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## AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan moves SC against Waqf Bill

**Sanjay Kumar**

New Delhi, Apr. 05: Aam Aadmi Party MLA Amanatullah Khan has moved the Supreme Court, challenging the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill,



2025. In his plea, Khan sought that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill be declared as "unconstitutional and being violative of Articles 14, 15, 21, 25, 26, 29, 30 and 300-A of the Constitution" and sought direction for striking it down. "The Bill violates fundamental rights enshrined under Articles 14, 15, 21, 25, 26, 29, 30, and 300-A of the Constitution. It curtails the religious and cultural autonomy of Muslims, enables arbitrary executive interference, and undermines minority

rights to manage their religious and charitable institutions," Khan's plea said. On Friday, Congress MP Mohammad Jawed and AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi moved the apex court, challenging the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, saying it violated the constitutional provisions. Jawed's plea alleged the Bill imposed "arbitrary restrictions" on Waqf properties and their management, undermining the religious autonomy of the Muslim community. The petition, filed through advocate Anas Tanwir, said the proposed law discriminated against the Muslim community by "imposing restrictions that are not present in the governance of other religious endowments". The Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha with 128 members voting in favour and 95 opposing it. It was passed in the Lok Sabha early April 3 with 288 members supporting it and 232 against it. Jawed, a Lok Sabha MP from Kishanganj in Bihar, was a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Bill and has alleged in his plea that the Bill "introduces restrictions on the creation of Waqfs based on the duration of one's religious practice".

## Rahul Gandhi claims Waqf Bill attacks Muslims, sets precedent for other communities

New Delhi, Apr 05: Leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that the Waqf Bill, now passed by Parliament, "attacks Muslims" and "sets a precedent to target other communities in future". In a post on microblogging site X, Gandhi shared an article which claimed that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has now shifted focus to Catholic Church land after the passage of



Waqf Bill. "I had said that the Waqf Bill attacks Muslims now but sets a precedent to target other communities in the future. It didn't take long for the RSS to turn its attention to Christians," the Congress leader wrote, referring to the article. "The Constitution is the only shield that protects our people from such attacks - and it is our collective duty to defend it," Gandhi wrote. On the day Lok Sabha passed the bill, Gandhi had said, "This attack on the Constitution by the RSS, BJP and their allies is aimed at Muslims today but sets a precedent to target other communities in the future." Congress leader KC Venugopal too shared another article pointing to Catholic Church surpassing Waqf Board in landholdings and said.

## Delhi government inks pact with Centre to implement Ayushman Bharat scheme

**Navdeep Singh Sahni**

New Delhi, Apr 05: The Bharatiya Janata Party-led Delhi government

signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Centre on Saturday to implement the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) in the city. The move, which was promised in the BJP manifesto ahead of the Delhi assembly election, was taken to expand people's access to healthcare in the national capital. With this, Delhi has become the 35th state/Union Territory to implement the health insurance scheme. West Bengal is now the only state which has not implemented the scheme. The MoU was signed between the Delhi government and the National Health Authority in the presence of Union

health minister JP Nadda, and Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta, among others. The National Health Authority is the apex body responsible for the



implementation of the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme. The BJP, which came to power in Delhi in February after a gap of more than 26

years, approved the implementation of the scheme at its first cabinet meeting, right after chief minister Rekha Gupta and six of her ministers took the oath of office on February 20. The Ayushman Bharat scheme provides free and cashless treatment for 1,961 medical procedures across 27 specialties, covering the costs of medicines, diagnostic services, hospitalisation, ICU care, surgeries and more. Under it, eligible families in Delhi will receive an annual health coverage of up to ₹10 lakh - ₹5 lakh from the Centre and ₹5 lakh as a top-up from the Delhi government. Following the signing of the MoU, a special campaign will be launched to enrol the beneficiaries under the scheme.

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one stock on the FTSE 100 fell on Friday, with Rolls-Royce, banks and miners among those to suffer the sharpest losses. Mr Trump claimed on Thursday that Sir Keir



was "very happy" with Britain's treatment over tariffs, telling reporters on board Air Force One that the pair "have a very good dialogue". Number 10 contradicted the characterisation, and said the UK is "disappointed" by the President's decision. Asked on Friday whether Mr Trump's characteri-

sation was accurate, a Downing Street spokesman said: "We're disappointed by the tariffs that have been brought in. 'Clearly, there will be an economic impact from the decisions the US has taken, both here and globally, but both the Prime Minister and the Business Secretary have been very clear over the last 24 hours that we will continue to act in the best interests of the UK, and we're prepared evening. 'China's retaliation to Trump's latest round of tariffs means that both sides are not backing down. 'It caps off a horrible week for financial markets and dragged share prices even lower,' AJ Bell investment analyst Dan Coatsworth said. 'The escalation in tariffs is bad for US companies who buy goods from China, and vice versa, because their costs will go up. 'It's also bad for the world in general as we now have a repeat of the heightened geopolitical tensions between the US and China which dominated Trump's first term in office.

## UK PM Keir Starmer in talks with world leaders as stocks fall after Trump's tariffs

**Tejinder Kaur Babbar**

Washington, Apr 05: The UK's FTSE 100 suffered its worst day since the start of the pandemic as Keir Starmer agreed that "like-minded countries must maintain strong relationships" in the wake of Donald Trump's tariffs. Trading across the world has been hammered in the aftermath of the US president unveiling his full range of import taxes on countries around the world. The Prime Minister spoke to the leaders of Australia and Italy on Friday - the first in a series of calls expected with world leaders over the weekend - as nations reel from the economic hit. London's top stock market index shed 419.75 points, or 4.95%, to close at 8,054.98 on Friday, the biggest single-day decline since March 2020 when the index lost more than 600 points in one day. From Saturday, UK goods imported into the US will be subject to a 10% import tax, and the car industry has already been hit with a 25% levy which came into effect in the early hours of Thursday morning. Downing

Street has said that Sir Keir, Anthony Albanese and Giorgia Meloni "all agreed that an all-out trade war would be extremely damaging". Issuing a readout of the separate discussions on Friday, a Downing Street spokesperson said the PM "has been clear the UK's response will be guided by the national interest" and officials will "calmly continue with our preparatory work, rather than rush to retaliate". "He discussed this approach with both leaders, acknowledging that while the global economic landscape has shifted this week, it has been clear for a long time that like-minded countries must maintain strong relationships and dialogue to ensure our mutual security and maintain economic stability," the spokesperson added. "They all agreed that an all-out trade war would be extremely damaging and is in nobody's interests, while agreeing to keep in close contact in the coming days." It is expected that Sir Keir will take further calls with counterparts over the weekend. All but

one stock on the FTSE 100 fell on Friday, with Rolls-Royce, banks and miners among those to suffer the sharpest losses. Mr Trump claimed on Thursday that Sir Keir



was "very happy" with Britain's treatment over tariffs, telling reporters on board Air Force One that the pair "have a very good dialogue". Number 10 contradicted the characterisation, and said the UK is "disappointed" by the President's decision. Asked on Friday whether Mr Trump's characteri-

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## Allahabad High Court Bar Association on Justice Varma's private oath ceremony

**Naresh Malhotra**

New Delhi, Apr 05: The Allahabad High Court Bar Association (AHCBA) wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of the high court, expressing their disapproval towards the allegedly "clandestine" oath-taking ceremony of Justice Yashwant Varma on Saturday, reported news agency ANI. Justice Yashwant Varma's repatriation to Allahabad from the Delhi high court had invited scrutiny from the AHCBA previously as well, with the bar association protesting the Supreme Court Collegium's decision to transfer the judge. Live the Thrill of IPL 2025! ?? Get Ball-by-Ball Updates, Scores & Breaking News. ?? Stay Updated Now! The Chief Justice of India had ordered an in-house inquiry concerning Justice Yashwant Varma, after a fire at his residence in Delhi led to the discovery of piles of unaccounted cash last month. Justice Varma has taken his oath as an Allahabad high court judge in his chambers privately, rather than the usual public event, which involves var-

ious dignitaries and colleagues. In their letter, the AHCBA wrote, "This is to bring to your kind notice that the entire Bar Association is at



pains to learn about the clandestine manner in which Justice Yashwant Varma has been administered the oath of his office at Allahabad." They added, "The High Court Bar

Association passed a resolution saying therein that this oath is against the Constitution of India and, therefore, the members of the Association do not want to be associated with an unconstitutional oath." The lawyers argued that an oath-taking ceremony was an important event in the judicial system and is traditionally conducted in an open court. Thus, without the presence of lawyers, and the majority of the judges of the Allahabad high court, they argued that the oath-taking ceremony was legally and traditionally "fallacious/unacceptable." "We are given to understand that the system is taking every step in a fair and transparent manner, but why this oath is not notified to the Bar is a question which again eroded the trust of people in the judicial system. We unequivocally condemn the manner in which Justice Yashwant Varma was administered oath behind our backs," the bar association said. The AHCBA's president Anil Tiwari, in March, had referred to Justice Yashwant Varma's transfer as "the blackest day in the Indian judicial system."

## 'Opposition to protest if Waqf Bill promotes division': Cong's Sandeep Dikshit

New Delhi, Apr 05: Sandeep Dikshit said that if the government is doing something with the intention of "division and hatred", then the opposition will stage protests. After Congress MP Mohammad



Jawed and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi moved to the Supreme Court challenging the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025, Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit said that if the government is doing something with the intention of "division and hatred", then the opposition will stage protests. "We are the opposition. If we ever see that the government is not doing justice and doing

something with the intention of division and hatred, then we will stage protests. If a law has been made, then we have only one way: going to the Supreme Court. And we have done that..." Dikshit told ANI. Earlier, Congress MP Syed Naseer Hussain criticised the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, passed by Parliament, calling it a "targeted" legislation. Terming the bill as "unconstitutional" and "unfair," Hussain said that despite knowing its issues, the government was "adamant" about passing it. "We believe that it is a constitutional problem and that this bill is unconstitutional and unfair. It is targeted legislation. The debate in both houses was very good. We disagreed with the government. Despite knowing that there would be many issues with the bill in the coming days, the government was adamant about passing it... The opposition fought unitedly," he said. On Friday, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) Member of Parliament Asaduddin Owaisi approached the Supreme Court challenging the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025.

## Stock market slide: Akhilesh Yadav says common people losing money

**ST Correspondent**

Lucknow, Apr. 05: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday said it is very important to pay attention to the slump of India's markets as common people are losing their money and this could cause the economy to sink. In a post on X in Hindi, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister held the central government responsible for this "double vicious circle" of the economy. Indian markets plunged on Friday after US President Donald Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs, including 27 per cent on India, to reduce the trade deficit and boost domestic manufacturing. "It is very important to pay attention to the loss of millions of crores in the country's stock market because the



savings and capital of the common people, who have some extra money to invest and with which they buy goods or services and vehicles and land, is being lost. "These are the things that keep the wheel of buying and selling moving in the market and also the economy. If the money of the common people is lost in the stock market, then both the market and the economy sink," Yadav said in his post. Investors' wealth dropped by Rs 10 lakh crore on Friday as the BSE Sensex slumped over 900 points to crash below the 76,000 level due to an across-the-board sell-off, tracking weak global markets amid growing global trade war fears. The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 930.67 points or 1.22 per cent to settle at 75,364.69. Tracking the weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 9,98,379.46 crore to Rs 4,03,34,886.46 crore (USD 4.73 trillion). Today, when the youth are investing their savings in the stock market, they are also becoming victims of this uncertainty of the market. This is a very dangerous situation for the future of the country's capital market, the SP chief said. "When the youth will suffer losses, they will also shy away from shares and other investments, which will not be a positive signal for the future of the stock market," he said. On the other hand, Yadav said, there are people who neither have money nor jobs since demonetisation and "recession".



## NEWS BOX

## Pharmacy student dies, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan promises justice to bereaved family



**RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM.** Naga Anjali, a 23-year-old pharmacy student who attempted suicide by administering a poisonous injection on March 24, died on Friday while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Rajamahendravaram. Prakashnagar Circle Inspector SK Bajilal confirmed her death and stated that the body was handed over to her parents following a postmortem. The family has taken her remains to their native village in Jeelugumilli mandal of Eluru district. Police have arrested the accused, Deepak, manager of the private hospital.

