civic responsibility and social maturity among certain segments of the population. Many internet users are using this viral incident to question why a portion of the traveling public continuously fails to adjust their behavioral patterns when transitioning from older transit systems to highly sophisticated, clean, and modern public transportation networks.

## Huge Water Shortage Hits Thousands of Residents in Bhiwandi Area

**Bhiwandi** : A massive drinking water crisis has hit the Kasara-Mokhavane region, leaving nearly 40,000 to 50,000 local residents struggling to find daily water. The emergency started after the main village water reservoir completely dried up. Local villagers are furious and claim that this is a man-made disaster rather than a natural summer shortage.

The residents allege that a private developer carried out heavy blasting work near the lower section of the dam, which caused structural damage and cracked open leaks in the reservoir, making all the stored water drain out quickly. People are now demanding an independent

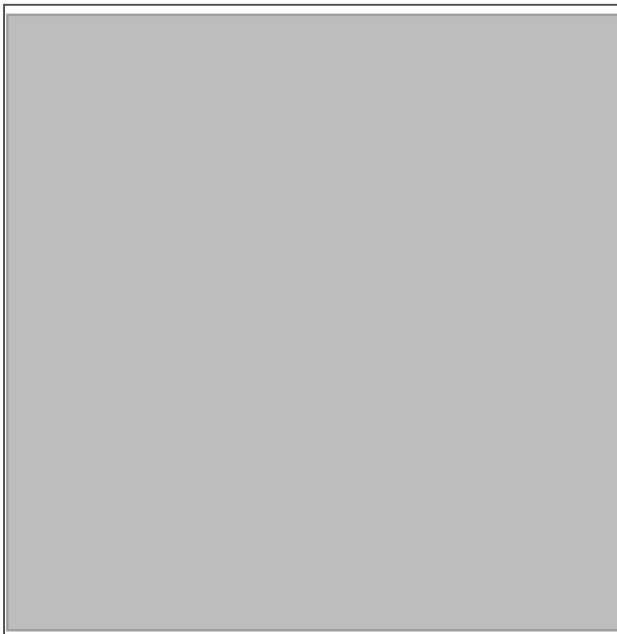
investigation to find out how blasting was allowed in an environmentally sensitive zone.

Local leader Prakash Veer confirmed that requests have been sent to the authorities for immediate alternative water tankers and a professional technical check of the damaged dam.

A massive drinking water crisis has officially gripped the expansive Kasara-Mokhavane region within the Bhiwandi area, plunging a vast population into severe daily hardship. According to local administrative estimates, anywhere between forty thousand and fifty thousand local residents are now actively struggling to

secure enough basic water to meet their essential daily survival needs. This sweeping emergency scenario escalated rapidly after the main village water reservoir, which serves as the primary lifeline for numerous settlements across the rural belt, was found to have completely dried up. The sudden disappearance of the area's primary water source has thrown the entire community into a state of absolute panic and desperation as the summer heat continues to intensify.

The unfolding disaster has sparked intense fury among the local villagers, who are openly refusing to accept the situation as a standard, weather-related seasonal shortage.



## Editorial

### The Perilous Labyrinth of the Gulf Conflict

The geopolitics surrounding the Gulf conflict has reached a critical and deeply concerning juncture; US President Donald Trump's constantly shifting statements and political flip-flops have created global confusion regarding when or how this war might end. A shocking development has recently come to light, revealing that President Trump has launched a scathing attack on his close ally, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. During a private phone conversation, Trump disparagingly labeled Netanyahu as "crazy and unhinged," fiercely criticizing his warmongering policies specifically citing Israel's escalating military operations and the resulting widespread destruction in Lebanon. Iran has taken a firm stance, asserting that Netanyahu's excessive aggression and the attacks on Lebanon pose the greatest obstacle to global peace proposals, making any peace negotiations impossible until Israel completely halts its military operations in the region. Ultimately, it was Netanyahu's flawed policies that dragged the US into this bloody conflict, resulting in immense economic and strategic losses for Washington. Realizing that this alliance is now exacting a heavy price on the global stage, the pragmatic Donald Trump has turned against his own friend. Donald Trump was furious to see that Israel's obstinate policy was jeopardizing the bilateral ceasefire and truce across the Gulf region; he bluntly asked Netanyahu, "Have you actually lost your mind?" This heated verbal exchange was revealed to the global media by the international news site 'Axios,' sparking a debate on the international stage about who is truly mad and who is sane. Trump's conversation illustrates how, when civilized reason vanishes from politics, insults replace reasoned discourse. The personal and political recklessness of these two leaders has pushed the world to the brink of a third world war, causing severe disruptions to international supply chains, acute fuel shortages, and skyrocketing inflation consequences the entire globe is forced to endure. Meanwhile, Iran is adopting an aggressive, uncompromising stance, declaring that it will not surrender under any circumstances and is fully prepared for direct war with the United States. Exasperated by this entire crisis, Trump sharply rebuked Netanyahu, implying in no uncertain terms that were it not for his backing as President, Netanyahu would currently be rotting in prison on various corruption charges.

However, even after such strong warnings from the international community and the United States, Netanyahu remains unyielding, emphatically stating that the military operation against Hezbollah in Lebanon will continue regardless of the circumstances. This clearly indicates a significant rift in the relationship between these two traditional allies. This war of words carries three major global implications: first, the strategic differences between Trump and Netanyahu have intensified sharply. Second, Netanyahu's brutal actions in Lebanon have placed the Trump administration in a legal and moral bind on the global stage, causing Trump significant personal distress. Third, Trump is signaling that Israel should heed American pressure and take at least one step back adopting a stance of de-escalation. If Netanyahu wishes to avoid a crushing defeat in Israel's upcoming general elections, it would be wise for him to stop posturing as if he has already won the war and instead agree to an immediate ceasefire. Failure to defuse this tension in time poses a serious risk that this entire political gamble could backfire on him. From the perspective of international foreign policy, this widening political chasm and lack of trust between the US and Israel play right into Iran's hands, allowing Tehran to reap direct strategic benefits. Iran has posed a highly valid and legitimate question to Trump: how can Netanyahu order successive airstrikes on Lebanon while delicate ceasefire negotiations are simultaneously underway on the international stage? Iran has held direct US covert military support responsible for this aggressive act by Israel, arguing internationally that the move constitutes a blatant violation of the official ceasefire. Exasperated by this, Trump has effectively cornered Netanyahu within the constraints of international law.

Significantly, Israel persisted with fierce attacks on Lebanon even after the US President's stern warning, resulting in the tragic deaths of eight innocent Lebanese civilians.

It is entirely natural for Iran to become increasingly agitated and aggressive as a result. If Donald Trump were to truly withdraw his backing from Benjamin Netanyahu, the latter would find himself in a dire predicament within his own country. On one hand, his domestic political adversaries would rise up against him, while on the other, the corruption inquiry pending against him in the Knesset (parliament) would likely accelerate, potentially leading to his imprisonment. If the Israeli elections postponed due to the war-like situation were to take place amidst this political turmoil, Netanyahu's party would suffer a crushing blow from voters, and his political standing would be shattered.

Therefore, his true personal and national interest lies in setting aside his ego and aligning with Trump.

With great diplomatic acumen, Iran has cast a wide net proposing a 'limited agreement' before US foreign policy; it will be intriguing to see whether Trump, the 'businessman,' takes the bait. The demands Iran has placed before the US are highly significant and strategic. Iran's primary condition is the immediate cessation of military conflicts and Israeli attacks across all fronts, including Lebanon.

Furthermore, they have stipulated that the US must immediately lift the economic and naval blockade imposed in the Gulf, thereby enabling Iran to officially supply crude oil to the international market. Most importantly, they have demanded that the billions of dollars in Iranian revenue and funds frozen in American banks during the period of US-imposed economic sanctions be immediately released to Iran. Thus, it must be said that Iran has, for the time being, succeeded in making the US dance to its tune.

# Record 50 GW + renewable capacity integration in a year

The Consultative Committee meeting for the Ministry of Power, was held today in Chandigarh. The meeting on the subject of 'Grid Stability' was chaired by Shri Manohar Lal, Union Minister for Power.

The meeting was attended by the Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State for Power, Member of Parliaments (MPs) who are members of the Consultative Committee, Secretary, Ministry of Power, and senior representatives from key power sector institutions including the Central Electricity Authority, Grid Controller of India Limited and Central Transmission Utility of India Limited.

The Committee deliberated on the emerging requirements of grid stability in view of India's growing electricity demand, large-scale renewable energy integration and increasing share of inverter-based generation resources and bulk loads. Discussions covered secure renewable integration, transmission strengthening, energy storage, dynamic reactive power support, grid flexibility, compliance with technical standards, forecasting, power quality and resili-

ence of the grid.

It was noted that grid stability is central to energy security and that India's

of STATCOMs and synchronous condensers, PMU-based monitoring, black-start mock drills, and

based generation resources and bulk loads were appreciated: Avoiding mismatch between commissioning of

complexes to optimize transmission investments. Planning and deployment of equipment such as

Periodic and timely review of technical standards for new technologies such as battery energy storage systems, grid-forming inverters, electrolyzers and data centre loads.

Strengthening compliance monitoring through periodic self-audit and compliance reporting by grid-connected entities.

Improving renewable energy forecasting through better weather data, calibration and maintenance of weather stations, and installation of automatic weather stations in renewable energy plants.

Enhancing grid resilience through strengthening of transmission and distribution infrastructure in weather-prone corridors, maintaining emergency restoration systems and augmenting black-start capability for faster restoration.

Developing a suitable framework for power quality and harmonics assessment in view of increasing penetration of inverter-based resources.

The meeting concluded with a resolve to work collectively towards a clean, reliable, flexible, secure and resilient Indian grid.



clean energy transition must be supported by a reliable, flexible and resilient power grid.

Members appreciated the initiatives already being taken, including resource adequacy planning, ancillary services, energy storage promotion, deployment

strengthening of technical standards. Committee appreciated the record renewable capacity integration of more than 50 GW in a year.