Deputy CM and JSP chief Pawan Kalyan expressed his condolences to the bereaved family and condemned the incident. He assured the student community that the government would take strict action against those involved in harassing female students. He added that he would discuss the matter with the Home Minister and CM, highlighting the seriousness of the case and the need for justice. Former MP Margani Bharath also demanded that the State government provide compensation to Anjali's family.

## Sircilla weaver crafts gold saree for Ram Navami

**RAJANNA-SIRCILLA.** Veldi Hariprasad, a weaver from Sircilla, has created gold and silk clothes (a saree and shawl) for the celestial wedding at Bhadradi temple during Sri Ram Navami.

Hariprasad spent 10 days weaving the saree, which features images of the Bhadradi temple idols, a conch, and a lotus motif. The names of Hanuman and Garutmanta appear along the border. The entire saree is woven to repeatedly display the verse "Sri Rama Rama Rameti Rame Rame Manoranme Sahasranama Tulyam Ramanama Varana" 51 times.

Hariprasad used one gram of gold and silk thread, resulting in a seven-yard saree weighing 800 grams. He has received appreciation for creating rare sarees for deities and has been offering such sarees during Sri Ram Navami for the past three years. He requested Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to place orders through the Endowments department to support handloom weavers and provide more opportunities. Hariprasad is known for weaving the 'Rajanna Siripattu' saree, which was launched in New Zealand.

Another weaver, Nalla Vijay, produced a saree containing 20 grams of gold, valued at Rs 2.80 lakh. The five-and-a-half-metre saree has been ordered by a businessman from Bellary in Karnataka.

## Seven held in crackdown on cricket betting rackets in Telangana

**NIZAMABAD.** Nizamabad police have cracked down on illegal cricket betting, arresting seven persons from two gangs operating in Nizamabad and Armoor. Several mobile phones and motorbikes were seized from them. The police stated that the accused, who established an illegal betting business, is estimated to be worth over Rs 88 lakh.

Commissioner of Police P Sai Chaitanya presented the accused and case details to the media on Friday. Based on a tip-off, the police arrested four people — Sheikh Mujeeb Ahmed, Sheikh Nadeem, Sheikh Junid and Sheikh Rehan — from Autonagar, Bharathi Rani Colony under Fifth Town Police limits.

Mujeeb admitted that they contacted a man named Sachin from Nanded, Maharashtra, through Shakeel of Salura village. Sachin provided access to online betting apps. Referred to as a "Master", he appointed agents (Bookies), who created user accounts and handled deposits and withdrawals. The agents earned 7% commission by recruiting users. Over 200 youth joined the apps this IPL season, with nearly 5,000 transactions recorded.

The police recovered Rs 50,000 cash, five mobile phones, bank passbooks, one credit card and one debit card. Four more suspects are absconding.

In a separate case in Armoor, the police arrested Gattadi Vadda Gouth, Dayal Sunil and Jaju Ranjith. Five others are absconding. The trio received betting app links from contacts in Haryana and Maharashtra and invested earnings in money-lending, using bikes as collateral. The police seized 34 bikes, mobile phones and Rs 6,000 cash from their possession.

Commissioner Sai Chaitanya stated that betting has been banned by the state government and is being treated as cyber-terrorism. He linked betting to several suicides in the district and appealed to youth to avoid the lure of easy money.

## Indian seafood sector left in rough waters as Trump's tariffs kick in

**India exports vanamai shrimp, black tiger shrimp, squid and cuttle fish to the US market and the country's seafood export stood at Rs 60,524 crore in 2023-24.**

**KOCHI.** The decision of the US administration to impose a 34.26% tariff on Indian marine food products has left the seafood exporters and shrimp farmers in the country in deep distress. Though there is no indication of tariff negotiations, the seafood exporters are hopeful that the US may reduce the tariffs. If the US administration refuses to reduce the reciprocal tax, small producers like Ecuador may take over the US market riding on the tax advantage and India will be the loser as we have a 40% share in the US seafood market.

As per information, the US has decided to impose an anti-dumping duty of 2.49%, countervailing duty of 5.77% and reciprocal tariff of 26% which will raise the tariff to a total of 34.26%. The situation will be advantageous to Ecuador as its tariff is only 13.78%.

"Despite the ban on Indian wild-caught shrimp, the US continues to be the biggest market for Indian seafood products. We have around 35 to 40% share in the US market. The reciprocal tariff of 26% will make our products expensive and there are chances of Ecuador taking over the market. The buyers have already asked us to stop shipping new consignments. Many



consignments are already on the way and we fear the buyers may demand a discount or reject them. There is uncertainty over shipping the inventory in the cold storage. The exporters are forced to stop procurement as we will be forced to reduce the rates," said Seafood Exporters Association of India vice-president, Alex Ninan.

India exports vanamai shrimp, black tiger shrimp, squid and cuttle fish to the US market and the country's seafood export stood at Rs 60,524 crore in 2023-24. The earnings from frozen shrimp export alone stood at Rs 40,013 crore during the period. The export firms in Kerala ship around Rs 8,000 crore worth

seafood products per year and a major share of the products go to the US market.

"We will have to concentrate more on the European and China market as the high reciprocal tax will make our products expensive in the US market. But we cannot afford to lose a market like the US as there is no other country that consumes so much of shrimp. We are hopeful that the US may reduce the reciprocal tariff after talks. Besides, the reduction of duty on feed by the India government will reduce the farmers' production cost by around Rs 30. The buyers, exporters and farmers will have to share the burden," said Seafood Exporters Association Kerala Chapter president M R Premachandra Bhat.

"The reciprocal tariff and anti-dumping duty will affect around 130 export-oriented seafood processing units in Kerala and the thousands of workers in the sector. The Kerala government should send a delegation to Centre to raise Kerala's concern before the Union government," said Kerala Fishermen Coordination Committee president Charles George.

## US Navy finds a taste of home in Visakhapatnam with Tiger Triumph

**The crew members have been immersing themselves in the culture of Vizag while strengthening military cooperation with their Indian counterparts.**

**VISAKHAPATNAM.** From relishing the rich spices of local cuisine to exploring the vibrant sights of the city, US Navy personnel participating in the ongoing Tiger Triumph 2025 exercise in Visakhapatnam are taking home more than just military drills from their visit.

The crew members of USS Comstock (LSD 45) and USS Ralph Johnson (DDG 114), docked at the port as part of the joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) exercise, have been immersing themselves in the culture of Vizag while strengthening military cooperation with their Indian counterparts.

"The colours, culture, food, and the people here are amazing," shared US Navy crew members to TNIE adding, "We have enjoyed everything from street food to full-course buffets, and biryani has definitely been a favourite. The spicy chicken dishes, in particular, are unforgettable."

Apart from the culinary experiences, the sailors expressed their admiration for the city's atmosphere and hospitality. "Vizag is so beautiful.

The exercise has been an incredible experience, and the warmth of the people here has made it even better," they added. The arrival of the US Navy



ships marks an important step in enhancing cooperation between the Indian and US navies. Commander Byron Stocks of USS Comstock, who led a tour of the LSD 45 ship, highlighted the significance of the exercise.

"This is a proud moment for us, and being here for

Tiger Triumph is an honour. This exercise is a responsibility and an opportunity for our navies to work together and exchange expertise," he stated.

Stocks explained that USS Comstock is primarily designed for amphibious operations and humanitarian assistance.

"Our well deck, which spans nearly three-quarters of the ship, allows us to transport significant marine combat power, supplies, and humanitarian aid, including medical supplies and food," he said.

The ship operates with a crew of about 350 and can carry an additional 450 marines. Naval Officer JAC Caesar of USS Ralph Johnson (DDG 114), a guided-missile destroyer commissioned seven years ago, emphasised the importance of the joint operations. "The big focus of this exercise is on amphibious humanitarian aid and disaster response, particularly in collaboration with INS Jalashwa," he noted. As the exercise continues, the visiting naval personnel are not only participating in crucial drills but also taking back memories of a city that welcomed them with open arms.

## Air conditioners to push peak power demand beyond 7,000 MW by 2026-27

**On the other hand, battery systems that allows bulk electricity storage for later use, offer quicker deployment, and greater location flexibility.**

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** Use of air conditioners, induction cookers, and charging of electric vehicles will mainly contribute towards the state's peak electricity demand crossing 7,000 MW by 2026-27, according to a report by the Energy Management Centre (EMC)-Kerala, an agency under the state power department. In the just concluded fiscal year, the peak demand was approximately 5,300 MW.

In the report titled 'Analysing Viability of Energy Storage Systems at the Sub-national Level', EMC has recommended that large-scale battery energy storage systems and pumped storage projects be deployed to handle the rising demand.

ACs will be the prime energy demand driver, registering an increase of 15% in consumption over the next three years, the

report said. This at a time when the state's overall energy consumption is growing at a pace of just 5.1%. From 348 million units (MU) in 2024-25, ACs are projected to consume 400 MU in 2025-26 and 460 MU in 2026-27, registering a cumulative consumption of 1,208 MU over three years.

Notably, induction cooktops are set to edge past EVs by a slight margin to claim the spot for the second major power demand driver by 2026-27. The report noted that the power consumption of induction cooktops is expected to rise by a whopping 80% over the next three years. A cumulative consumption of 340 MU is expected till 2026-27, the report said.

The EMC document noted that annual EV deployment in Kerala is expected to more than double

during the period, reaching more than two lakh units in 2026-27. "The annual EV energy demand is estimated to increase by 29% over the next three years, contributing to an additional 339 MU by FY27," the report pointed out.

## Possible solutions

While recommending pumped storage projects (PSP) and battery energy storage systems (BESS) as possible solutions to meet the rising demand, the EMC report has also carried out a comparative study of the two options. Pumped storage projects involve reuse of water from a higher elevation storage facility to generate power. These are beneficial for long-duration storage over extended lifespans. On the other hand, battery systems that allows bulk electricity storage for later use, offer quicker deployment, and greater location flexibility.

## Receiving death threats over Waqf row: Former chairman of Karnataka State Minorities Commission

**Anwar Manippady told reporters on Friday that he has been receiving threatening calls over the last two days, and he has orally informed Mangaluru City Police Commissioner Anupam Agarwal about the calls.**

**MANGALURU.** Former chairman of Karnataka State Minorities Commission, Anwar Manippady, has sought protection, stating that he has been receiving death threats via internet-based calls.

Manippady told reporters on Friday that he has been receiving threat calls over the last two days and he has orally informed Mangaluru City Police Commissioner Anupam Agarwal about the calls.

"I have been receiving threats for many years. From Wednesday after the Waqf Amendment Bill was passed, I started receiving more calls. Those who made those calls spoke in Marathi, Kannada, English, and Urdu. One person spoke like a foreigner, saying names of leaders of the country have been damaged because of me.

They seemed to be internet calls. They told me, 'I am running out of time'. It is being said that they (Union Government) have come up with an amendment to the bill based on my report on mismanagement of Waqf

properties.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has also mentioned about my report during discussions on the Waqf Amendment Bill. My friends have also asked me to be careful while stepping out," he said, adding that he has also informed Union minister Pralhad Joshi about the calls.

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## 'High command decision on KPCC president not known': PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi

**Calling the BJP's protest over price hikes "laughable", Jarkiholi claimed that the BJP itself had previously raised prices of petrol, diesel, and essentials.**

**BELAGAVI.** Commenting on speculation about the possible nomination of a new KPCC president, PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi said he was unaware of the criterion that the Congress high command was using. While media reports have mentioned that his and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre's names are doing the rounds, he claimed he is not privy to any internal discussions among senior leaders.

Regarding Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara not being invited to the inauguration of the Karnataka Bhavan in New Delhi, Jarkiholi suggested that it may have been a communication gap, and not a major issue. He said he would speak to Parameshwara about it. Calling the BJP's protest over price hikes "laughable",

Jarkiholi claimed that the BJP itself had previously raised prices of petrol, diesel, and essentials. "How many times have fuel prices been hiked over the past decade? The increase in prices at that time triggered the current situation. Why didn't the BJP protest back then?" he questioned.

He explained that the rising population and the need to fund development works have made price hikes inevitable. When asked about protests by the Opposition, Jarkiholi said they should be "scientific" and constructive. He also noted that the newly built Karnataka Bhavan in New Delhi now has 70 additional rooms, which will help



ease accommodation issues for visitors. Jarkiholi mentioned that Karnataka does not receive any revenue from highway toll hikes. During a recent visit to New Delhi, he said he

could not meet leaders of the Congress high command due to the rush of people seeking Legislative Council nominations and other appointments. Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna also missed the opportunity, although the chief minister did meet with them, he added.

Commenting on the honeytrap allegations involving Rajanna, Jarkiholi said the police investigation is progressing. "Let's wait for the report. The claims are baseless," he claimed, adding that he would not like to comment on Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's remarks about the case.



# For 2,800 prisoners, Bhondsi jail has 1 doctor, NHRC finds; Sactioned posts of medical officers 3, gaps in security facilities too

**Gurgaon.** No woman doctor, insufficient medical staff, severe lack of facilities and gangsters using mobile phones — Bhondsi Jail is reeling under several problems. While the jail lacks adequate healthcare services for its inmates, there is only one medical officer appointed for the health services of over 2,800 prisoners, even though there are three sanctioned positions for medical officers. The lack of primary medical check-up facilities is causing difficulties for the inmates.

Sick prisoners are sent to Civil Hospital in Sector 10 for routine tests, whereas such facilities should be available within the jail as per regulations. There is no woman doctor for female inmates, raising concerns about how sick women can discuss their health issues with a doctor. The use of mobile phones by gangsters has also not stopped, a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) official said after inspection of the jail that has been included in Haryana's list of high-security prisons. These shortcomings — among a

plethora of issues plaguing the jail — were revealed during an inspection by NHRC's special monitor Balkrishna Goyal. Goyal said that inspections of Bhondsi Jail and an old age home were conducted on Tuesday, uncovering several deficiencies that need to be rectified promptly. "The inspection report will be submitted to the chairman of NHRC and subsequently sent to the chief secretary of Haryana to address the issues," he said, adding, no human rights violations will be tolerated.

Goyal told TOI that although the wages for working inmates are transferred to their accounts on time, "they lack information on how to use the money and thus are unable to utilise it." "Additionally, there are no jammers to prevent inmates from using phones. The jail has 2G jammers, while 5G networks are operational on mobile phones, allowing inmates to potentially use them. Several gangsters are lodged in Bhondsi

Jail and often reports of the use of mobile phones inside the jail are reported," Goyal said.

Goyal expressed concern over the



inadequate healthcare services for inmates and instructed civil surgeon Dr Alka Singh to enhance these services. As of Dec 31, 2024, the jail housed 2,898 inmates against a sanctioned capacity of 2,412, resulting in an overpopulation of 486. This inmate population comprised 2,269 male undertrials, 80 female

undertrials, 532 male convicts and 17 female convicts. Additionally, four children were residing in the jail premises with their mothers. In comparison, on Dec 31, 2023, the jail held 2,910 inmates, exceeding its capacity by 498. The population included 2,066 male undertrials, 85 female undertrials, 739 male convicts and 20 female convicts. Additionally, five children were residing with their mothers. Goyal also visited an old age home in Mandawar, Sohna, which was found to be operating illegally without permission from the social welfare department and the social welfare officer was unaware of its existence. The lack of trained staff at the old age home was causing difficulties for the elderly. During the inspection, it was also revealed that employees of the DLSA and the Child Welfare Committee had not received their salaries for eight months, prompting instructions for the ADC to ensure payment.

## Year-long study done, report to reveal local polluters & impacts in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon:** Every winter, the air quality in Delhi-NCR plummets to dangerous levels. The wait to identify the primary contributors to the city's air pollution levels will be over next month. A source appropriation study focusing on identifying local polluters, which started on Feb 1 last year, is now complete.

The final report will be submitted to Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) in May. "The study — conducted by Automotive Research Association of India — is finalised and we will get a final report by next month," HSPCB regional officer Nirmal Kashyap said. The source appropriation study's findings will be crucial in assisting authorities to implement effective measures to combat air pollution, as the lack of uniformity in efforts to improve air quality has been a major challenge.

An HSPCB official said, "The study will help us understand which industries to close down, when and for how long. After data collection, validation and interpretation, researchers will create a detailed roadmap for air quality improvement using all possible measures." The official, however, declined to comment on why the study was initiated only last year instead of earlier. Every winter, the region is enveloped by a blanket of toxic haze due to a combination of cold weather and local emissions like garbage burning. Additionally, farm fires, commonly seen in north India's agricultural belt to clear tracts of land for another round of sowing after the paddy harvest, contribute significantly to the pollution during this period.

"Now that the data collection is complete, we will carry out validation and interpretation of the assimilated information. A detailed road map will be drawn considering all possible measures for air quality improvement," Kashyap said. HSPCB officials say these measures will be classified into short and long term, with due priority to low-cost measures that give maximum benefits. Two similar studies were already conducted in Delhi, by IIT Kanpur in 2010 and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) in 2019.

## 2 slabs fall from 23rd floor of highrise, miss woman by a whisker in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.** A woman had a narrow escape when two concrete slabs fell from the 23rd floor of tower 5 in ATS Kocoon in Sector 109 on Thursday evening. The woman was gardening at her ground-floor lawn.

Two slabs, weighing 45kg and 35kg each, lodged six to nine inches into the ground. The falling of the slab highlights serious structural safety concerns in the highrise complex. Meanwhile, the residents of ATS Kocoon have demanded a safety audit. A formal complaint has been sent to the district administration and the department of town and country planning (DTCP). ATS group spokesperson said, "The alleged incident has been brought to our notice. Without prejudice to anyone, at the outset, it appears that a plaster moulding has fallen into the private lawn of a resident in the complex. It is certainly not a concrete block, as alleged in your queries. We have initiated an investigation into the alleged incident and the reasons thereof. The company will take every necessary measure to safeguard the

interests of every complex resident." Apra Agarwal, the resident, recounted the terrifying moment. "I had just finished watering the plants and turned around to



step inside when there was a deafening crash behind me. If I had been there even a second longer, I wouldn't be alive today," she said. The slabs landed exactly where she had been standing moments earlier. Residents of the society say this is not an isolated incident. Apra recalled a similar scare when a slab from the 9th floor had fallen into the front lawn earlier. "This is the second time such a life-

threatening incident has happened. It's horrifying to think what might happen next," she said. In 2022, five floors of the Paradiso project collapsed which is situated 100 meters away in the same sector, which led to the death of two residents and a subsequent demolition order for structurally unsafe towers.

The ATS project is now under renewed scrutiny. The incident has raised fears among the residents, many of whom are now demanding an immediate structural safety audit of the towers and strict accountability from both builders and DTCP. "DTCP is issuing occupation certificates without due diligence. This allows builders to offload substandard and incomplete projects on unsuspecting homebuyers, with no set time lines for completion of projects," said a representative of the Apartment Owners Association (AOA), which has sent a formal complaint to the district administration and DTCP.

## SC halts demolition of illegal construction in DLF phases in Gurgaon, town planner & cops return

**Gurgaon.** The Supreme Court on Friday stayed a demolition drive in DLF phases 1 to 5 by the town and country planning department, halting a team that had arrived at the site to bring down illegal constructions and residential properties turned into commercial complexes like gyms and guesthouses. The division bench of justices JK Maheshwari and Aravind Kumar ordered a status quo, slamming the brakes on all current and planned enforcement measures until the next hearing, slated four weeks from now. The SC was hearing a petition by DLF Qutub Enclave RWA, challenging the country planning department's authority to act on these properties. Lawyers Indira Jaising and Anuj Saxena — who represented the RWA — argued that the five DLF phases had been under the jurisdiction of Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) since 2008, which meant that only the civic body had the power to initiate

actions such as demolitions. "There are two conflicting orders from different division benches of the Punjab and Haryana high court regarding constructions in DLF phases. So, it is legally questionable how action could be taken based on only one of the orders. The Supreme Court has rightly asked all parties to maintain status quo and issued notices seeking responses from all stakeholders.

The next hearing is scheduled after four weeks," Saxena said on Friday. On Feb 13, the HC asked authorities to pursue action against unauthorised constructions, alterations and commercialisation in residential zones of DLF areas. The court also sought an action-taken report by April 19. Subsequently, the department issued over 4,500 show-cause notices and restoration orders to more than 2,200 homeowners in the five DLF phases.

Officials planned to embark on an enforcement drive from Friday itself, warning of demolition, cancellation of occupation certificates, and disconnection of water, sewer, and electricity services for residents who did not comply with the notices. The RWA then moved the SC, claiming that the HC had issued contradictory orders. In 2012, the petitioner said, a HC bench had clarified that the country planning department had no jurisdiction in matters related to DLF areas. But this year, the HC asked the same department to initiate action. In keeping with the plan to proceed with demolitions, district town planner Amit Madholia arrived in DLF-3 with four enforcement squads, 200 police personnel, and four duty magistrates on Friday morning. By noon, however, the SC had issued its interim directive, asking all parties to maintain status quo and suspending any further action.

## ACB probe unveils major flaws in key Ardee City road construction

**Gurgaon.** A technical squad of the anti-corruption bureau (ACB) discovered the cement road connecting Ardee City's gate number 2 to Artemis Hospital was not at par with the prescribed standards, with some major faults.

The thickness of the road failed to meet standards, and the surface was damaged with numerous potholes, a bureau team found in the April 1 inspection following a complaint about the use of poor construction material.

Preliminary findings indicated the contractor failed to adhere to standard road construction guidelines, holding MCG officials and contractors accountable for the substandard construction work. MCG constructed the road during the lockdown in 2020 when Ardee City was not under its jurisdiction back then.

An ACB official said the bureau will take necessary action to tackle the matter. "We will also get the road quality checked. If the ACB team has taken samples for the assessment, we can take action based on the results; otherwise, we will also get it checked. Moreover, punitive action will be taken against those responsible," said MCG chief engineer Vijay Dhaka. "The road, constructed in 2020, was initially built nine inches above other roads in Ardee. After we raised concerns, it was reconstructed to prevent flooding issues. Despite construction and reconstruction within six to seven months, the road was dilapidated in less than a year. Currently, vehicular movement on this stretch proves challenging," said Ardee City resident Chaitali Mandhotra. Ardee City residents said they repeatedly requested municipal officials to inspect the quality of Ardee City roads for several months and raised the issue through TOI on March 16. At a Samadhan camp, they requested an inspection of roads after Ardee RWA sent road samples to a private lab, which found all the samples to be failing. There have been previous instances where samples of roads constructed by MCG failed to comply with quality benchmarks. Sector 10 A internal roads failed and were found to be substandard in 2024. Samples of roads constructed in Sarai Alawardi and Nathupur failed quality tests in April 2022 and 2021, respectively.

## Child mortality rate improves, but UP 2nd highest in India: Study

**Noida.** UP ranked among the states with the highest child mortality rates in the country despite an year-on-year improvement, annual health report for 2024-25 released by Union ministry of health and family welfare has revealed. Forty-three out of 1,000 children born in UP die before their fifth birthday, the report said, adding the current infant mortality rate (IMR) stood at 38 per 1,000 live births, while the neonatal mortality rate (NMR) was 28. The state stands after Madhya Pradesh, where infant mortality rate is 43 out of 1,000 live births and NMR is 31. This is much higher than the country's average IMR of 28 and MNR of 20. Doctors attributed a significant share of infant deaths to infections during childbirth or septicaemia caused by poor hygiene, especially due to a lack of institutional deliveries. The report also flagged that UP was among the few low-performing state (LPS) when it came to institutional childbirth. "Home births are still prevalent in UP, especially in rural areas. This is mostly due to the unavailability of institutional facilities," a senior doctor at Child PGI, Noida, said.

A Unicef India report, published in 2020, suggests that nearly 46% of all maternal deaths and 40% of neonatal deaths happen during labour or in the first 24 hours after birth. "Pre-maturity (35%), neonatal infections (33%), birth asphyxia (20%) and congenital malformations (9%) are among the major causes of newborn deaths," the report stated. The annual report, however, states UP and Karnataka saw the highest drop in under-five mortality rate, each by five points from 2019 when it was recorded at 48 out of 1,000 live births. In comparison, India's average decline was three points from 35 per 1,000 live births in 2019 to 32 per 1,000 live births in 2020. However, UP continues to remain "behind the all-India average of these indicators," states a CAG report, released in Dec 2024.