The following actions for ensuring grid stability in the Indian grid with large penetration of inverter-

transmission lines and RE generation projects to avoid curtailment. Promoting pumped storage projects for long-duration storage to ensure resource adequacy and provide inertial support.

Encouraging suitable bulk consumers closer to large renewable generation

STATCOMs and synchronous condensers for voltage stability and system strength support.

Establishing suitable regulatory and commercial mechanisms to harness flexibility services from renewable energy sources and storage systems.

## Third Mountain Tunnel Breakthrough Achieved in Maharashtra for Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project



A major engineering milestone has been achieved in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project with the successful breakthrough of the third mountain tunnel (MT-07) at Ambesari village in Dahanu Taluka of Palghar district, Maharashtra.

With this achievement, three mountain tunnel breakthroughs have now been completed in Maharashtra within the last five months, reflecting rapid progress in one of the most technically challenging sections of India's first

high-speed rail corridor.

The newly completed MT-07 mountain tunnel is 417 metres long and 14.4 metres wide, designed to accommodate both up and down tracks of the Bullet Train corridor. The tunnel was excavated through a controlled drilling and blasting method from both ends, supported by advanced engineering and safety protocols.

Throughout the excavation process, sophisticated monitoring systems and geotechnical instruments were deployed to ensure

structural stability, worker safety and precision execution. Real-time monitoring arrangements including Surface Settlement Points (SSP), 3D targets, strain gauges and seismographs continuously monitored vibrations, tunnel behaviour and surrounding structures. Comprehensive worker-safety measures including ventilation systems, fire-safety arrangements, controlled access and continuous geotechnical supervision were maintained during tunnelling operations.

The latest breakthrough builds upon earlier milestones achieved in the Maharashtra section of the project. The first mountain tunnel breakthrough (MT-05), spanning 1.5 km, was achieved near Saphale in Palghar district on 2 January 2026, marking the first successful mountain tunnel breakthrough for the Bullet Train Project in Maharashtra. This was followed by the second breakthrough (MT-06) on 3 February 2026, involving a 454-metre-long tunnel excavated using New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM), resulting in two breakthroughs being achieved within about one month in Palghar district.

Among the seven mountain tunnels under construction in Ma-

hharashtra, MT-05, MT-06 and MT-07 have now achieved breakthroughs, MT-08 (350 metre) already achieved breakthrough on 5 October 2023, MT-03 has crossed 80% excavation progress, MT-04 has reached nearly 60% progress, while MT-01 and MT-02 are progressing steadily. Of the total eight mountain tunnels in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project, seven are located in Palghar district of Maharashtra and one in Valsad district of Gujarat, where tunnelling work has already been com-



pleted. All three mountain tunnels between Vapi and Boisar Bullet Train stations have been successfully ex-

cavated. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project continues to drive adoption of advanced tunnelling, monitoring and construction technologies, strengthening In-

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project continues to drive adoption of advanced tunnelling, monitoring and construction technologies, strengthening In-

dia's capabilities in high-speed rail infrastructure and laying the foundation for safe, modern and future-ready rail mobility.

## Roadmap for Closing Skills Gaps and Strengthening India's Position as a Global Talent Hub

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with the World Economic Forum (WEF), today convened the High-Level Roundtable of the India Skills Accelerator (ISA) in New Delhi under the theme "From Insight to Action: Closing Skills Gaps for Growth." The roundtable brought together leaders from government, industry, academia, international organizations and development partners to deliberate on priority actions required to bridge emerging skills gaps and strengthen India's role as a global talent hub.

The India Skills Accelerator, announced in January 2026 following the approval of the Union Cabinet, is hosted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and forms part of the World Economic Forum's Global Accelerators Network. The initiative seeks to foster public-private collaboration to align skilling systems with evolving labour market needs, develop in-

novative skills financing models and accelerate workforce readiness in emerging sectors including artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, supply chains, and the green economy.

The roundtable was co-chaired by Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India; Dr. Sukanta Majumdar, Minister of State for Education and Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India; Ms. Shobana Kamineni, Executive Chairperson, Apollo HealthCo Limited; and Mr. Sanjiv Bajaj, Chairman and Managing Director, Bajaj Finserv. The Co-Chairs were joined by Mr. Mirek Dušek, Managing Director, World Economic Forum.

The discussions focused on identifying the key forces shaping India's labour market, validating priority interventions to address critical skills gaps, and building a coalition of

stakeholders committed to advancing the India Skills Accelerator agenda.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, said: "India's demographic strength can become the world's greatest growth engine if we are able to continuously align skills with the evolving demands of technology, industry and society. The India Skills Accelerator represents a new model of collaboration where government, industry, academia and global institutions come together not merely to discuss challenges, but to co-create solutions. As India advances towards Viksit Bharat 2047, our focus must be on building agile, future-ready and globally competitive talent that can power innovation and growth both within the country and across the world."

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Sukanta Majum-

dar, Minister of State for Education and Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India, said: "The future of education and skilling lies in deeper integration between learning and employability. As technologies transform industries at an unprecedented pace, it is imperative that our institutions equip learners not only with knowledge but also with relevant skills, adaptability and a lifelong learning mindset. Through collaborative platforms such as the India Skills Accelerator, we can build pathways that prepare our youth for opportunities in emerging sectors and contribute meaningfully to India's growth story."

Ms. Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director, World Economic Forum, said "India is in a strong position to shape the future of the global workforce. Realizing this opportunity requires strong collaboration between government, industry and education stakeholders to ensure skills systems keep pace with

economic and technological change. The India Skills Accelerator is an important platform to strengthen this coordination, align workforce development with industry demand, and help build a more inclusive, resilient and future-ready economy."

The roundtable concluded with a shared commitment from stakeholders to advance priority actions through structured public-private collaboration, with a focus on workforce transformation, skills financing, emerging technologies and inclusive growth. The outcomes of the deliberations will inform the implementation roadmap of the India Skills Accelerator and support India's efforts to strengthen its position as a leading global talent hub.

The roundtable witnessed participation from a diverse group of leaders representing government, industry, academia and international organisations. Industry leaders included representatives from Apollo Hospitals, Bajaj Finserv, JSW Group, Mahindra

Group, RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro, Reliance Foundation, ReNew, IBM, Bharat Seats Ltd., and Reliance Industries Limited. The discussions were further enriched by participation from the World Economic Forum, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), FICCI, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), IITDelhi-FIT, AICTE, UGC, CBSE, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of External Affairs, NCVET, NSDC, MSDE and other key stakeholders from India's skilling and workforce ecosystem.

The India Skills Accelerator is part of the World Economic Forum's Global Accelerators Network and is hosted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The platform aims to close skills gaps, strengthen workforce readiness and foster innovative multi-stakeholder solutions to support India's economic growth and competitiveness in the future of work.

## CM Fadnavis unveils Shivaji Maharaj statue at New Mumbai International Airport

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday unveiled a 12-foot-tall bronze bust of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at the New Mumbai International Airport to mark the occasion of Shivrajy-abhishek Din.

The unveiling ceremony was held as Maharashtra commemorated the historic day on which Shivaji Maharaj was crowned as Chhatrapati, an event that remains one of the most significant milestones in the state's history and cultural identity. Addressing those present at the event, Fadnavis said he had earlier expressed the desire that the new international airport, located in Raigad district, should prominently feature a statue of Shivaji Maharaj. He noted that the installation of the bronze bust fulfilled that commitment.

The Chief Minister stated that the statue would serve as a source of inspira-



tion for passengers arriving at and departing from the airport.

According to him, both domestic and international travellers would be able to draw motivation and energy from the presence of the iconic Maratha ruler's likeness.

He said the installation reflects the state's commit-

ment to honouring the legacy of Shivaji Maharaj and ensuring that future generations remain connected with the values of courage, leadership and good governance associated with his life.

The 12-foot bronze bust has been placed at a prominent location within the airport complex, making it one of the notable visual land-

marks for visitors entering the upcoming aviation hub. Paying tribute on social media, Fadnavis described Shivaji Maharaj as the visionary and indomitable founder of Hindavi Swarajya. He offered his salutations to the legendary ruler on the auspicious occasion of Shivrajyabhishek Din. In another message, the Chief Minister

said the state was honouring the unparalleled legacy of the founder of Hindavi Swarajya, whose contribution to Indian history continues to inspire millions across generations. Shivrajyabhishek Din is observed annually to commemorate the coronation of Shivaji Maharaj as Chhatrapati on June 6, 1674, at Raigad Fort. The event marked the formal establishment of his sovereign rule and the consolidation of the Maratha kingdom. Historians regard the coronation as a defining moment in Indian history, as it symbolised the emergence of a powerful indigenous kingdom founded on principles of self-rule, administrative efficiency and military strength. Shivaji Maharaj is widely remembered for his visionary leadership, strategic military campaigns, progressive governance and efforts to establish a strong and independent state in western India during the 17th century.

## NCP (SP) Chief Pawar suggests use of AI, Modern Tech to Prevent Incidents like NEET Paper Leak

**Pune:** Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday suggested that the controversy surrounding the alleged NEET paper leak could have been prevented through the timely use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced technology in the examination process.

Commenting on the issue, Pawar said that the adoption of modern technological systems during the conduct of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) could have helped eliminate vulnerabilities and reduced the possibility of irregularities. According to him, greater reliance on technology would have strengthened transparency and security in the examination process.

The veteran leader argued that if Artificial Intelligence-based monitoring and other digital safeguards had been implemented earlier, the country would not have found itself confronting the current situation. He stressed



that technology can play a critical role in ensuring fairness and credibility in large-scale competitive examinations.