## Noida woman kills kids, dies by suicide after quarrel with husband over breakfast

**Noida.** A 35-year-old woman and her two minor children, aged 6 and 5, were found dead on the roof of their house in Bisrakh on Thursday morning. Police suspect the woman died by suicide by hanging herself with a scarf after killing her children following a quarrel with her husband. Police were alerted on the emergency helpline, Dial 112, by neighbours after they spotted the bodies around 10.45 am. The woman, Aarti, and her children were taken to a nearby hospital by her family members but were declared brought dead. "Initial investigation shows Aarti and her husband, Rajkumar, were having domestic trouble and would fight frequently. The couple, married around 12 years ago, have three children. On Thursday, Aarti took the two younger children to the roof and hung them with a scarf before dying by suicide herself. The couple's eldest daughter was also in the house, on one of the lower floors, during the incident," DCP (Central Noida) Shakti Mohan Avasthy said.

A senior officer told TOI that minutes before the incident, Rajkumar had fought with Aarti for not cooking breakfast on time. Earlier that morning, Rajkumar had also scolded the children. When Aarti objected, it led to an argument between the two. Cops have sent the bodies for autopsy. Police said they have not received any complaints so far from the woman's family.

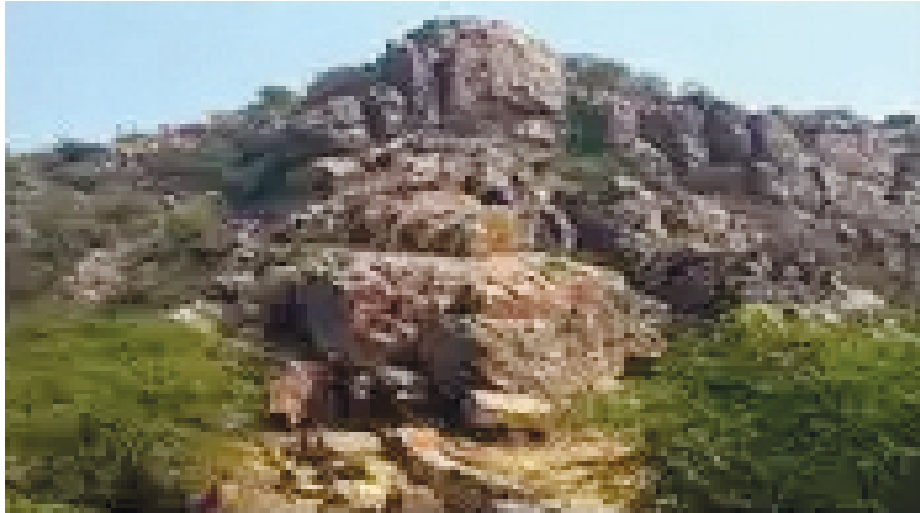


## A third of Gurgaon's Aravali land under threat: Notification barring non-forest activities in Manesar, Farrukhnagar expired a decade ago

**Gurgaon.** Aravalis in 86 villages of Manesar and Farrukhnagar tehsils, which constitute over one-third of Gurgaon's total area, are currently vulnerable to tree-felling and destruction. This vulnerability stems from the expiration of a notification that barred non-forest activities in this region a decade ago, Haryana forest department told a bench of National Green Tribunal (NGT) at a hearing while submitting a report to the green tribunal on Thursday.

The forest department said it has taken significant steps to protect these areas. It has sent a proposal to the state govt to include Manesar and Farrukhnagar tehsils under the tree felling regulations. According to the forest department, the proposal was sent to Haryana govt in Feb this year. The state govt has been urged to set up a panel, the NGT was informed.

City-based activist Vaishali Rana said on Friday, "The forest department's initiative to include the Manesar and Farrukhnagar areas under tree regulation and their proposal to establish a committee for creating a policy on tree felling regulation in non-forest areas is a positive step. It is crucial for the govt to act swiftly to ensure the protection of trees in these non-forest regions." These proposals aim to address several key concerns raised by the applicants in the ongoing case of Vaishali Rana & Ors. vs. Union of India & Others (O.A. No. 680/2024), currently under review by National Green Tribunal (NGT) principal bench. The plea filed by



Vaishali Rana contends numerous trees were cut down in the city (Gurgaon) without authorisation and for these "egregious violations", the divisional forest officer imposed paltry fines of Rs 500.

Rana's plea also questioned the process of granting permission for felling trees, terming it arbitrary. She argued that while the tehsils of Gurgaon, Sohna and Pataudi are covered under the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), 1900, Manesar and Farrukhnagar tehsils, though in the same district, are not covered by the law, exposing those areas to incidents of tree-felling. The forest department on Thursday informed NGT that the govt has

been taking several steps to ensure the protection of trees. This move aims to reinstate protections and curb the rampant tree-felling activities that threaten the ecological balance of the region. To ensure comprehensive tree conservation policies across Haryana, the department also proposed to the govt in Feb the formation of a committee. A forest official said, "This committee will be tasked with formulating a policy for tree felling regulation in non-forest areas throughout the state. The proposed policy aims to address the gaps in current regulations and provide a framework for the protection and conservation of trees."

The forest department, in its reply to NGT,

said, "The Haryana govt has already implemented several initiatives to promote tree conservation, including the Pran Vayu Devta Scheme, which provides an annual pension to tree owners for trees older than 75 years and the Van Mitra Scheme, which offers incentives for planting and maintaining trees." Gurgaon, according to the Forest Survey of India report 2022, lost 2.5 sq km of forest cover between Oct 2019 and Feb 2020. The city's overall tree and forest cover is 12.9% of its geographical area, according to findings of Haryana's first tree census in 2023. At 6.7%, the state's forest and tree cover is the lowest in India.

Unlike Delhi, Haryana does not have a Tree Act of its own. The Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, bars the felling of trees. It also mandates that every person must deposit Rs 34,500 with the forest department and plant 10 saplings for cutting one tree after permission is granted. Such a law to protect trees has been spoken about but hasn't been enacted. The state has, however, started giving heritage tags to protect old trees. So far, 3,876 trees across the state have got heritage status. Haryana's forest policy, which was framed in 2006, set a goal of achieving 20% forest and tree cover in the state in a phased manner in 2020, but it has failed to achieve it so far.



NEWS BOX

Indian stabbed to death in Canada's Ottawa, suspect taken into custody: Embassy

**world.** An Indian national was killed in a stabbing incident in Rockland, a town near Ottawa, Canada. Local police have taken a suspect into custody, though further details about the circumstances of the attack remain unknown. The Indian embassy in Canada confirmed the incident on X and said it was in touch with the victim's family. "We are deeply saddened by the tragic death of an Indian national in Rockland near Ottawa, due to stabbing. Police has stated a suspect has been taken into custody. We are in close contact through a local community association to provide all possible assistance to the bereaved kin," the post read. According to a report by CBC News, one person was found dead in Clarence-Rockland and another was arrested. Authorities have not disclosed the cause of death or whether any charges have been filed. The Ontario Provincial Police has advised residents of Rockland to expect a heightened police presence in the area, according to a report by CBC News.

'Shame on you': Anti-Israeli protester interrupts Microsoft's 50th anniversary over AI use in war

**world.** A woman disrupted Microsoft's 50th anniversary celebration on Friday in protest of the company's connection to the Israeli military. It occurred during a keynote presentation by Microsoft AI CEO Mustafa Suleyman, who was speaking about the future of the company's AI assistant, Copilot. The event featured key figures, including Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and former CEO Steve Ballmer. As Suleyman spoke, the woman stood up and shouted, "Mustafa, shame on you. You claim that you care about using AI for good but Microsoft sells AI weapons to the Israeli military." "Fifty-thousand people have died ... all of Microsoft has blood on its hands. How do you all celebrate when Microsoft is killing children? Shame on you all," she added. Suleyman responded calmly, saying, "Thank you for your protest, I hear you." However, the protester continued, accusing him and Microsoft of having "blood on their hands."

AI in military operations  
The protest comes as there has been increasing scrutiny of how tech firms, including Microsoft and OpenAI, sell AI tools to the military. An earlier report by The Associated Press this year claimed that the AI models produced by the companies were being used by the Israeli military to select bombing targets. The report further cited a disastrous incident in 2023 when an Israeli airstrike accidentally destroyed a car in Lebanon, killing three young girls and their grandmother. Earlier in February, five workers were banned from an in-house meeting with CEO Satya Nadella when they protested over the company's contracts with the military. Meanwhile, Friday's demonstration was more high-profile because it occurred during a livestreamed celebration.

Magnitude 6.9 earthquake strikes Papua New Guinea, tsunami warning cancelled

**world.** WELLINGTON: A tsunami warning was cancelled for Papua New Guinea after a strong magnitude 6.9 earthquake, according to the US Geological Survey. The quake was shallow, striking the Pacific island nation at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles) on Saturday morning local time. It was centered offshore, 194 km (120 miles) east of the town of Kimbe, on the island of New Britain. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center later called off an alert issued immediately after the jolt that warned of waves of 1 to 3 meters along some parts of the Papua New Guinea coastline. A caution about smaller waves of 0.3 m issued for nearby Solomon Islands was also called off. There were no immediate reports of damage. Just over 500,000 people live on the island of New Britain. Australia's Bureau of Meteorology said there was no tsunami threat to the country, which is Papua New Guinea's closest neighbour. No warning was issued for New Zealand. Papua New Guinea sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," the arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where much of the world's earthquake and volcanic activity occurs.

"Oops": Trump Shares Video Showing Deadly Strike On Houthis In Yemen

**Washington, United States.** US President Donald Trump on Friday posted a video purportedly showing dozens of Houthi fighters being killed in an American strike on Yemen, adding the comment "oops." "Resembling images shot from military drones or other loitering aircraft, the black-and-white footage Trump posted to his Truth Social network shows several dozen human figures from an almost vertical angle." These Houthis gathered for instructions on an attack," Trump wrote in an accompanying text, using an alternate spelling for the Yemeni rebel group. American forces have carried out major raids on Yemen in recent weeks in response to the group's attacks on Red Sea shipping. Gathered in a loose oval along a road, the people in the video are superimposed with a gun camera-style crosshair. A few seconds in, a bright flash appears in the middle of the scene, followed by billowing smoke. The footage cuts to a wider shot showing a column of smoke over the apparent impact site and several vehicles parked further up the road. The camera then cuts closer again to show a broad crater at the point of impact. No bodies are readily identifiable.

From IRS to EPA: Full breakdown of historic US government layoffs

**UPDATED** President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk are undertaking a sweeping campaign to cut the size of the 2.3 million-strong civilian US government workforce. Nearly 200,000 employees have been fired or earmarked for termination or have accepted buyouts. The layoffs have primarily been aimed at probationary workers, many in jobs for less than a year with fewer job protections than longer-tenured staffers. A judge ruled in March that the terminations of some 25,000 probationary employees were likely illegal, forcing federal agencies to begin reinstating them. Meanwhile, a new wave of cuts targeting career government workers has begun and is intensifying after Trump ordered federal agencies to submit plans for large-scale layoffs by March 13. Here are details of some of the layoffs at federal departments and agencies gleaned by Reuters reporters. **UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE** Employees at the United States Institute of Peace received termination letters Friday

evening, according to people familiar with the matter. The organization, an independent, nonprofit organization funded by Congress, employs about 300 people at its Washington headquarters. The mass firing came less than two weeks after DOGE staffers gained access to USIP's headquarters in Washington with the help of police officers, prompting the institute to accuse Musk's team of occupying its building by force. **INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES** All employees of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency with about 75 workers which provides funding for America's libraries and museums, were placed on administrative leave on Monday, according to a union statement. The American Federation of Government Employees Local 3403 said in a statement that all employees were put on leave following "a brief meeting between DOGE



staff and IMLS leadership" and told to turn in all their government equipment. **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** The US Department of Health and Human Services will cut about 10,000 full-time jobs and close half of its regional offices, it said on March 27, a major overhaul of the department under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Employees of various departmental agencies began receiving their termination notices on April 1.

The latest job cuts, and about 10,000 recent voluntary departures, will reduce the number of full-time employees at the department to 62,000 from 82,000, the department said. **VOICE OF AMERICA** More than 1,300 Voice of America employees were placed on leave on March 15, Michael Abramowitz, the U.S. government-funded outlet's director, said in a post on LinkedIn. The cuts were part of a gutting of the outlet's parent agency, the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which terminated its grants to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Radio Free Asia. **VETERANS AFFAIRS** The Department of Veterans Affairs is planning to cut more than 80,000 workers from the agency, according to an internal memo seen by Reuters. The VA's chief of staff, Christopher Syrek, sent the memo to senior agency officials, telling them the goal was to return the agency to 2019

Taiwan's top security official visits US as China ends military drills: Report

**Taiwan's top security official, Joseph Wu, arrived in the US for talks with the Trump administration, days after China's war games near Taiwan. The "special channel" meeting marks Trump's first since returning to office, amid rising regional tensions.**



**UPDATED.** The head of Taiwan's National Security Council arrived in the United States for talks with President Donald Trump's administration, a source familiar with the matter said on Friday, days after China concluded war games around Taiwan. Joseph Wu was leading a delegation for a meeting known as the "special channel," the Financial Times reported earlier. It marked Trump's first use of the channel since returning to the White House on January 20. Earlier this week, China's military

concluded two-day war games around Taiwan in which it held long-range, live-fire drills in the East China Sea, marking an escalation of exercises around the island. Taiwan has denounced China for holding the drills. The United States, Taiwan's most important international supporter and

main arms supplier despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations, condemned the latest exercises earlier this week. Taiwan is only one area of tension between the United States and China whose ties have been tested by multiple issues such as human rights, the origins of COVID-19 and trade tariffs, including measures put in place by Trump this week. Trump's tariffs this week also upset Taiwan, which called them unreasonable. Trump has

also been critical of Taiwan for taking U.S. semiconductor business, saying he wants the industry to re-base to the United States. Taiwan's top security official has said the Trump administration's support for Taiwan remains "very strong." China has stepped up rhetoric against Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, calling him a "parasite" on Tuesday in the wake of U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth's Asia visit, during which he repeatedly criticised Beijing. The White House and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States did not immediately respond to requests for comment. China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and has repeatedly denounced Lai as a "separatist". Lai, who won election last year, rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims and says only Taiwan's people can decide their future. Taiwan has lived under the threat of Chinese invasion since 1949 when the defeated Republic of China government fled to the island after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists, though the two sides have not exchanged fire in anger for decades.

US mistakenly orders Ukrainians to leave in email blunder

**world.** Multiple Ukrainians legally in the United States under a humanitarian program received an email this week telling them their status had been revoked and they had seven days to leave the country or the "federal government will find you." A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokesperson said on Friday the email had been sent in error and that the Ukrainian parole program created after the 2022 Russian invasion of that country had not been terminated. It was not clear how many Ukrainians received the email. Reuters reported last month that the Trump administration was planning to revoke temporary legal status for some 240,000 Ukrainians who fled the conflict with Russia. Such a move would be a reversal of the welcome Ukrainians received under President Joe Biden's administration. "If you do not depart the United States



immediately, you will be subject to potential law enforcement actions that will result in your removal from the United States," the Thursday email read. "Again, DHS is terminating your parole. Do not attempt to remain in the United States." The DHS sent a follow-up note on Friday, informing them that the order was in error and that "the terms of your parole as originally issued remain unchanged at this time." One Ukrainian parolee, who asked that her name not be used for fear of

retribution from the U.S. government, said she "couldn't breathe normally and was uncontrollably crying" upon receiving the email. The woman said she had renewed her immigration status last August and had been told that it was valid for another two years, and she racked her brain trying to figure out what she had done wrong to be booted from the U.S. She could think of no reason, saying, "I don't have as much as a parking ticket, don't post on social media." Angela Boelens, president of IA NICE, a non-profit in Iowa that has sponsored dozens of Ukrainians, said she knows of at least two women who received the letter, one of whom is pregnant. "It's a very scary email. All of my families are in complete panic," Boelens said. "I'd been telling people they would have time after a revocation notice. But this letter is very different."



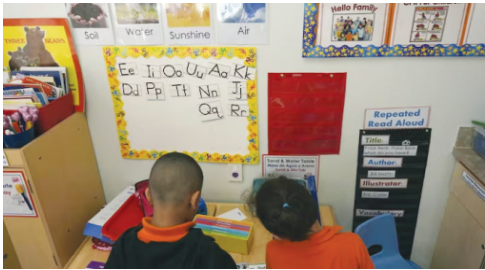
he's doing it on purpose." He goes on to suggest that this is all part of a bigger plan. "Here's the secret game he's playing, and it could make you rich." As per the video, Trump is attempting to pressure money into US treasury bonds. This will complicate matters for the Federal Reserve (US central bank), asking it to decrease interest rates in May. Low interest rates would allow the government to roll over its record debt at a cheap interest rate. The video states this also lowers the mortgage rates and weakens the dollar, which can aid common people in America. "Now it's a wild chess move, but it's working," the narrator claims. The video even praises Trump's tariff strategy, calling it "a genius play." It explains, "It actually forces companies to build here to dodge them. It also forces farmers to sell more of their products here in the US to bring grocery prices way down. We've already seen this with eggs." The narrator then makes a bold statement, "Now, remember, 94 percent of all stocks are owned only by 8 percent of Americans."

Supreme Court backs Trump move to cut \$600 million in teacher training funds

**WASHINGTON.** The Supreme Court on Friday granted the Trump administration's plea to cut hundreds of millions of dollars in teacher-training money as part of its anti-DEI efforts, while a lawsuit continues. The justices split 5-4, with Chief Justice John Roberts joining the three liberal justices in dissent. The emergency appeal is among several the high court is considering in which the Justice Department argues that lower-court judges have improperly obstructed President Donald Trump's agenda. Friday's order was the first time, in three attempts, that the nation's highest court gave the administration what it wanted on an emergency basis. The Supreme Court previously sided against the administration in another lawsuit over nearly \$2 billion in foreign aid cuts in another divided 5-4 ruling, with Justice Amy Coney Barrett in the majority in both cases. It remains to be seen whether Friday's decision marks a narrow win or a broader shift in Trump's favor. The Trump administration is facing some 150 lawsuits

in lower courts challenging his flurry of executive orders. That includes about two dozen over federal funding cuts, some totalling billions of dollars. The teaching training case deals with cuts to more than 100 programs. They had been temporarily blocked by a federal judge in Boston, who found that they were already affecting training programs aimed at addressing a nationwide teacher shortage. U.S. District Judge Myong Joun issued a temporary restraining order sought by eight Democratic-led states that argued the cuts were likely driven by efforts from Trump's administration to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion programs. The federal appeals court in Boston turned away an appeal from the administration to allow them to resume. The Republican president has also signed an executive order calling for the dismantling of the Education Department, and his administration has already started overhauling much of its work, including cutting dozens of contracts it dismissed as "woke" and wasteful. The

two programs at issue — the Teacher Quality Partnership and Supporting Effective Educator Development — provide more than \$600 million in grants



for teacher preparation programs, often in subject areas such as math, science and special education, the states have argued. They said data has shown the programs had led to increased teacher retention rates and ensured that educators remain in the profession beyond five years. Despite Joun's finding that the programs were already being affected, the high court's

conservative majority wrote that the states can keep the programs running with their own money for now. By contrast, the majority said in an unsigned opinion, the federal government probably wouldn't be able to recover the cash if it ultimately wins the lawsuit. Justice Elena Kagan wrote in dissent that there was no reason for the court's emergency intervention. Nowhere in its papers does the Government defend the legality of canceling the education grants at issue here," Kagan wrote. In a separate opinion, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote, "It is beyond puzzling that a majority of Justices conceive of the government's application as an emergency." Roberts joined neither dissent, noting only that he would have denied the appeal. The administration halted the programs without notice in February. Joun, an appointee of Democratic President Joe Biden, found that the cancellations probably violated a federal law that requires a clear explanation.



## NEWS BOX

## Vijayawada Municipal Corporation takes up special drive to curb vector-borne diseases

**VIJAYAWADA.** The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) has intensified its efforts to control the spread of vector-borne diseases, including dengue and malaria, across the city.

VMC officials have launched special drives involving canal cleaning, drainage desilting, fogging, and spraying ML oil using drones and Taiwan sprayers. As part of preventive measures, the health department also released one lakh *Gambusia* fish into stagnant water bodies to control mosquito larvae and prevent further breeding.

Biologist Dr R Ch Surya Kumar said they were working under the instructions of VMC Commissioner Dhyana Chandra H M to curb the mosquito menace. He said the civic body had collected 98,534 blood smears for malaria testing and 7,543 samples from Jakkampudi alone from January to December 2024. Across NTR district, 3,17,250 samples were collected during the same period.

Despite it being summer, residents are facing an unusual surge in mosquito population, leading to sleepless nights and rising health concerns. Many people are using coils, lotions, and vapourisers to protect themselves, but their efforts remain largely ineffective.

Last year, the district reported 61 malaria cases—29 in Jakkampudi, 36 in rural areas, and the remaining within Vijayawada city limits. 50 dengue cases were confirmed across the district, including in the city. The VMC has urged residents to cooperate by removing stagnant water and keeping their surroundings clean to prevent mosquito breeding.

## Vulture count in Nilgiris Reserve up by 70 in a year

**CHENNAI.** Vulture population in Tamil Nadu and the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) continues to rise and it is an incredible comeback from the verge of extinction. On Friday, the state forest department released the results of the synchronised vulture survey, and the data show the population grew from 320 to 390.

Conducted on February 27-28 this year across 106 vantage points in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka spanning 4,670 sq km in the NBR, the survey reveals Tamil Nadu retains its leadership position when it comes to vulture conservation in the region. Tamil Nadu recorded 157 vultures, up from 100 in 2022-23 and 152 in 2023-24. Kerala recorded 125 vultures and Karnataka 106.

The White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) dominates the recovery, with 110 counted in Tamil Nadu and 288 sightings in the NBR. Long-billed Vultures (*Gyps indicus*) followed with 31 in Tamil Nadu and 50 in the NBR, while Red-headed Vultures (*Sarcogyps calvus*) hit 11 and 47, respectively. Five juvenile Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*), listed as endangered, were recorded in Nellai wildlife sanctuary in Tamil Nadu.

The most heartening news for the conservationists is the first-ever Red-headed Vulture nest documented in south India in Masinagudi range of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), a rare win for the species. Overall, 75 active nests were recorded in NBR, of which MTR in Tamil Nadu reported 54 active White-rumped nests, supporting 108 adults and 30 chicks.

## CEIR helps recover over 6,000 stolen phones, preventing data theft, financial loss

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** Losing personal electronic devices, especially mobile phones, is something people dread. Apart from the financial setback, there is the fear of confidential data being compromised. But, not many are aware that the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR), a portal created by the department of telecommunication, is their best ally in tracking down and retrieving lost or stolen phones.

Between September 2019 and March 2025, the portal received 45,647 requests from the state for blocking mobile phones. Of these, nearly 39,500 phones were successfully blocked. Traceability reports were generated in around 35,000 instances, which culminated in the tracking of 29,000 phones. And, as many as 6,222 phones were successfully retrieved.

Many of the devices were recovered from local second-hand mobile shops, while some were repossessed from counterfeit markets in West Bengal, Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai, police sources said.

A senior police officer said the phones are blocked using their IMEI number. Using state-of-the-art digital tools, the devices are tracked, and once the geographical location is identified, they are physically retrieved. The collective worth of the recovered phones could be more than ₹6 crore, the official told.

However, it's not always monetary loss that prompts users to register police complaints and report on the CEIR platform. Most fear the prospect of data stored in their phones being accessed by others, which could in turn ruin their personal and professional lives.

## Refrain from hate speech against CM Stalin: Madras HC to C Ve Shanmugam

**Noting that he had held posts of an MLA and a minister for 10 years and is currently an MP, Justice GK Ilanthiraiyan, in a recent order, said Shanmugam should show responsibility while criticising the chief minister.**

**CHENNAI.** The Madras High Court has asked senior AIADMK leader and Rajya Sabha Member C Ve Shanmugam to refrain from making 'hate speech' against Chief Minister MK Stalin while addressing public forum even though he is entitled to level criticism on public issues owing to freedom of speech and expression as enshrined in the Constitution.