Pawar observed that the alleged paper leak controversy has raised serious concerns about the integrity of examination systems and highlighted the need for stronger mechanisms to prevent malpractice. He said technological interventions can significantly improve oversight and reduce opportunities for human interference. Speaking more broadly about the growing role of Artificial Intelligence,

Pawar noted that AI is bringing transformative changes across multiple sectors, ranging from agriculture and education to healthcare and administration. He said India should accelerate efforts to integrate emerging technologies into governance and public services. According to him, the benefits of AI are already becoming visible in several fields, helping improve efficiency, transparency and decision-making. He emphasised that policymakers and institutions must embrace technological innovation to address complex challenges more effectively.

## Builder accused of unauthorized constructions arrested

**Mumbai:** A builder Salman Dolare, accused in multiple cases related to unauthorized constructions and alleged fraud, was arrested in Kalyan town in adjoining Thane district, police said here on Sunday.

He was absconding since last nearly two years after several cases were registered under various provisions, including the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act (MRT-PA) and cheating-related offences. The arrest was carried out by Bazaar Peth Police. Investigators allege that Dolare constructed and marketed flats in four disputed residential buildings-- Yusuf Heights, JM Tower, Zamzam Villa and Mariam Tower-- located in



different parts of Kalyan using forged and misleading documents, resulting in substantial financial losses for hundreds of homebuyers.

In a similar case Vishunagar Police last week arrested a builder Prafull Gore, accused of erecting a seven-storey residential

building using allegedly forged documents and fake regulatory approvals.

The arrests have intensified concerns among more than 100 families residing in the buildings, who now face the possibility of losing their homes if demolition proceedings are initiated.

**Nashik:** Directives were issued on Saturday for the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India to begin procuring onions produced by farmers in Nashik district at the guaranteed price from all Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) starting June 8.

The decision was taken during a review meeting held at the District Collector's office in Nashik, where representatives of the state government, public representatives, procurement agencies and market committees discussed arrangements for the large-scale

procurement drive aimed at supporting onion growers.

The meeting was attended virtually by Maharashtra ministers Chhagan Bhujbal, Dadaji Bhuse and Narhari Zirwal, along with Member of Parliament Bhaskar Bhagare and several legislators from the region.

Present at the Collector's office were Member of Parliament Shobha Bachhav, MLAs Rahul Aher, Dilip Bankar and Hiranman Khoskar, Nashik District Collector Ayush Prasad, chairpersons of various APMCs, senior NAFED officials and representatives of implementing agencies.

During the meeting, officials directed NAFED to

commence procurement operations without delay and ensure that all necessary infrastructure, manpower and logistical arrangements are in place before procurement begins.

The agencies were instructed to complete all procedural formalities and operational preparations by Sunday so that procurement activities could start smoothly across the district from Monday.

Given Nashik's status as one of India's largest onion-producing regions, participants stressed the need for an extensive procurement network. It was decided that procurement centres should be established at all

APMCs in the district to ensure easy access for farmers.

Officials said that onion cultivation is a major source of income for thousands of farmers in Nashik and surrounding areas.

Therefore, procurement agencies must ensure that growers do not face unnecessary delays, administrative hurdles or transportation difficulties while selling their produce.

The meeting also clarified that NAFED would bear transportation costs incurred in shifting procured onions from market yards to designated warehouses. In addition, labour charges associated with handling and storage of the produce would also be

covered by the agency.

Participants emphasised that procurement should be carried out strictly at the notified rates and according to the targets assigned by the government. Agencies were instructed to take all necessary measures to facilitate smooth procurement and maintain transparency throughout the process.

To increase awareness among farmers, it was decided that informational signboards explaining procurement procedures, eligibility conditions and pricing details would be displayed prominently at market committees. The APMCs assured full cooperation in implementing the programme.

## 3,000 kg of "Tarri Poha" prepared by chef Vishnu Manohar sets world record

**Nagpur:** Internationally acclaimed chef Vishnu Manohar on Sunday created a new world record by preparing 3,000 kg of Nagpur's iconic "Tarri Poha" on the occasion of World Poha Day, with the aim of giving global recognition to the city's popular culinary specialty.

The feat was recognised by the World Records Book of India, officials said. The certificate was handed over by World Record

Coordinator Renu Jamdar, while Founder and Chief Editor Sushma Narvekar extended greetings for the initiative.

The event, organised at Vishnuji Ki Rasoi in Bajaj Nagar, witnessed an enthusiastic response from citizens as the large-scale preparation began in the early hours of the day.

Thousands of people were served free Tarri Poha between 6:30 am and 9:30

am, with many gathering at the venue to savour the traditional Nagpur delicacy.

Free tea was also distributed during the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Manohar said the initiative aimed to take the taste and popularity of Nagpur's Tarri Poha beyond national boundaries and establish it on the global culinary map.

"We will continue our efforts to take this pride of Nagpur's food culture to

people across the world," he said.

Manohar dedicated the record to his father, painter Digambar Manohar, on his birth anniversary.

Floral tributes were paid to his portrait and Tarri Poha was offered as naivedya during the event.

The chef credited the team of 'Vishnuji Ki Rasoi' and his associates for the successful execution of the initiative.

## Three family members drown in Kanhan river in Nagpur

**Nagpur:** A tragic outing near the Kanhan River in Nagpur district ended in the death of three members of the same family, including a six-year-old child, after they drowned while attempting to rescue one another on Sunday, police said. The deceased were identified as Chaitanya Bablu Ambade (6), Gautam Rajkumar Ambade (31) and Rohit Kailas Nagdeve (33). According to police, all three belonged to the same extended family and had accompanied relatives on a visit to a temple near the river.

The incident occurred near the Army area in Old Kamptee, located on the banks of the Kanhan River. Family members had travelled to the area for darshan at a Shiva temple and had planned to spend some leisure time together following the visit.

Police said nearly a dozen members of the family were present at the spot when the tragedy unfolded. After offering prayers at the temple, some members moved towards the riverbank, where the child entered the water for a bath. During the outing, six-year-old

Chaitanya reportedly ventured into a deeper section of the river. Family members soon noticed that he was struggling in the water and appeared unable to return to safety. Seeing the child in distress, Gautam Rajkumar Ambade immediately jumped into the river in an effort to rescue him. However, while attempting to reach the boy, he too encountered difficulties in the deep water. As the situation worsened, another relative, Rohit Kailas Nagdeve, entered the river in an attempt to save both Gautam and the child.

## Chandrapur Cancer Hospital hit by ransomware attack, hackers demand Rs 75 lakh

**Chandrapur :** A major cyberattack has reportedly crippled the operations of the Chandrapur Cancer Care Foundation after hackers allegedly encrypted the hospital's entire database and demanded a ransom of nearly Rs 75 lakh in Bitcoin to restore access to critical systems, officials said on Sunday. The incident came to light after the hospital's Information Technology department detected a technical problem in the main server on June 1 at around 7.30 am. What initially appeared to be a routine system malfunction soon turned into a serious cybersecurity incident affecting the institution's digital infrastructure.

According to hospital sources, IT personnel launched an internal investigation after discovering that several systems were not functioning normally. During the examination, staff reportedly encountered a ransomware message displayed on the server, indicating that unauthorized individuals had gained access to the network. Preliminary findings suggest that cybercriminals infiltrated the hospital's systems and encrypted large volumes of data, rendering them inaccessible to hospital administrators and staff. The attack effectively locked the

institution out of its own database and disrupted access to essential records.

Officials said the encrypted data reportedly includes critical patient information, treatment histories, medical records and various administrative documents required for the day-to-day functioning of the hospital.

The attackers allegedly left behind a ransom note demanding payment of 1.23456 Bitcoin in exchange for a decryption key. Based on current cryptocurrency valuations, the amount is estimated to be worth approximately Rs 75 lakh. According to sources familiar with the matter, the cybercriminals claimed that access to the data would be restored only after the ransom was paid. They also reportedly assured hospital authorities that the compromised information would not be shared or leaked if their demands were met. The incident has had a significant impact on the hospital's information management systems. Sources said staff members have faced difficulties accessing patient histories, treatment schedules, diagnostic information and other records that are essential for providing medical services. Administrative operations have also reportedly

been disrupted as employees struggle to access digital databases and internal systems that support routine hospital functions.

The cyberattack has raised concerns among healthcare professionals and cybersecurity experts about the vulnerability of medical institutions to ransomware attacks. Hospitals increasingly rely on digital infrastructure to manage patient care, making them attractive targets for cybercriminals.

Experts note that ransomware attacks can have particularly serious consequences in healthcare settings because delays in accessing medical information can affect patient treatment, scheduling and emergency response capabilities. While hospital authorities are working to assess the full extent of the breach, officials have not yet disclosed whether any backup systems remain available or whether patient data can be restored without complying with the ransom demand. Cybersecurity specialists are expected to examine the hospital's network architecture, server logs and security controls to determine how the attackers gained access to the system and whether any sensitive information was exfiltrated before encryption occurred.

## Kharge Committee formed for revised draft on Devasthan land: Maha Minister Bawankule

**Nashik:** Maharashtra Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Saturday announced that the state government has decided to put on hold the current draft of the proposed 'Maharashtra Devasthan Inam Abolition Act, 2026' and constitute a high-level committee to prepare a revised version of the legislation after considering objections and suggestions received from various stakeholders.

Addressing a press conference in Nagpur, Bawankule said the proposed law aims to protect the rights of Devasthans, or temple trusts, across Maharashtra and address the issue of encroachments on temple lands.

However, in view of the large number of objections and concerns raised regarding the draft legislation, the government has decided to temporarily stay the existing process and undertake a comprehensive review.

The minister said a committee headed by Vikas Kharge, Additional Chief Secretary of the Revenue Department, has been formed to prepare a revised draft after examining all representations submitted by stakeholders.

According to Bawankule, citizens, temple trusts and other interested parties will be able to submit objections and suggestions regarding the revised draft at the offices of district collectors across Maharashtra until September 15, 2026.

He expressed confidence that after completing the consultation process and incorporating necessary changes, the final legislation would be ready for presentation during the state legislature's winter session scheduled to be held in December.

The minister said the original draft of the Act had been placed in the public domain between May 6 and June 5, 2026, inviting suggestions and objections from citizens and institutions.