Noting that he had held posts of an MLA and a minister for 10 years and is currently an MP, Justice GK Ilanthiraiyan, in a recent order, said Shanmugam should show responsibility while criticising the chief minister.

He explained, "The petitioner (Shanmugam) has the right of freedom of speech and expression and hold public meetings under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution with some restrictions. He should not have delivered hate speech against the CM and the state government."

"The petitioner shall have to avoid hate speech while addressing public meetings," the judge said. However, Justice Ilanthiraiyan held that free speech of the citizens of the country cannot be stifled by implicating them in criminal cases unless such speech has the tendency to affect the public order.



The matter pertains the defamation case filed by the public prosecutor at Villupuram district court against Shanmugam for his derogatory comments at a demonstration on July 20, 2023 at Villupuram to condemn the state

government for its alleged failure to check rising prices of essential commodities.

**Court refuses to bin FIR against Periyar univ V-C**

**Chennai:** The Madras HC has refused to quash an FIR registered against the Periyar University vice chancellor R Jaganathan on the alleged misappropriation of funds and caste abuse against a leader of the university employees union.

The petition filed by Jagannathan praying for quashing the FIR, registered by the Karuppur police in Salem district on December 26, 2023 for the offences that included criminal conspiracy, cheating and caste abuse under various sections of IPC was dismissed by Justice GK Ilanthiraiyan on Friday.

A similar petition filed by the registrar (in-charge) K Thangavel was also dismissed by the court. The main charge was that the V-C had floated a private entity-Periyar University Technology Entrepreneurship Research (PUTER) Foundation, without obtaining appropriate permission from the government, with an intention to misappropriate the university funds.

## Kerala police investigate trafficking of job seekers to Thailand

**Police officials revealed that Euro Sky World began recruiting overseas in Edappally in 2023-24, advertising on social media with claims of providing visas for New Zealand, Australia, and Southeast Asia.**

**KOCHI.** The police have launched an investigation into a suspected human trafficking incident in which several individuals were deceived with promises of high-paying jobs and taken to Bangkok. Following a magistrate court's directive, the Elamakkara police have registered three cases against a recruitment agency that operated in Edappally. According to police officials, the agency, Euro Sky World, began its overseas recruitment activities in Edappally during 2023-24. The firm advertised on social media, claiming to provide visas for New Zealand, Australia, and various South-east Asian countries. Several job seekers approached the agency for overseas employment.

"Although the applicants initially sought jobs in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, the agency lured them into applying for warehouse jobs in

Hong Kong, promising salaries of over Rs 2 lakh per month. The victims collectively paid around Rs 7.75 lakh for these job placements," a police officer said. In May 2024, the victims were taken to Bangkok under the pretence that their travel to Hong Kong would be finalised upon arrival. However, after reaching Bangkok, they were informed that their Hong Kong visas had not been approved and were advised to seek employment in Bangkok instead. "The victims alleged that in Bangkok, they were coerced into working for an online sex racket.

When they refused, they were threatened, tortured and detained. They were released only after paying a ransom of \$1,500," the officer added. Following complaints filed by three victims in the magistrate court, the police have registered cases against six individuals,

including the managing director and employees of Euro Sky World. Two more victims, who were similarly deceived and taken to Bangkok, have also approached the court. The recruitment agency is not operational now.

"We questioned the managing director of the recruitment firm. He claimed that his company was associated with an agent in Tamil Nadu and that the Tamil Nadu native was responsible for cheating the victims. Our initial probe indicates that this agent has been involved in multiple fraud cases," an official said.

The Tamil Nadu-based agent was previously arrested in another overseas job fraud case in Kochi but is currently out on bail. "We are tracking his movements and working to help the victims reclaim their lost money," the officer added.

## BJP promises to support Kerala's Munambam residents

**KOCHI.** A day after the passage of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in Parliament, the BJP on Friday said it would stand with the people of Munambam until their revenue rights are re-established. BJP leaders led by state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar visited Munambam and joined residents in their celebrations over the passing of the bill by the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

In Thrissur, Union Minister Suresh Gopi went to the St Mary's Forane Church in Koratti, fulfilling "the promise he made to the people of Munambam" that he would visit the church once the bill was passed. Chandrasekhar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been following a policy of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' since 2014 and the Union government has not shown any discrimination towards any community on the basis of caste or religion.

"The Waqf (Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament is a milestone in Indian history. The non-violent protest of the residents of Munambam village reached New Delhi and facilitated the passage of a historic bill. I am sure the bill will help restore the land rights of the residents of Munambam," he said. Interacting with media after visiting the protesting residents, Chandrasekhar said the passage of the bill marks a decisive moment in Kerala politics.

Waqf bill not against any religion: BJP state chief

"The fight against Waqf claim over Munambam land has brought the village in national focus," Chandrasekhar said. Alleging that the MPs who opposed the bill had supported appeasement politics, Chandrasekhar said the bill was not against any religion. "The amendment was bought to ensure transparency in the functioning of the Waqf Board. The LDF and UDF MPs who opposed the bill are trying to mislead people," he said.

Stating that the bill's passage would help Munambam residents, Suresh Gopi told reporters that the amendment will also benefit the Muslim community.

## Railways revises Ernakulam-Thuravoor line doubling work deadline to February 2027

**Work on the over 23-km stretch is being executed in two sections -- the 7.71-km Ernakulam-Kumbalam section and the 15.59-km Thuravoor-Kumbalam section.**

**KOCHI.** The Railways has expedited track-doubling work on the key Ernakulam-Thuravoor section of the coastal line and revised the deadline for completion of work to February 2027.

Work on the over 23-km stretch is being executed in two sections -- the 7.71-km Ernakulam-Kumbalam section and the 15.59-km Thuravoor-Kumbalam section. "Eighty per cent of the land acquisition process along both stretches has been completed. We've awarded all the major contracts, except for the laying of tracks. While it will take another two years to complete the works, we've speeded up activities," said a senior official with the railway construction wing in Ernakulam.

While doubling work has been completed in the main Ernakulam-Kottayam-Kayamkulam section, work on the Kayamkulam-Alappuzha-Ernakulam segment has encountered major delays due to non-availability of funds. Of the total 102-km section, track doubling has been completed only in the 33-km Kayamkulam-Ambalapuzha stretch. Administrative

sanction is yet to be received with respect to the 46-km-long Ambalapuzha-Thuravoor section.

The deadline for the 69-km Ernakulam-Ambalapuzha section was initially set for December 2026. "Now we're focusing on the Ernakulam-Thuravoor



section. Work on the section, including that of three bridges, has been hastened," the official said.

Construction of the 854.5-m-long Aroor-Kumbalam railway bridge, the second longest in the state, is now being carried out from both the Alappuzha and Ernakulam sides. "Kolkata-based Royal Infra is executing work of Aroor-Kumbalam bridge (EAK 31). We've also started work on the Konthuruthy-Nettoor (EAK10; 152.5

m) and Nettoor-Kumbalam (EAK 17; 158.6 m) bridges," the official said.

Delay affecting ops

Meanwhile, daily commuters complain that delay in works and sanctioning the doubling of the Thuravoor-Ambalapuzha line have resulted in travel woes.

"We've submitted multiple memorandums seeking completion of doubling work along the entire section. Currently, there are inadequate services along the coastal route. Many trains are halted multiple times to facilitate crossings. This delays services," said Paul K J Manvetton, president of the All Kerala Railway Users' Association. A social-impact study carried out as part of the track-doubling project noted that the number of railway passengers travelling from neighbouring districts to Kochi and back is on the rise.

"Many industrial and IT firms are headquartered in Kochi. Since Ernakulam South railway station witnesses heavy rail traffic, restrictions on train movement need to be enforced, resulting in delays for passengers.

## Thiruvananthapuram's Velland KSRTC depot officials file complaint over stray dog menace

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** In light of the increasing stray dog menace, officials at the Velland KSRTC depot have filed a complaint with the Velland panchayat seeking urgent intervention. The complaint was lodged on Friday after a 16-year-old girl was bitten by a stray dog near the depot.

According to depot staff, the girl had just gotten off a bus on Thursday morning when she was bitten by the dog on her leg. Later, another girl who had arrived with her family was also attacked by the dog, but she escaped without any injuries.

"This is not the first time such an incident has happened. Our staff and passengers are at risk daily. We have informed the panchayat multiple times, but no concrete action has been taken yet," said a depot official.

The concern has been mounting for months, with several attacks reported in and around the depot. Two weeks ago, a KSRTC driver Baiju was bitten by a stray dog while on duty. A month ago, a homemaker from Companykukku was attacked in front of the depot. Stray dog attacks have also been reported from Velland Junction and nearby areas.

Responding to the complaints, Velland panchayat vice-president Velland Sreekanandan admitted that the situation has become alarming.

"Human lives are more important. We have vaccinated the dogs and marked them with numbers before releasing them. However, to completely eliminate the threat, culling the dogs is the only solution, but there is no law for that. We are helpless," said Sreekanandan.

The vice-president also pointed out that the government had suggested setting up shelters for stray dogs, but the initiative failed due to high maintenance costs. Meanwhile, the panchayat has issued strict instructions to travellers and employees to stop feeding stray dogs to curb their presence near public spaces.

## GCC mulls single portal for water, property taxes

**The proposed unified platform aims to simplify the tax payment process and thereby improve efficiency in tax collection as well.**

**CHENNAI.** City residents may soon be able to pay their property and water taxes through a single platform as the state is conducting a feasibility study for their integration.

Currently, taxpayers have to navigate separate portals for property tax under the GCC and water tax through the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB). The proposed unified platform aims to simplify the tax payment process and thereby improve efficiency in tax collection as well.

GCC deputy mayor M Magesh Kumar said, "If implemented, the new single-window system will direct taxpayers' payments into an escrow account under the GCC after which the funds will get distributed to the

respective departments, ensuring seamless revenue management." According to sources, both departments are conducting test calculations by determining the number of taxpayers in both departments and identifying mismatches. For instance, the GCC does not collect property taxes for houses on poramboke land without patta. However, these households may still receive basic amenities, including water connections and therefore pay taxes to CMWSSB.

Similarly, as per Section 87 of the Tamil Nadu Urban Local Bodies Act, 1998, GCC has exempted property taxes for places of public worship and educational institutions. Yet, these places still pay water taxes. A CMWSSB official said



discrepancies also arise as some domestic water connections are used for commercial purposes illegally. To overcome such challenges during integration, the GCC and CMWSSB are relying on TNEB data,

which is more accurate. However, as the process is complex and time-consuming due to technical challenges, the integration is likely to take time. GCC officials added since both the civic body and CMWSSB has limited human resources for tax collection, an integrated platform will be helpful for both.

The CMWSSB calculates water and sewerage tax as 7% of the annual rental value fixed by the GCC for property tax, with the amount collected in two batches per year. CMWSSB has at least 14 lakh consumers, receiving Rs 1,050 crore taxes in 2024-25, following the recent tax revision. In previous years, the sewerage board collected around Rs 800 crore per annum.



## Geopolitical fault lines in the Northeast

Media reports on Wednesday quoted statements attributed to Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser to the interim government of Bangladesh, which he reportedly made during his recent visit to China. He has imagined and projected the landlocked seven sisters (our Northeastern states) along with Bangladesh as an extension of the Chinese economy, with Bangladesh and its ports playing a pivotal role. With these remarks, he is trying to leverage the geographical situation prevailing in the Chicken's Neck area (also known as the Siliguri Corridor), a narrow strip of land in West Bengal's Siliguri that connects the Northeast and the rest of India. Yunus is trying to add a new dimension to this problem, I am certain that the Government of India must have already taken cognisance and strategised ways to meet such a contingency. Media reports on Wednesday quoted statements attributed to Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser to the interim government of Bangladesh, which he reportedly made during his recent visit to China. He has imagined and projected the landlocked seven sisters (our Northeastern states) along with Bangladesh as an extension of the Chinese economy, with Bangladesh and its ports playing a pivotal role. With these remarks, he is trying to leverage the geographical situation prevailing in the Chicken's Neck area (also known as the Siliguri Corridor), a narrow strip of land in West Bengal's Siliguri that connects the Northeast and the rest of India. Yunus is trying to add a new dimension to this problem, I am certain that the Government of India must have already taken cognisance and strategised ways to meet such a contingency. Till 2023 and the start of violence in Manipur, peace had prevailed in the Northeast after decades of unrest and violence. There was a ceasefire in Nagaland and elected governments were in place in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Manipur.