During this period, the government received a substantial number of responses, prompting a reassessment of certain provisions.

Bawankule stated that confusion had arisen among some sections of society regarding the implications of the proposed law. To address these concerns and ensure greater clarity, the government decided to revisit the draft before moving ahead with the legislative process. Highlighting the signif-



icance of the issue, he said Maharashtra has nearly 5.5 lakh hectares of Devasthan land. Many of these lands were historically granted to temples and religious institutions dating back to the era of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

According to the minister, a large portion of these lands is currently facing encroachments by influential individuals and groups. He said many temple trusts lack the legal and administrative capacity to independently remove such encroachments.

Bawankule said the state government intends to enact a strong legal framework that would help Devasthans protect their properties and reclaim lands wherever required. He added that the government is examining

provisions similar to those available for the protection of lands belonging to the Waqf Board.

At the same time, he clarified that the government is conscious of the complexities surrounding certain categories of land. Special provisions would therefore be incorporated to address cases involving agricultural cultivation spanning generations and lands entangled in long-standing legal disputes.

The minister said the revised legislation would seek to balance the interests of Devasthans, cultivators and other stakeholders while ensuring that the rights of religious institutions are adequately protected.

The committee headed by Vikas Kharge will study all objections, suggestions

and proposed amendments received by June 5 and prepare recommendations for the government. The objective, Bawankule said, is to ensure that the final law is legally sound, transparent and broadly acceptable.

The committee includes the Divisional Commissioners of Pune and Konkan divisions, the District Collectors of Thane and Ahilyanagar, Joint Secretary Manisha Jaybhaye, another Joint or Deputy Secretary nominated by the chairperson, and 15 representatives from various religious shrines across Maharashtra to be nominated by the Revenue Minister. Joint Secretary Kailas Arjun Gaikwad will serve as the Member Secretary.

Bawankule said the Kharge Committee has been asked to submit its report to the government by August 15, 2026. Based on the committee's recommendations, a revised draft of the Maharashtra Devasthan Inam Abolition Act will be published once again in the public domain, allowing citizens and stakeholders another opportunity to review the proposal and submit final objections before the legislation is introduced in the state legislature.

## Marathi Film Industry expresses confidence in Meghraj Rajebhosale's leadership

**Mumbai** : Against the backdrop of the forthcoming quinquennial elections of the All India Marathi Film Corporation, a large gathering of film industry stakeholders organised by the Samarth Panel witnessed an enthusiastic response in Pune, highlighting the growing interest surrounding the corporation's future leadership and direction.

The event brought together a wide spectrum of members from the Marathi film fraternity, including actors, producers, directors, technicians, workers and corporation members. The gathering served as a platform for discussions on the challenges facing the industry and the role of the corporation in addressing them.

The meeting was held in an energetic atmosphere, with participants expressing optimism about the future of the Marathi film industry and the opportunities available to strengthen its institutional framework through collective efforts and effective leadership. Leading the event was producer Meghraj Rajebhosale, who interacted extensively with attendees and outlined the Samarth Panel's vision for the corporation. He presented a roadmap aimed at strengthening the organisation and making it more responsive to the needs of industry stakeholders.

Rajebhosale stated that the panel is committed to addressing a range of issues affecting the Marathi film sec-

tor, including concerns related to artists, technicians, producers and workers. He stressed the need for a transparent, efficient and accountable corporation that can effectively represent the interests of all its members.

According to him, the corporation should play a more proactive role in supporting industry growth, creating opportunities for professionals and ensuring that the concerns of members are addressed in a timely and systematic manner.

Several prominent personalities from the Marathi entertainment industry and allied sectors attended the gathering. Among them was veteran singer Anand Shinde, whose presence drew considerable attention from participants.

The event was also attended by producer Sunil Mahajan, writer Raj Kazi, directors Ajit Shirole and Deepak Kadam, as well as actor Sushant Shelar, who joined discussions concerning the future of the industry. Other notable attendees included producer Bhausaheb Bhoir, actor Sunil Godbole, and social activist Tripti Desai, along with several distinguished representatives from creative, technical and cultural fields.

Participants emphasised that the Marathi film industry stands at a crucial juncture and requires coordinated efforts from all stakeholders to address existing challenges while creating a stronger

foundation for future growth and innovation.

A key theme emerging from the discussions was the importance of supporting artists, technicians and workers who form the backbone of the industry. Attendees stressed that sustainable growth can only be achieved when opportunities and resources are distributed more effectively across all segments of the sector.

Office-bearers of the Samarth Panel assured members that, if elected, they would work closely with artists, producers, technicians and workers to better understand their concerns and implement practical measures aimed at resolving long-standing issues.

The panel also expressed its commitment to introducing new initiatives through the corporation to encourage emerging talent. These proposals include programmes designed to provide opportunities for newcomers, recognise the contributions of artists and strengthen the ecosystem supporting Marathi cinema.

Representatives said the corporation should not only function as an administrative body but also as an institution that actively nurtures talent, promotes creativity and helps create pathways for aspiring filmmakers and performers.

The Samarth Panel is contesting the elections under the slogan "Respect for Artists - Development of the Marathi Film Industry."

## Emraan Hashmi and Vishesh Bhatt wrap Awarapan 2

**Mumbai** : Vishesh Films has announced the completion of principal photography for Awarapan 2, marking a major milestone in the production of the highly anticipated sequel to the 2007 cult action-drama Awarapan. The film is scheduled for a worldwide theatrical release on August 14, 2026.

The sequel brings back Emraan Hashmi in the role of Shivam, the emotionally complex character that earned him widespread appreciation nearly two decades ago. The return of the character has generated considerable excitement among fans who continue to regard the original film as one of Hashmi's most memorable performances.

Directed by Nitin Kakkar, the film has been shot extensively across Rajasthan and several locations in South East Asia. The makers have indicated that the diverse settings will play a significant role in shaping the narrative and visual scale of the sequel.

The completion of principal photography signals the transition of the project into its post-production phase, where editing, visual effects, background score and other finishing work will be undertaken ahead of the film's release next year.

Joining the franchise for the first time is Disha Patani, who stars opposite Emraan Hashmi in the film. Her association with Vishesh Films also marks a new collaboration for the actress, who has established herself as one of the prominent faces of contemporary Hindi cinema.

The screenplay for the film has been penned by Bilal Siddiqui. The



writers and filmmakers have so far kept plot details under wraps, adding to the anticipation surrounding the project.

The film is being produced by Vishesh Bhatt under the banner of Vishesh Films, a production house known for delivering several successful and influential films over the years. The studio has played a significant role in shaping modern Hindi cinema, particularly in the thriller and musical drama genres.

According to the makers, Awarapan 2 aims to build upon the emotional depth and themes that resonated with audiences in the original film while presenting a contemporary story for a new generation of viewers.

The return of Shivam is expected to form the emotional core of the narrative. The character's journey in the first film, marked by redemption, sacrifice and self-discovery, remains one of the key reasons for the enduring popularity of Awarapan among fans.

Released in 2007, the original Awarapan was directed by Mohit Suri

and gradually attained cult status despite a modest initial box-office performance. Over time, the film gained recognition for its storytelling, performances and memorable soundtrack.

The first installment featured a strong ensemble cast that included Shriya Saran, Mrinalini Sharma, Ashutosh Rana, Ashish Vidyarthi, Shaad Randhawa and Purab Kohli in pivotal roles.

One of the defining aspects of Awarapan was its music, which continues to enjoy popularity among listeners. Songs from the film became enduring favourites and contributed significantly to its lasting appeal.

Industry observers believe that the sequel faces the challenge of meeting the expectations of audiences who hold the original film in high regard. At the same time, the return of Emraan Hashmi and the involvement of a fresh creative team provide opportunities to expand the franchise in new directions.

The choice of Rajasthan and international locations in South East Asia suggests that the sequel may feature a broader canvas and a larger visual scale compared to its predecessor, though the makers have not yet disclosed specific story details.

With filming now wrapped and post-production underway, anticipation is expected to grow in the coming months as the makers begin unveiling promotional material. Backed by Vishesh Films and led by Emraan Hashmi and Disha Patani, Awarapan 2 is positioning itself as one of the notable Hindi film releases slated for Independence Day weekend in 2026.

## After Saiyaara, Shaan R Grover completes shoot for new project in Bhopal

**Mumbai** : Actor Shaan R Grover has completed the shooting schedule for his upcoming project in Bhopal, marking the end of an important phase of production. The development comes shortly after the actor received appreciation for his work in Saiyaara, a performance that helped draw attention to his growing body of work. The latest project was filmed extensively across various locations in Bhopal. Known for its historical landmarks, lakes and cultural heritage, the city served as a key backdrop for the production. The makers reportedly utilized several scenic locations in



and around the city to help shape the visual identity and atmosphere of the narrative. While details regarding

the project remain under wraps, the completion of the shoot has generated curiosity among fans eager to see

Shaan's next on-screen appearance. Industry buzz suggests that the actor will be seen in a role that differs from some of his previous work, although an official announcement about the character and storyline is yet to be made.

Shaan's recent performance in Saiyaara introduced him to a wider audience and contributed to growing interest in his upcoming ventures. With filming now wrapped, attention is expected to shift towards post-production and the eventual unveiling of the project's first look and promotional material.

## Parineeti Chopra teases spiritual musical project; devotional song to release on Today

**Mumbai** : Actor and singer Parineeti Chopra has announced a new musical venture that promises to reveal a different dimension of her artistic journey. The actress recently shared on social media that she will soon be releasing a devotional song, generating excitement and curiosity among her fans and followers. The announcement marks a notable departure from the kind of music audiences have previously associated with Parineeti. While she has showcased her vocal talent through film songs, stage performances and special musical projects over the years, a devotional track represents a fresh and meaningful addition to her repertoire. Soon after the announcement, social media was flooded with reactions from fans eager to hear the actress's interpretation of devotional music.

Many praised her willingness to explore new genres and expressed anticipation for the upcoming release. Parineeti has consistently demonstrated her passion for music alongside her acting career. Trained in singing and known for her melodious voice, she has often spoken about how music has remained an integral part of her life even while pursuing a successful career in cinema. Over the years, the actress has earned appreciation for balancing multiple creative pursuits.

Whether through acting performances or musical appearances, she has repeatedly shown her desire to experiment with different forms of artistic expression. Her journey in the entertainment industry has been marked by versatility and growth. Through films such as Amar Singh Chamkila, Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar and Hasee Toh Phasee, Parineeti has portrayed a wide range of characters, earning recognition for her ability to adapt to diverse roles. Alongside her acting achievements, she has continued to nurture her musical interests.

Her previous singing performances have been well received by audiences, helping establish her as one of the few Bollywood actors who actively pursue both acting and singing. The devotional song comes at an important stage in Parineeti's personal life. In October 2025, she and her husband, Raghav Chadha, welcomed their first child, a baby boy named Neer, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the couple. Since embracing motherhood, the actress has been gradually returning to professional commitments while balancing family responsibilities. Rather

than rushing back into a demanding film schedule, she has chosen projects that reflect both her personal interests and evolving creative priorities. One such initiative is her recently launched digital talk show, Mom Talks With Parineeti Chopra. Through the programme, she engages in candid conversations with celebrity parents, discussing parenting experiences, work-life balance and the challenges of raising children in the public eye. The show has allowed Parineeti to connect with audiences in a more personal and relatable manner. By focusing on parenthood and family life, she has expanded her presence beyond films and music into meaningful lifestyle and conversational content. Industry observers view her decision to release a devotional song as part of a broader effort to explore new creative avenues.

The genre often requires emotional depth and sincerity, qualities that many believe could resonate strongly with listeners familiar with her artistic sensibilities.

The project also reflects a growing trend among artists who are experimenting with spiritually themed and devotional content while maintaining mainstream careers. Such ventures often allow performers to connect with audiences on a more personal and emotional level. On the professional front, Parineeti is also preparing for a return to the streaming platform space. She is set to headline an upcoming Netflix mystery thriller

tentatively titled Talaash, which is expected to showcase her in a challenging and emotionally intense role. According to reports, the series will feature Parineeti as a mother searching for answers amid a gripping mystery, offering another opportunity for the actress to demonstrate her range as a performer. With a devotional music release, a successful talk show and a major streaming project in the pipeline, Parineeti appears poised to enter an exciting new phase of her career, blending personal growth with creative exploration.

## Nushratt Bharuccha breaks silence on viral IPL victory video controversy; clarifies 'moaning' claims with proof

**Mumbai** : After finding herself at the centre of an unexpected social media controversy, Nushratt Bharuccha has finally addressed the speculation surrounding a video she shared during Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) historic IPL victory celebration. The actress had posted a clip capturing the moment RCB lifted the IPL trophy. However, while the focus of the video was meant to be the team's win, some social media users claimed to have heard suggestive sounds in the background. The clip quickly went viral, with several netizens alleging that the actress was

moaning and others claiming to hear slapping noises. Responding to the controversy, Nushratt took to her Instagram Stories to set the record straight. Sharing a photograph of the living room and television where she watched the match, she wrote, "Kuch logon ne hadh hi kar di hai. Ek puppy ke rone ki awaaz se itna bawala mach gaya hai (Some people have crossed the limit. Just because of the sound of a puppy crying) and someone has issued a fake clarification also on my behalf. So here's the reality... I was watching the match at my friends house and their young puppy was making these crying 'Sounds'. This is the video made by my friend at the same time with the same sounds from another angle."

The actress further posted additional visuals from the house along with footage of the puppy, reiterating her explanation. "This is the house where I was watching the match. This is the puppy. This is a video from that very night a while later. Fearing exactly what has happened, I was advised to delete that video and I did. People, calm your wild thoughts down! Owing a mobile phone doesn't empower harassment. Do not misinterpret or follow blindly. Think and act responsibly!" With her clarification, Nushratt Bharuccha made it clear that the audio heard in the now-deleted video was unintentionally captured.

exactly what has happened, I was advised to delete that video and I did. People, calm your wild thoughts down! Owing a mobile phone doesn't empower harassment. Do not misinterpret or follow blindly. Think and act responsibly!" With her clarification, Nushratt Bharuccha made it clear that the audio heard in the now-deleted video was unintentionally captured.



## Priya Bapat career experience: "The actor kept kissing me and messaging me despite my discomfort"



**Mumbai** : Actor Priya Bapat has opened up about an uncomfortable experience from the early days of her acting career, revealing how a co-star allegedly crossed professional boundaries during the shooting of one of her first films. Her candid account has reignited conversations about consent, workplace conduct and the importance of

professional boundaries within the entertainment industry. Reflecting on the incident, Priya recalled that the film included a kissing scene that she had questioned from the very beginning. According to the actress, her concern was not about performing an intimate scene but about whether it was necessary for the story and justified within the narrative.

She explained that during script-reading sessions, she repeatedly asked the director why the kiss was required and whether it contributed meaningfully to the plot. Priya said she wanted clarity on the creative purpose of the scene rather than objecting to it on personal grounds.

The actress stated that she has always believed intimate scenes should serve a narrative purpose. She noted that her hesitation stemmed from the feeling that the particular scene did not fit organically into the story being told.

Despite her doubts, Priya eventually agreed to perform the scene. She said she viewed it as an opportunity to overcome her own inhibitions and challenge personal reservations, provided it was part of her professional responsibilities as an actor. According to Priya, she ultimately consented to a single kissing scene in the film after discussions with the director. However, she alleged that the situation became uncomfortable

during filming when the co-star began improvising beyond what had originally been agreed upon.

She claimed that during the shooting of a song sequence, the actor repeatedly kissed her without prior discussion or consent regarding those additional moments. Looking back, Priya admitted that she found herself unsure of how to react or assert her discomfort at the time. The actress acknowledged that being relatively new to the industry contributed to her uncertainty. She said she did not know how to handle the situation or effectively communicate her boundaries in a professional environment where she was still finding her footing. Ac-

cording to Priya, the discomfort did not remain limited to the film set. She alleged that the actor continued contacting her outside working hours and repeatedly invited her to spend time with him despite her lack of interest. She recalled receiving messages asking her to meet for swimming lessons, dinners and breakfasts while they were staying at the same hotel during the shoot. Although they were accommodated in separate rooms, she said the repeated attempts to interact beyond work made her increasingly uncomfortable.

Priya stressed that she clearly communicated her unwillingness to participate in such meetings.

She noted that she had never encountered a similar situation before and felt that such behaviour should not be considered acceptable in a professional setting.

At the time, the actress was filming in Bhopal and frequently spoke to her husband, actor Umesh Kamat, about what she was experiencing. She said these conversations helped her process the situation and seek emotional support. Although she never directly asked him to intervene, Priya revealed that Umesh eventually flew from Mumbai to Bhopal after learning about her discomfort. His decision, she said, was motivated by concern for her well-being.

## Indian men's Hockey team leaves for European Leg of FIH Hockey Pro League 2025-26

**Bengaluru:** The Indian Men's Hockey Team departed from Kempegowda International Airport here on Saturday night for the European leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2025-26, where they will take on some of the top hockey nations in a crucial phase of the tournament.

The Indian contingent is travelling to Brussels, Belgium, via Abu Dhabi, as the team will undergo a preparatory training camp and play a friendly match between June 7 and 9 in Brussels.

The short training block aims to help the squad acclimatise to European conditions ahead of a packed Pro League schedule.

Following the camp in Belgium, the team will move to Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on June 10 for the first phase of their European campaign. India will face Germany and hosts Netherlands in the FIH Hockey Pro League from June 14 to 21 in Rotterdam.

Thereafter, the squad will travel to London, England, where they will take on



Pakistan and England in the second phase of the European leg from 23 to 28 June 2026.

India will play each of the four opponents twice during the tour. The eagerly-awaited matches against Pakistan will be played on June 23 and June 26.

Speaking ahead of the departure, Indian Men's

Hockey Team captain Harmanpreet Singh expressed confidence in the squad's preparations and excitement for the challenges ahead.

"The European leg of the Pro League is always a great test because you are up against some of the best teams in the world in their home conditions. We have prepared well during our

training camp in Bengaluru, and the players are looking forward to competing at the highest level," said Harmanpreet, who returns to lead the side after missing the Australian leg of the FIH Pro League in Hobart due to personal reasons.

"Our objective is to play fearless hockey, remain disciplined in key moments and

continue evolving as a group. The upcoming matches will give us an excellent opportunity to assess ourselves against top-quality opposition and continue building momentum as a team," the captain said.

"Our focus will be on executing our plans consistently, improving with every game and ensuring that we make the most of this tour. The Pro League is an important platform for us to gain experience, strengthen combinations and continue our progress as a unit. We are excited for the challenge and eager to give our best for India," he added.

The Indian team aims to secure valuable points in the Pro League to move up in the standings while continuing to build towards upcoming major international competitions, including the FIH World Cup and the Asian Games later this year.

India will begin their European leg of the FIH Pro League 2025-26 against the Netherlands on June 14 at 7:30 pm IST.