The Government of India has done an admirable job with the help of the army, security forces and police in bringing peace to the area and the restoration of the democratic process. The interaction and integration between the Northeast and the rest of India has improved and people of the area are going to other parts for studies and employment. Tourism has also begun to grow green shoots. However, an unfortunate Manipur High Court ruling recommended that the state government should move the GoI to include the dominant Meiteis as a Scheduled Tribe and, thereby, allowed for affirmative action (also implying the opening of purchase of land in the hills by outsiders). Knowing the potential of harm likely to be caused by the ruling, the state government should have taken immediate steps to challenge the ruling through judicial means (it could have easily done so).

The hill tribes, fearing loss of land and identity due to the anticipated influx of outsiders, reacted on a massive and sometimes violent scale. Unfortunately, the matter was not handled properly at the state level and the situation was allowed to descend into unrest and violence. The people of the valley and the hills clashed in large numbers and police armouries were looted and many arms were taken away (most of which have not been recovered). The army and the paramilitary forces were not used aptly and the police were not up to it. Now, some kind of peace has been restored, but the social fabric has been torn asunder and silence is the only dialogue. The hill people have not been able to go back to their old way of life. We are sitting on a powder keg, which one volatile statement can set off. The process of dialogue between the communities and the government was not initiated in the early stages and the state government opted to use strong-arm methods, which failed.

The situation in the Northeast requires political acumen and statesmanship of the highest order. We should not wait for the situation to escalate and then try to douse the fires. I would like to take just a passing glance at the other states.

Mizoram has been quiet for long, but now some ominous signs are visible. As reported in the press, the Government of India had asked Mizoram to not take in Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and set up camps for them.

## Trump's trade war may sound death knell for WTO

India must start preparing for seizing the opportunity arising out of the higher tariffs being imposed on our competitors.

So the world is not flat any longer! (with homage to Thomas Friedman). In fact, POTUS' 'Liberation Day' announcements have created a large number of valleys and crevices across the global economy. Donald Trump's announcements may also sound the death knell for the World Trade Organisation (WTO) because one of its cardinal principles, the MFN (most favoured nation), has been unceremoniously chucked out of the window of the Oval Office. The MFN, from its inception, has unambiguously mandated that the tariff rate applied by a country on its imports from another country will be applicable to all other exporting countries. With a dazzling bouquet of tariff rates applicable specifically to a particular trade partner of the US, the MFN principle is truly dead and buried. Will this imply the culmination of the long-drawn demise of the WTO, from which the US effectively withdrew in Trump 1.0? I think it will. Centre William Rappard, which houses the headquarters of the WTO in Geneva, should be soon available for new tenants! I am also fairly curious on the reaction to these global economy-shattering announcements from the Bretton Woods Twins, the IMF and the World Bank, as also from the die-hard advocates of a tariff-free world which Prof Jagdish Bhagwati has spawned over his lifetime. What happens to the remnants of the Washington Consensus and its proponents? The entire macroeconomic copybook has been turned on its head with the country that accounts for more than one quarter (26.3 per cent) of the global economy now proceeding to virtually close its domestic market to imports. Poor Mexico, which sent 80 per cent of its exports northwards, and Canada, whose Ontario border bristles with cross-border trade of autos, auto components and consumer products, will now be looking at alternatives that can absorb this large volume of exports. Will they find these when all other countries may be tempted to safeguard their own markets? The EU, with a 20 per cent tariff imposed on their exports, may retaliate with a tit-for-tat announcement, but will that not sound the end of the north Atlantic alliance that we had taken for granted as the guarantor of the rules-based, multi-lateral global trading order? Sorry, Fukuyama san, history is yet being made. No respite for the succeeding generations.

I am at my wits' end to understand as to how an economy with a per capita income of \$87,000 in 2024, having achieved a significant increase of more than \$5,000 over the level in 2023, can hope to raise these incomes further by shutting itself out of the global trade flows which has benefitted it so enormously. Is it real for POTUS to expect a grand revival of the manufacturing sector and the re-shining of the rust belt across the mid-west, given the extraordinarily high real wages in relative terms with other trading partners? These are only likely to rise as



result of the large-scale forced emigration of working age population. Perhaps the calculus is based on a large-scale adoption of robotisation in the US manufacturing sector and a massive increase in private sector capex to undertake this AI-driven robotisation. More likely, the expectation is that border-hopping foreign direct investment, as announced by TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company), will get the rust belt up and running in no time. One is reminded of the saying that if wishes were horses... What of the impact on India? The 26 per cent tariff announced is argued to be half of the 52 per cent effective protection applied by India on US exports to India. I am not sure at all on how this figure of effective protection has been arrived at. But be that as it may, it is clear that India's exports to the US will attract substantially lower tariffs as compared to China (34 per cent) Taiwan (36 per cent), Vietnam 46 per cent, and I am sure none of us would have guessed that Cambodia (49 per cent) will face the worst wrath meted out on Liberation Day. So, does this new fragmented world trading arrangement present an opportunity for India? I think so specially if we consider that the much higher cost exports from the EU and Canada will also now attract similar level of tariffs. So rather than go on about the negative impact on our exports to the US, we start preparing for seizing the opportunity presented to us by higher tariffs being imposed on our competitors. In any case how much could the negative impact be if our total exports to the US are a

paltry \$77.5 billion in 2023 — compared to China's \$526 billion and Vietnam's at \$120 billion? One straightforward opportunity that is plainly visible comes from the hugely concessional 10 per cent tariff on Brazilian export. Our firms should be encouraged and indeed helped in setting up joint ventures in Brazil and shift our high-end garment export units to that country. The diamond business with relatively low capital costs could also be so re-routed. And with Bangladesh losing out on its import duty free status, we should be preparing to welcome our garment exporters back to India and assure them that they will surely not face the business conditions that drove them away from India to Bangladesh in the past two decades. Finally, a suggestion that, going by past rhetoric, is likely to evoke the fury of Trump 2.0. Members of BRICS, now expanded to BRICSUSAI, should use its next summit to try and agree to a common low-tariff regime among themselves. Yes, there exists the danger of Chinese flooding of all these markets, but it will also open up the growing Chinese market to exports from its BRICSUSAI trading partners. And China could be persuaded to maintain a trade balance with its trading partners with some limits on trade surplus as was originally suggested by Keynes and which was cornerstone of IMF's exchange rate determination stance. With nearly 40 per cent of world trade among themselves, including everything from energy to gold and gems and jewellery, this could pose a very healthy flat world challenge to the global trade.

## Anti-drug drives

Punjab must go beyond political optics

Even as Punjab's Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Governor Gulab Chand Kataria lead parallel anti-drug campaigns, it is imperative that the efforts go beyond political rivalry and yield tangible results. Punjab, ranking second in the country for drug-related cases under the NDPS Act, continues to grapple with a crisis that has devastated families and endangered the future of its youth. While high-profile marches, public oaths and pledges can create awareness, they must be backed by strong enforcement and systemic change.

The numbers tell a concerning story. While the number of drug-related cases in Punjab has declined from 12,423 in 2022 to 9,025 in 2024, the state remains a major hub for drug smuggling. The government has adopted an aggressive stance, with the Punjab Police shifting focus to dismantling high-level drug networks and targeting



kingpins. The real challenge lies in cracking down on the "big fish" who control the supply chain. Deaths due to drug overdose continue to be a stark reality in

Punjab, with scores of young individuals succumbing to addiction each year. The absence of adequate deaddiction and rehabilitation services further exacerbates the problem, leaving many vulnerable to relapse or fatal overdose. Without a multi-pronged strategy that includes medical intervention, community support and economic opportunities for those at risk, the state will struggle to turn the tide. The Mann government's youth engagement and the Governor's padyatra aim to mobilise public participation, but deeper interventions are needed. Schools and colleges must play a proactive role and, as the Chief Minister has suggested, teachers should be trained to identify early signs of addiction. For Punjab to truly rid itself of this scourge, political leaders must prioritise long-term structural reforms over momentary optics.

## Nation's moral fabric is in peril

Citizens are the sufferers as public life is witnessing a steady decline in values

Justice Yashwant Varma, who was recently transferred to the Allahabad High Court amid a cash stash row, has claimed that someone placed the money in the outhouse of his official residence in Delhi in order to frame him. It must have been a very rich person who had planned to frame the judge. Only Justice Varma would be in a position to name him! A fire was reported at the judge's residence during his absence last month. The police and, of course, the fire brigade were at the scene promptly. Wads of notes were recovered from the outhouse. Some of them were charred, making it difficult for the first responders to count the money — Rs 15 crore is what the public has learnt. It is the figure bandied around on the grapevine, but there is no official take on the amount nor how the money got into the outhouse. The Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court was informed before others. He informed the Chief Justice of India (CJI), who, in turn, ordered an in-house inquiry by a committee of three judges of different high courts. The CJI has decided to be open about the facts as and when they are reported to him. It is obvious that the CJI wants to hide nothing since he knows that if rumours based on conjectures are allowed to proliferate, the damage being done to the integrity and good name of the institution would harm the very essence of the judicial process system in the country. In fact, much harm has already been done.

The armed forces and the judiciary are the two institutions that the people still respect. The other two pillars of any democratic polity, the legislature and the executive, have gone for a toss. The media, too, has largely capitulated. It no longer performs the task of acting as the eyes and ears of the people which it was wont to do earlier. The judiciary is our sole protector at present. If the judiciary, too, goes the way of all flesh, we as a nation are doomed.

There is an advocate in Mumbai named Raju Z Moray. He writes books on his experiences in courts of the city, including the high court. In his latest book, Tales of Law and Laughter, he makes the reader laugh at the foibles of the stakeholders he meets in the HC corridors. But he



also subtly hints at the decline in the quality of judges and, worse, the standards of integrity that they were known for earlier. It is very, very sad that the very concept of honesty is under assault in all departments of the government and public life. When our Prime Minister proclaimed that he would not touch tainted money and would not permit others from doing so, many took him at his word. I do not doubt that he has kept to the first part of his promise. The second part should never have been included in the first place. Corruption at the ground level has bested all records. The PM is helpless to combat the menace. He knows it and so do the people. Entrants to the IAS, the IPS and the judiciary, the three Services which matter the most to the people, primarily used to be men and women of merit and integrity. The subordinate ranks

respected them and followed their example to a major degree. Three decades later, electoral battles have become so intense that demands to expand the scope of reservation and relax the age of the candidates for the All-India Services and the Central Class I have led to a situation where someone like Puja Khedkar could walk into the premier Service and that, too, in her home state, even though she was ranked 800-plus in the order of merit! In 1952, when I competed, only 41 were taken into the IAS/IFS and 37 in the IPS. If the need to win elections eclipses the need to ensure justice and good governance, there will never be any light at the end of the tunnel. People will have to be content with mediocrity and the insidious corruption that they experience in daily life. It becomes even murkier if justice is dispensed on payment

in courts of law. One of my first postings as an assistant superintendent of police was in Nasik. The district judge, for some reason, took a liking to me. When my superior was on leave and I was temporarily in charge of the district police, a policeman on duty in the tribal area of Surgana raped a woman at a fair. The commotion that followed required the presence of a senior officer to calm tempers. The sessions judge and I were in the Officers' Club when the news reached us. He advised me to leave every other matter on hand and proceed immediately to the scene of the disturbance, which I did. All sessions judges in the districts where I served were men of great integrity. Our social interaction rested on shared values and a firm belief in justice and the rule of law.

Things have changed drastically in recent decades. All Services that cater to the public have experienced a steady deterioration in standards. The real sufferers are the citizens of our great nation. The irony is that they do not know what has hit them and how the tsunami originated. We do not know as yet if Justice Varma accepted money. A fair inquiry should reveal the truth. What is certain, however, is that there has been a steady decline in morals and values in public life. India may rise to the rank of the third-largest economy in the world, but if that is achieved under the shadow of corruption, the self-esteem of our citizens will remain low. The writ of the Supreme Court on bulldozer justice, for instance, is being openly flouted by the executive in BJP-ruled states. A form of terrorism has taken shape. The State has become a terrorist. In classical terrorism, citizens do not know who is going to be the next victim. The uncertainty keeps him or her on edge constantly.