## UCI Pledges Support to Make Pune Grand Tour Cycle Race the World's Fourth Grand Tour

**Lake Garda:** The union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) has pledged its full support to help establish the Pune Grand Tour (PGT) as the world's fourth Grand Tour and position Pune as a leading global sports tourism destination. During a special presentation of the organizing team of PGT before the UCI Management Committee in Lake Garda, Italy, the world governing body for cycling praised the Pune Grand Tour for delivering a race of a quality comparable to the finest cycling events in the world and expressed amazement that an event of such a big scale and international standard was successfully conceived, planned and executed within just six months. The UCI also lauded the exemplary discipline displayed by the more than 2.5 million spectators (largest for any sporting event in India) who attended the five-day event and commended the police and district administration for ensuring exceptional safety and security arrangements despite the unprecedented crowds. Recognizing the race as the first genuine opportunity to cre-

ate a future Grand Tour outside Europe, UCI President David Lappartient extended the organization's full cooperation to support the event's long-term growth, including expertise in urban mobility planning and assistance in strengthening grassroots cycling development programs across India. The Pune Grand Tour received a significant boost on the global cycling stage as the UCI endorsed the event's long-term vision and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting its growth, a release stated on Sunday. A delegation comprising Pune District Collector Jitendra Dudi, Cycling Federation of India (CFI) Secretary General Maninder Pal Singh and Bajaj Auto Director Abhinav Bindra was invited by UCI President David Lappartient to present the remarkable journey and future roadmap of the Pune Grand Tour, whose inaugural edition was successfully held in January 2026. Sharing the key outcomes of the presentation and subsequent interaction with the UCI Management Committee, Jitendra Dudi said, the UCI Management Committee not

only appreciated the quality and execution of the race, but also approved the upgrade of the Pune Grand Tour to UCI 2.1 Status, marking a major milestone in the event's international recognition. The committee also gave its consent for the 2027 edition to be held between January 26 and January 31, allowing the event to incorporate three national holidays, while leaving the final scheduling decision to the Pune district administration. (UCI 2.1 status is a Class 1 stage race classification that attracts a higher caliber of teams, allowing up to 50 per cent of the participants to be elite UCI World Teams. It also features larger prize purses, more UCI ranking points and stricter organizational standards.) Representing the unique partnership between government, federation and corporate stakeholders that delivered the inaugural edition of the race, the delegation of PGT outlined Pune's ambition to establish the Pune Grand Tour among the world's premier cycling events during the presentation to the UCI Management Committee.

# FIFA World Cup Group J preview: Argentina launches title defense as Jordan makes debut

**Washington:** Argentina will launch its title defense in Group J as it bids to become the first team in 64 years to retain the FIFA World Cup. Lionel Scaloni's side is joined by Algeria, returning after a 12-year absence, Austria, back at the finals for the first time since 1998, and tournament debutant Jordan.

Argentina arrives at the tournament as world and continental champion, aiming to win a fourth successive major international competition.

Lionel Scaloni's side cruised through South American qualifying, finishing nine points clear of second-placed Ecuador with 12 wins from 18 matches.

The 48-year-old has built a mature, adaptable 4-3-3 system since taking

over in 2018. Seventeen members of the squad that triumphed in Qatar remain, providing continuity and tournament-winning know-how.

The spine of the team is formidable. Emiliano Martinez provides a commanding last line in goal, Cristian Romero and Lisandro Martinez form an elite Premier League central defensive partnership, and Enzo Fernandez anchors a midfield that blends industry with invention.

Up front, Lautaro Martinez and Julian Alvarez offer contrasting but complementary options, while the supporting cast of Rodrigo De Paul, Alexis Mac Allister and Giovanni Lo Celso ensures Scaloni can adjust to any opponent.

The group stage schedule, playing Algeria in Kansas City, and Austria and Jordan both in Dallas, should present few obstacles for the runaway group favorite.

Star player: Lionel Messi is competing at his sixth World Cup, an all-time record. Now 38, the Argentina captain holds the national records for appearances (198) and goals (116), and has scored 13 times at the global showpiece, making him his country's all-time top scorer in the competition. His quest to finish as the tournament's leading marksman is one of the few honors missing from a collection that already includes the World Cup Golden Ball in 2014 and 2022.

Player to watch: Nico Paz has emerged as one of

the revelations of the European season. The 21-year-old midfielder scored 13 goals and provided



eight assists in 40 appearances for Como, helping the Italian club secure historic qualification for the UEFA Champions League.

A left knee issue slowed his preparation, but the medical staff are confident he will be available for the



opener against Algeria. His creative spark from midfield offers Scaloni a fresh dimension, according to Xinhua. Algeria team: Algeria

returns to the World Cup stage for the first time since its memorable run to the round of 16 at Brazil 2014, where it pushed eventual winner Germany to extra time. Under Bosnian coach Vladimir Petkovic, appointed in early 2024, Algeria qualified with authority, winning eight of its 10 African preliminaries and losing just once. Algeria's greatest strength lies in its attacking variety. Captain Riyad Mahrez provides guile, Mohamed Amoura, who scored 10 goals in qualifying, offers direct running, and teenage prospect Ibrahim Maza supplies unpredictability. The squad's weakness is in goal, where three goalkeepers selected share only 10 caps between them, and a single clean sheet in its last 13

World Cup matches underscores a long-standing vulnerability.

Star player: Mahrez remains the face of Algerian football. Now 35, the Al-Ahli winger captains the side and has declared this will be his final World Cup. A Champions League winner and five-time Premier League champion with Manchester City and Leicester City, Mahrez is his country's second-highest all-time scorer with 38 goals in 114 caps. His touch, vision and set-piece delivery remain Algeria's primary creative weapons, even if he no longer completes 90 minutes.

Player to watch: Maza has already been nicknamed "Mazadona" by supporters for his close control and creative flair. The 20-year-old

Berlin-born playmaker featured in 28 Bundesliga games for Bayer Leverkusen this season, scoring three goals and registering four assists, while also gaining Champions League experience. Having represented Germany at youth level, Maza pledged his international future to Algeria and is the country's most exciting attacking prospect at the tournament.

Austria team: Austria is back at a World Cup for the first time in 28 years, having topped UEFA qualifying Group H ahead of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under German coach Ralf Rangnick, appointed in April 2022, Austria has become one of Europe's most distinctive and aggressive pressing sides.

## Suthar's dream debut powers India's control over AFG on Day 2

**Mullanpur:** A dream debut from Manav Suthar headlined a dominant all-round display as India tightened their grip on the one-off Test against Afghanistan, declaring at 564 for 8 before reducing the visitors to 113 for 5 at stumps on Day Two here on Sunday.

Left-arm spinner Manav Suthar made an immediate impact on his Test debut, striking three times across the day to break Afghanistan's resistance at key moments. He first removed Rahmanullah Gurbaz early in the innings, with Sai Sudharsan taking a sharp catch at slip, setting the tone for India's relentless bowling effort.

He returned later to cap his performance by dismissing Afsar Zazai for 3, taking a simple return catch and completing a memorable debut spell marked by control, accuracy and composure un-

der pressure.

India's dominance, however, was built on a towering batting effort earlier in the day. Resuming at 368 for 3, the hosts quickly took control through a commanding 169-run partnership between skipper Shubman Gill (126) and Rishabh Pant (81). Gill anchored the innings with elegance and patience while Pant provided the aggression, ensuring Afghanistan were kept under constant pressure. India's lower order also made key contributions, with debutant Manav Suthar showing promise with the bat and Washington Sundar playing a crucial stabilising and counter-attacking role with an unbeaten half-century (52\*), ensuring India capitalised fully on their strong position.

Despite a spirited response from Afghanistan pacer Mohammad Saleem Safi, who produced a six-

wicket haul, India never lost control of the game. Safi struck twice in quick succession to remove Gill and Dhruv Jurel, briefly lifting Afghanistan's energy in the field. However, Pant counter-attacked with authority, striking six fours and three sixes in a fluent 81 that pushed India beyond 450 before lunch. The hosts eventually reached 475 for 6 at the interval. Afghanistan's struggle with the ball soon shifted to a battle for survival with the bat. At tea, they were already 28 for 1 after Suthar's early strike, and the pressure only intensified in the post-lunch session.

The passage of play after tea was marked by tight bowling, tense reviews and brief flashes of resistance. Hashmatullah Shahidi survived a caught-behind appeal off Washington Sundar after UltraEdge confirmed a faint inside edge, overturn-

ing the on-field decision.

Rahmat Shah also benefited from a close LBW call earlier, with India losing a review due to inconclusive camera angles caused by sight-screen obstruction. However, Afghanistan's resistance gradually unraveled. Shahidi was dismissed at 32.2 overs when Prasad Krishna trapped him lbw, with ball-tracking confirming the delivery was hitting leg stump. Rahmat Shah fought hard with a fluent 43, including a lofted six off Sundar, but lacked support as wickets fell regularly around him.

Suthar continued to be the constant threat, maintaining control through the middle overs and ensuring Afghanistan never built partnerships. His final strike at 39.5 overs sealed the innings phase, as he removed Afsar Zazai to complete a standout three-wicket haul on debut.

## Srishti Kiran finishes runner-up at ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors

**Bengaluru:** Thirteen-year-old Bengaluru tennis sensation Srishti Kiran continued her remarkable rise on the international junior circuit by finishing runner-up at the prestigious ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors J100 Guatemala City in Guatemala City, Guatemala, further cementing her reputation as one of India's most promising young tennis talents.

The young Indian produced another impressive week of tennis against a strong international field before eventually falling in the final to top seed Ellery Mendell of the United States. Despite the defeat, Srishti's performance throughout the tournament earned widespread praise and highlighted her rapid progress on the global junior circuit.

In the championship match, Srishti fought hard before going down 4-6, 3-6 in a contest that tested both her skill and resilience. The final proved particularly challenging as she struggled with physical discomfort and cramps during the

latter stages of the encounter.

The Indian teenager began the match confidently and showed little sign of nerves despite competing in one of the biggest finals of her young career. She surged to an early 2-0 lead in the opening set and continued to dictate play, eventually extending her advantage to 3-1 against the tournament's top seed. However, Mendell gradually found her rhythm and began to turn the momentum in her favour. The American displayed composure under pressure, winning a series of crucial points to erase the deficit and ultimately capture the first set 6-4.

The second set remained highly competitive, with neither player able to establish clear control. At 3-3, the contest appeared evenly balanced and Srishti looked capable of forcing a decisive third set through her aggressive shot-making and determination. At a crucial stage of the match, Srishti earned two game points that could have shifted momentum significantly in her favour.

Unfortunately for the Indian youngster, the onset of cramps began affecting her movement around the court, making it difficult for her to maintain the same intensity.

As her mobility became restricted, Mendell capitalised on the opportunity and increased the pressure. The top seed used her experience effectively, winning the key exchanges and eventually closing out the second set 6-3 to secure the title. Although she fell short in the final, Srishti's performance in Guatemala represented another major achievement in what has been a breakthrough season. The tournament showcased her ability to compete consistently against some of the best junior players in the world. Entering the event, Srishti was already riding a wave of confidence after capturing five consecutive ITF junior titles. That remarkable winning streak had established her as one of the most in-form players on the circuit and demonstrated her growing maturity as a competitor.

## India dominates medal tally at 1st World Yogasana Championship 2026

**Ahmedabad:** India continued its commanding performance at the inaugural World Yogasana Championship 2026, finishing Day 3 at the top of the medal standings with an extraordinary haul of 30 medals, including 24 gold, five silver and one bronze. The impressive performance further reinforced India's dominance in the sport and highlighted the country's deep-rooted expertise in Yogasana on the international stage.

The championship, currently being held in Ahmedabad, has emerged as a landmark event in the evolution of Yogasana as a competitive global sport. Athletes from numerous countries have gathered to showcase their

skills, transforming the traditional discipline into a high-level international sporting competition.

Indian participants delivered exceptional performances across multiple categories, demonstrating remarkable flexibility, balance, endurance and mental focus. Their consistent success throughout the competition has enabled the host nation to establish a significant lead over the rest of the field.

With 24 gold medals already secured, India has displayed a level of dominance rarely witnessed in international multi-category sporting events. The athletes' performances reflected years of dedicated training and highlighted the country's strong

infrastructure for nurturing Yogasana talent.

The Indian contingent also added five silver medals and one bronze medal to its tally, taking the overall count to 30 medals after three days of competition. This remarkable achievement has placed the country comfortably ahead of its closest rivals in the championship standings.

Occupying second place on the medal table is Singapore, which has accumulated six medals, including two gold, two silver and two bronze.

The country's athletes have delivered commendable performances and emerged as one of the strongest international competitors at the event.

# India, WI in final Women's T20 WC dress rehearsal in Cardiff

**Cardiff:** With the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 just days away, India and the West Indies will use their warm-up clash at Sophia Gardens on Monday to address lingering questions and build momentum ahead of the global showpiece. Though the fixture carries no official significance, it offers both sides a valuable opportunity to fine-tune combinations before the tournament begins. For third-ranked India, the match comes in the aftermath of a disappointing 2-1 T20I series defeat to England, a result that exposed uncertainties in both

batting and bowling departments. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur has indicated that the team management is close to finalising its preferred XI, but experimentation continues as India seek the right balance. The batting order remains a key talking point. Yastika Bhatia, returning from a lengthy injury layoff, was promoted to No. 3 during the England series, prompting a reshuffle that pushed Jimimah Rodrigues down the order while Harmanpreet moved to No. 5. The openers have struggled for consistency, while wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh



is still searching for form in the lower middle order. The warm-up games are expected to provide opportunities to fringe players, with all-rounder Radha Yadav and batter Bharti Fulmali among

those looking to strengthen their claims. Radha's return after nearly a year away from international cricket could be particularly significant, given her experience, fielding prowess and ability to

contribute with the bat. India's pace attack also remains under scrutiny. Renuka Singh Thakur, Arundhati Reddy and Kranti Gaud endured a difficult phase earlier this year, and English conditions are likely to test their discipline and adaptability once again. In contrast, the West Indies arrive in Cardiff buoyed by their recent triseries triumph in Dublin. The Caribbean side secured back-to-back victories early in the tournament before edging past challenges from Ireland and Pakistan to emerge on top through superior net run rate.

## Market valuation of 7 of top-10 most-valued firms erode by Rs 1.25 tn

**New Delhi:** The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 1.25 trillion in a week with the Reliance Industries took the biggest hit.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries dropped Rs 39,718 crore to Rs 17,47,321.40 crore. HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, and State Bank of India were the gainers while on the losing end were Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Hindustan Unilever. ICICI Bank went up Rs 4,484.86 crore to Rs 9,05,074.77 crore and that of HDFC Bank climbed Rs 4,101.47 crore to Rs 11,50,743.31 crore. The mcap of State Bank of India



jumped Rs 12,692.09 crore to Rs 9,02,523.63 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of LIC diminished Rs 14,610.74 crore to Rs 5,05,873.32 crore while

Bajaj Finance lost Rs 9,681.36 crore from its mcap, which stood at Rs 5,53,580.97 crore.

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever declined Rs

5,909.23 crore to Rs 4,98,301.31 crore.

TCS faced an erosion of Rs 20,134.66 crore from its valuation, which stood at Rs 7,95,346.09 crore while

Bharti Airtel's market valuation dipped Rs 18,736.04 crore to Rs 10,96,150.49 crore and that of Larsen & Toubro tumbled Rs 16,880.2 crore to Rs 5,43,956.44 crore.

In a rank-wise analysis, Reliance Industries remained the most-valued domestic firm followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, LIC, and Hindustan Unilever.

The Indian stock market on Friday ended in the red, in a volatile trading session, as investors weighed the Reserve Bank of India's latest inflation and growth projections. At close, Sensex was at 74,243, lower by 117 points or 0.16 per cent while, NSE Nifty ended at 23,366.70, down 49.85 or 0.21 per cent.

## Singareni Raises Telangana's Flag on Global Stage with World Championship Victory: Dy CM Bhatti

**Hyderabad:** Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka today congratulated the Singareni Rescue Team for bringing international recognition to Telangana by emerging as world champions at the prestigious International Mines Rescue Competition held in Zambia.

The rescue team, accompanied by Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) Chairman and Managing Director Dr. Buddha Prakash Jyoti, called on the Deputy Chief Minister at Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Praja Bhavan in Hyderabad and presented the trophies and medals won at the international event.

Congratulating the team members, Bhatti said Singareni had once again demonstrated its leadership in underground mine rescue operations on the global

stage. He expressed happiness that the Singareni Rescue Team secured first place in the Underground Mines Rescue category, outperforming teams from major mining nations including China, Canada, Australia, Poland and Colombia.

Describing the achievement as a matter of pride for Telangana and the country, the Deputy Chief Minister said the victory reflected the high standards of professionalism, dedication and technical expertise maintained by Singareni's rescue personnel. He praised the rescue workers for their courage and commitment, noting that they routinely risk their own lives to save miners during accidents and emergency situations. "The services rendered by rescue personnel are invaluable. Their dedica-

tion and readiness to work under highly challenging conditions have now earned global recognition," he said.

Bhatti further assured that the State government would extend full support to strengthen Singareni and help it emerge not only as a leading coal-producing company but also as a front-runner in various fields of excellence.

He said the international recognition earned by the rescue team highlights the capability and expertise of Singareni employees, who operate in some of the most demanding mining environments. The Deputy Chief Minister said the team's success has enhanced Telangana's reputation in the global mining sector and serves as an inspiration for future generations of mining professionals.

## PM SVANidhi transitioned into institutional platform for financial inclusion: PNB Chief

**New Delhi:** The PM SVANidhi (Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi) scheme has successfully transitioned into an extended institutional platform for financial inclusion in India, said Ashok Chandra, MD & CEO, Punjab National Bank.

"The primary utility of PM SVANidhi lies in its brilliant dismantling of the barriers to formal credit for informal micro-entrepreneurs.

Historically, street vendors were trapped in vicious cycles of high-interest debt from informal moneylenders. PM SVANidhi shattered this paradigm by providing collateral-free working capital loans. Operated as a progressive lending ladder, it incentivizes fiscal discipline," Chandra said.

"Initially, when the scheme was launched, vendors began with a first tranche of up to Rs 10,000, and upon timely repayment, seam-

lessly graduate to a second tranche of up to ₹20,000, and a third of up to Rs 50,000. Backed by a 7 per cent per annum interest subvention credited quarterly to the borrowers' accounts, the scheme makes formal credit incredibly affordable," he added.

As the scheme marked its sixth anniversary on 1st June, 2026, its massive scale, recent structural upgrades, and holistic socio-economic impact offer a definitive blueprint for empowering the bottom of the pyramid, the PNB chief said.

He mentioned that the overwhelming success of the program is vividly reflected in its metrics. Demonstrating the massive scale of India's financial inclusion drive, 75.69 lakh micro-entrepreneurs have been successfully tapped into PM SVANidhi loans as of 29th May 2026, out of which 72.4 per cent are digitally active entrepreneurs.

## India's electronics manufacturing at inflection point amid import dependence, rising demand and policy interventions

**New Delhi:** India's consumer electronics manufacturing sector is entering a critical phase of growth as rising domestic demand, government-backed manufacturing initiatives and stable monetary policy create new opportunities, even as the industry remains vulnerable to global supply-chain disruptions and import dependence.

The challenges facing the sector were underscored by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its June 2026 Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting, which high-

lighted risks arising from elevated crude oil prices, geopolitical tensions in West Asia and persistent global supply-chain uncertainties. These factors, the central bank warned, could contribute to imported inflation and create headwinds for industries dependent on overseas sourcing.

For India's consumer electronics industry, the concerns are particularly significant as a large share of critical components—including semiconductors, display panels, memory chips, sensors and batteries—continue

to be imported. Industry experts say disruptions in global trade routes, currency fluctuations and rising freight costs can have a direct impact on production expenses, inventory management and pricing strategies.

At the same time, the RBI's decision to keep the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent has provided a measure of certainty for manufacturers planning long-term investments.

Commenting on the policy environment, Tushar Tekriwal, Director, Starttron Lifestyles Pvt. Ltd, said,

"The RBI's decision to maintain the repo rate at 5.25 per cent provides manufacturers with greater financing stability for long-term investments. This creates an opportunity to accelerate domestic production of semiconductors, battery cells, display modules and electronic components through strategic investments, technology partnerships and production-linked incentives. Reducing import dependence will not only improve supply-chain resilience but also shield manufacturers from external

shocks such as currency volatility and geopolitical disruptions."

Industry observers note that while India has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing electronics markets, the country's ambition of becoming a global manufacturing hub will require significant investments in domestic component production and technological capabilities. Meanwhile, demand from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities is increasingly becoming a major growth driver for the consumer electronics market.

## Telangana's Singareni refutes KTR's Coal Stock Allegations, Says Only 26.51 Lakh Tonnes Available

**Hyderabad:** State-owned Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) today rejected allegations made by BRS Working President K.T. Rama Rao (KTR) regarding the alleged disappearance of nearly 40 lakh metric tonnes of coal worth around Rs ₹1,600 crore, clarifying that the company had only 26.51 lakh tonnes (2.651 million tonnes) of coal stock as of June 4, 2026.

In a detailed statement, SCCL said the available coal stock at its mines and Coal Handling Plants (CHPs) represented the lowest stock level recorded in the last decade and was being continuously dispatched to consumers through rail and road transport based on demand.

The clarification came a day after KTR, in a letter to union Coal Minister G. Kishan Reddy, sought an immediate and comprehensive investigation into the alleged

disappearance of coal stocks from the company.

SCCL said maintaining coal stocks is a standard operational practice followed by all coal-producing companies to ensure uninterrupted supplies to thermal power stations and other consumers. The company noted that coal stocks generally accumulate during the high-production period from November to May and are subsequently utilized when production is affected by seasonal or operational factors. According to SCCL records, coal stocks stood at 70 lakh tonnes in 2015-16 and 74 lakh tonnes in 2016-17, while the average stock maintained between 2014 and 2024 was around 50 lakh tonnes.

The company emphasized that maintaining adequate coal reserves is particularly critical during the monsoon season to ensure

uninterrupted coal supplies to thermal power stations.

SCCL said it normally seeks to maintain a minimum stock of around 30 lakh tonnes, equivalent to about 15 days' requirement for power plants. Addressing another issue raised by KTR regarding the mandatory Site Visit Certificate requirement in overburden (OB) removal tenders, SCCL defended the policy, stating that it was introduced in May 2025 to ensure contractors fully understand site conditions, safety requirements, scope of work and local operational challenges before bidding.

The company said several contractors in the past had abandoned projects midway or executed works slowly after failing to properly assess geographical, mining and socio-political conditions, leading to production losses, financial setbacks and contractual disputes.

Citing examples such as the Srirampur OC-II and IK OC projects, SCCL said inadequate assessment by contractors had adversely impacted planned coal production targets.

The company maintained that the Site Visit Certificate requirement is neither unique to SCCL nor intended to restrict competition. Similar provisions are already being followed by organizations including GMDC, GIPCL, NMDC, several solar power projects and EPC contracts.

Within SCCL, such certificates were made mandatory for Coal Handling Plant projects in 2018, 2021 and 2023 based on recommendations from CMPDI, a subsidiary of Coal India Limited.

SCCL said all contractors are being facilitated with site visits and certificates are issued to every bidder who visits the project site.

## India's Ease of Doing Business reforms drive investor confidence, digital transformation

**New Delhi:** India's sweeping reforms in governance, regulation and digital infrastructure have significantly strengthened the country's business ecosystem, making it easier to start, operate and expand businesses while boosting investor confidence and global competitiveness. According to a government review released on Saturday, sustained efforts to simplify regulations, reduce compliance burdens and digitise public services have transformed India's business landscape over the past decade. The reforms have helped improve transparency, efficiency and ease of access to markets, credit and government services for entrepreneurs, startups and businesses of all sizes. The impact of these measures is reflected in India's rise in global rankings. The country improved its position in the World Bank's Doing Business Report from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in 2019. India has also strengthened its standing in the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking, moving up from 43rd place in 2021 to 41st in 2025. A major pillar of the reform agenda has been the promotion of entrepreneurship. Since the launch of

the Startup India initiative in 2016, the number of recognised startups has surged from just 502 to over 2.23 lakh by March 2026, generating more than 23.3 lakh direct jobs. Nearly half of these startups have at least one woman director or partner, underlining the growing inclusivity of India's startup ecosystem. Business registration has also become significantly easier through digital platforms such as the SPICE system and MCA21 Version 3, which have streamlined company incorporation and compliance processes. For micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the Udyam Registration Portal has enabled paperless and self-declaration-based registration, helping millions of enterprises enter the formal economy. Property registration and land governance have undergone a digital overhaul through the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme. More than 97 per cent of cadastral maps have been digitised, while over 36 crore land parcels have been assigned a Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN), enhancing transparency and reducing disputes. The government has also fo-

ocused on reducing procedural hurdles in obtaining business permits and clearances. The National Single Window System now integrates approvals across multiple central and state departments, while the PARIVESH portal has substantially reduced the time required for environmental clearances. Market access has improved through initiatives such as the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), PM GatiShakti and advanced logistics platforms. GeM alone has recorded a cumulative transaction value of Rs 18.4 lakh crore, providing opportunities to startups, women entrepreneurs and MSMEs to participate in government procurement. On the financial front, easier access to credit has emerged as a key reform area. Schemes such as the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGT-MSE), Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) and (PMMY) have expanded formal financing to millions of businesses. Since its launch in 2015, PMMY has sanctioned loans worth over Rs 40 lakh crore through more than 57 crore accounts.

# RBI's Reform Push May Attract USD 40 bn Capital Inflows, Support Rupee: SBI Report

**New Delhi:** The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision to keep key interest rates unchanged while unveiling a series of measures to attract foreign capital could pave the way for inflows of at least USD 40 billion, strengthen the rupee and lower borrowing costs, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI).

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), in its latest review, unanimously decided to maintain the repo rate at 5.25 per cent and retain its neutral stance despite growing global uncertainties. At the same time, the central bank introduced a set of reforms aimed at boosting foreign participation in India's financial markets and improving the country's external sector resilience.

SBI Research, in its Ecowrap report, said the RBI's latest policy reflects a careful balancing of inflation concerns and growth

priorities. While the central bank revised its FY27 growth projection downward by 30 basis points to 6.6 per cent, it raised its inflation forecast by 50 basis points to 5.1 per cent amid concerns over global commodity prices, supply-chain disruptions, weather-related uncertainties and the possibility of El Niño conditions affecting agricultural output.

The report noted that the policy language indicated greater vigilance towards inflation and exchange-rate stability. According to SBI, the RBI's emphasis that movements in the rupee are not always aligned with economic fundamentals sends a strong signal against speculative pressures in the currency market. It said such an approach is intended to reinforce confidence and prevent unnecessary volatility in the foreign exchange market.

Among the most significant measures announced by the RBI is the inclusion of newly issued 15-year, 30-year and 40-year government securities under the Fully Accessible Route (FAR), allowing foreign portfolio investors unrestricted access to these instruments. The SBI said the move, combined with tax incentives introduced by the government, is likely to make Indian government bonds significantly more attractive to global investors.

The report observed that foreign investor participation under FAR remains relatively low, with only a small portion of the available limit currently utilized. With substantial investment headroom available, SBI believes the reforms could lead to a sizeable increase in foreign inflows into the government securities market.

According to the report, greater foreign participation

would increase demand for government bonds, improve liquidity in long-term securities, reduce borrowing costs for the government, and provide support to the rupee. It could also strengthen India's case for wider inclusion in global bond indices, further broadening the investor base.

SBI estimated that the tax exemptions available to foreign investors could translate into benefits worth between Rs 4,500 crore and Rs 6,000 crore, enhancing post-tax returns and further encouraging investment in Indian debt markets.

The report said the cumulative impact of the bond market reforms, incentives for overseas borrowing and measures to attract foreign

currency deposits could result in capital inflows exceeding USD 40 billion. Such inflows, it added, could help stabilize the rupee and potentially pull it back toward the 92-93 per dollar range.

The RBI has also announced concessional foreign exchange swap facilities to encourage external commercial borrowings (ECBs) by public sector undertakings until September 30.

The SBI said the initiative is particularly significant as ECB inflows declined sharply in FY26. By lowering the effective cost of overseas borrowing, the scheme is expected to encourage public sector enti-

ties to access international capital markets more aggressively while reducing pressure on domestic funding channels.

Another key measure relates to Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank), or FCNR(B), deposits. The SBI said the RBI's decision to bear hedging costs and certain regulatory expenses will allow banks to offer more attractive returns to non-resident Indians. The report suggested that these incentives could lead to substantial foreign currency inflows, potentially surpassing the USD 34 billion mobilized during the FCNR(B) deposit drive of 2013.

The report also welcomed the RBI's decision to restore the time limit for re-allowance and repatriation of export proceeds to nine months from the temporary 15-month window that had been introduced during the

pandemic. Faster realization of export earnings is expected to improve foreign exchange availability and strengthen external sector liquidity.

On the domestic front, SBI highlighted that credit growth has remained robust despite global headwinds. Bank credit expanded by 16.2 per cent year-on-year as of mid-May 2026, driven by strong lending to retail borrowers, the services sector, MSMEs and large industries. Agricultural credit also continued to register steady growth.

The report further noted that the RBI's proactive liquidity management measures have helped keep the banking system in surplus liquidity territory, although funding conditions have tightened somewhat in recent months. Going forward, the drawdown of government cash balances and the seasonal return of cur-

rency during the monsoon period are expected to support liquidity conditions.

The SBI concluded that the RBI's latest policy package marks a significant shift towards strengthening external sector stability while preserving growth momentum.

The report maintained that the central bank is likely to remain cautious in the coming months and expects a pause in the August monetary policy review, arguing that growth considerations could continue to outweigh the case for an aggressive rate-hiking cycle.

With a combination of monetary prudence and structural reforms, the report said, the RBI has laid the groundwork for stronger capital inflows, improved market confidence and greater resilience in the Indian economy amid an increasingly uncertain global environment.