On the outskirts of Mumbai, a 'patriot' passing by a Muslim house when an India-Pakistan cricket match was being played in Dubai thought he heard a boy raise anti-India slogans. That was enough for the bulldozers to perform their task of destruction as punishment for a crime the boy may or may not have been guilty of. The Supreme Court's diktat was peremptorily ignored!



# Give a Green look to the Home

Gardening is a creative hobby. Apart from helping to beautify the interior and exterior of one's house, attending to plants gives one tremendous satisfaction. You may try the fanciest of lighting arrangements to brighten up your home, or may get the most expensive and classy sofa sets to decorate your living room, but nothing can match the cool, green effect of indoor plants. The modern urban dwellers might consider this hobby a privilege of the rich who have sprawling courtyards and bungalows, servants. In cramped city flats, where there is not even enough space for human beings where can one accommodate pots and plants, one might ask. But the question itself provides the logic for keeping plants. A tinge of greenery not only adds welcome colour to the drab city abode, but is an essential factor in today's polluted atmosphere. But despite the shortage of space, some of us who have a feel for the good things in life can cultivate plants and enjoy their beauty even while staying in cramped flats. For those of you who don't have the privilege of a garden, you can satisfy your yearning for greenery by growing plants on your terrace. Think of it like this. Would you sit in the sun on the balcony, for hours? Or would you find a nice shady spot? All you need is common sense to approach to growing a fine leafy friend at home. The modern trend is to bring nature inside house, be it

in a significant place as your living room. House plants brighten up your home or office. Caring for house plants make for a great hobby too. Apart from the clean air they provide, plants also brighten up the room providing a cheerful atmosphere and sight for those dry and summer days. The variety of house plants is varied and broad. There are flowering types or non-flowering types. You can grow cacti, small shrubs and flower bulbs. However, most of these plants require more sunlight which might be difficult indoors.

#### CHECK OUT

Check out carefully how healthy the plant you want to buy is. It should look fresh with

abundance of healthy leaves. If it's a flowering plant does it have more than one bud? Buy a plant which has a number of buds.

#### FIRST CHOOSE A POT

Clay pots with their capacity to retain moisture are the best containers for house plants. See that the pots are well baked so that they provide for all season plants. But each pot must have a hole which is plugged loosely so that if there is any excess water in the pot, it does not break easily. You could also go in for cement pots. To make the pots look attractive, mask them in baskets, brass containers. Another attractive trend today is an art called 'pot painting'. Ordinary earthen pots are

printed using oil paint. These pots are quite pretty, elegant and a few plants preferably cactus variety which need less water bring them to life. Use an old plate or try filling them with pebbles placed beneath the pot will help collect water.

#### GET YOUR SAND IN

Equal parts of the sand soil and manure would be generally acceptable blend. Place the plant in a hollow created in the pot. Hold the plant and fill the pot up to three centimetres below the rim. Water it. Ferns are beautiful

plants. Even if you start off with just one leaf, the plant can grow full and fresh. But when the beautiful green suddenly has brown leaflets, some glamour is definitely lost. This means the pot is too small for the plant, simple repotting can revive it.

If you are staying on the ground floor and have some space in the backyard of the house, you have wide options. You can cultivate a kitchen garden in your balcony. A couple of tomatoes for your salad or a bunch of coriander leaves for your raita from your very own garden is indeed delicious and safe from harmful pesticides. Lady fingers, methi, curry leaves or other small plants which could be of use in your kitchen and which require little space are all choices for you to select from. While spinach requires a little attention and does well at your washing place where adequate water is ensured, lady fingers need only 4 to 5 weeks to produce a crop. Seeds could be either had from professional sellers or selected from kitchen shelf.

If you live in a multi-storey and have access to the roof, a terrace garden is best for you. The plants you could consider are rubber and a wide range of vines.

But if you are stuck in a sandwich flat, your option is to attempt an indoor or balcony garden. You can choose from a wide variety of cacti, ferns, which can give a garden look to the corners of the flat.

We commonly think of only a limited house plants. These plants will keep your garden green through all seasons.

There are a lot of varieties. For instance, there are basil and parsley which can survive in the limited light conditions of your home.

#### IN A NUT SHELL

For a plant to grow well, you just need to remember four things; light, air, temperature and humidity.

These affect plants nearly the same way as they affect us.

#### WHY THE PLANT IS WILTING

If a plant is being deprived of water, leaves and stem first become dry and brittle and crisp. Too much water causes the leaves to go limp.

As per watering is concerned, over watering is as bad as under watering and should be avoided. In summers, more water is needed as it evaporates faster and, for the same reason, plants kept in shades require less water.

## Are you following the right desk etiquettes?



You spend majority of your time at your work desk, thus making it an extension of your persona. A messy desk leaves a bad impression and reflects badly on you, which is something you can't afford, especially

in a professional environment. Sheena Agarwal, Image Consultant, Urbanista Image Consultancy explains, "A messy desk is not a system. It is a manifestation of gross neglect. Hence, it is necessary that it reflects you as an

individual and helps in perception management." So what should you ideally keep on your desk?

"The list is endless but to begin with, what you keep on your desk should be keeping in mind the nature of your work and industry. In an investment bank, it is frowned upon if the space is cluttered and full of personal pictures and notes. Same rules apply for the wallpaper on your desktop. People trusting you with their money must see you as someone credible. Hence, keep it simple. A few appropriate pictures and necessary stationery is as far as you should go," adds Sheena.

But the rules are different if you were in the creative line of work. Then you can have fun, literally. Sheena explains, "Express, emot but don't go overboard. Keep the creativity energy fresh and not mucky. But do not go as far as plants are concerned. You have a place called home for that."

Either ways do not clutter your desk with a lot of paperwork and files. If there is additional space provided, store the unnecessary there.

Women should bar from making their workstations a pink/red overload. In a corporate world, putting your femininity on the forefront might put your career on a backseat. If you like keeping extra pair of shoes, clothing etc. for time of need, keep it discreet.

Unless absolutely necessary, refrain from eating at your desk. Clear out empty cups of tea/coffee, beverage cans and food wrappers time to time.

#### How much is too much?

It is important that your workstation reflects who you are. Having said that, workstation adornment should not be a necessary conversation starter. Sheena adds, "No one likes being known as the person who has too many flowers or paperwork at their stations. Keep it simple. Place a few pictures if need be, maybe copy of some appreciation mail addressed to you would be acceptable as well. But do not overdo it. You should not be seen as someone trying too hard to make a point. Even if you are the youngest member in the team, do not put up pictures of a wild night with friends on your workstation. A family picture, graduation pictures, parents and close family is as far as you should go."

If you have a pin board next to your



station, pin up necessary information like phone numbers or instructions to it.

Treat your workstation as you would treat your personal space. Keep it clean and simple. Let it not be your identity in its entirety. Let it be a reflection of who you are by keeping it clean and sophisticated.



## Here's how to let your Garden blossom

After the heavy showers in the last few days, the city is sizzling hot again, making it tougher for plants, thereby giving your garden a weary look. Just like us, plants and lawns also need enough care in this sweltering heat.

Here are some easy tips and tricks for keeping your garden in a good and fresh shape.

#### WATER

Make sure that you water plants, deeply, everyday. "Do not just spray water on plants and lawns, make sure that you make a layer of three inches of water, so that it seeps down till the roots," says Sanjay Alok, owner of a nursery. Remember, your hanging baskets would dry quickly, so help them retain soil moisture by adding moisture retaining gel or crystals. The best time to water is early morning or early evening.

#### GARDEN BEDS AND CONTAINER

Remove dead plants and clear the rough space for fresh colourful annuals. Choose plants in larger pots to fill in empty spots more quickly. Also, pick plants that are heat-friendly and are favourable to this weather. Clearing dead patches in your garden would help promote more flowers, and keep the garden fresh.

#### MULCH

An exclusive organic layer of decayed leaves, bark or composite, applying two inch of mulch on top of soil around the plants saves them from the heat. "Mulching is important to garden health, it protects plants from the heat and helps control weeds," says Aarti Mukhani, a botanist.

#### WEEDS

During summers, tiny weed seedlings become huge monsters. Pull out all the junk flora as soon as they are spotted as they take up all the nutrients and water from the plants' soil and keeps them away from utilising it. Weeds also encourage the spread of pests.



# 'Shistachar' squads conduct women's safety drive at school, public places

**The initiative focused on educating the public about the perpetuating forms of harassment that women face in public spaces.**

NEW DELHI. The Delhi Police's anti-eve-teasing team, coined as the 'Shistachar Squad', conducted awareness campaigns at a school in Rani Bagh and in public places around outer Delhi's Paschim Vihar area in a bid to spread awareness over issues like eve-teasing, molestation, and harassment, officials said on Friday. The initiative focused on educating the public about the perpetuating forms of harassment that women face in public spaces. In an effort to empower women and make them aware of their rights, the campaign also emphasised on the legal provisions, helpline numbers, and support mechanisms available for those facing such harassment, they said.

With an aim to foster a safer public environment for women, the police teams distributed pamphlets and held interactive



sessions with commuters, stressing the importance of respecting women's safety, dignity, and boundaries.

Members of the Shistachar Squad also engaged with local authorities to discuss preventive measures and encourage victims to report such criminal tendencies without fear or stigma, the police said.

Earlier this month, Delhi Police Commissioner

Sanjay Arora had issued a circular constituting dedicated district-wise anti-eve-teasing teams (Shistachar Squads) across the national capital to check incidents of harassment and ensure the women's safety in public spaces. Each squad comprises an inspector, a sub-inspector, four female and five male personnel, and one technician from special staff from the anti-auto theft squad for technical aid. They will be provided with one four-wheeler and adequate two-wheelers to ensure effective patrolling and quick response.

"DCPs in each district shall identify and compile a list of hotspots and vulnerable areas, posing risks to women's safety, which will be the primary focus of these squads. A list of such hotspots identified by the district DCPs will be shared with DCP of the Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC)," the circular had read.

**BookMyShow removes all content of comic Kunal Kamra amid joke row, delists him**



NEW DELHI. In a huge blow to Kunal Kamra, online ticketing platform BookMyShow on Saturday removed all content related to the stand-up comedian and removed him from the list of artists listed on its website. This comes a day after Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) youth leader Rahool N Kanak wrote to BookMyShow, requesting the company not to provide a platform for Kamra, following his controversial remarks on Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Requesting the website not to facilitate the sales of tickets for Kamra's upcoming show, Kanak stressed that "continuing to facilitate ticket sales for his events could be perceived as an endorsement to his divisive rhetoric which may have serious repercussions for public sentiment and order in the city." Soon after the ticketing website's decision to delete Kamra from the history list of artists, Kanak welcomed the move, thanking BookMyShow for removing any content linked to the artist.

**Fight against the Waqf bill goes to Supreme Court**

NEW DELHI. Hours after the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025 received Parliament's approval, the Congress and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) moved the Supreme Court on Friday, challenging its validity, arguing that it violates constitutional provisions. The development came a day after Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin announced in the state assembly that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) will move the SC to challenge the bill.

In his plea, Congress MP Mohammad Jawed held that the bill imposes arbitrary restrictions on waqf properties and their management, undermining the religious autonomy of the Muslim community. The petition claimed that the proposed law discriminates against Muslims by imposing restrictions that are not present in the governance of other religious endowments.

Jawed, a Lok Sabha MP from Bihar's Kishanganj, was also a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) that scrutinised the bill.

While the Lok Sabha cleared the bill 288:232; in the Rajya Sabha it sailed through with a 128:95 vote. Both Houses witnessed 12-hour marathon debates. The bill will now go to the President for assent before becoming law. Earlier in the day, AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said his party will soon challenge the constitutionality of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, in the Supreme Court.

Challenging the bill in the top court, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi in his plea argued that it removes various protections that were previously accorded to waqfs as well as to Hindu, Jain, and Sikh religious and charitable endowments. "This diminishing of the protection given to Waqfs while retaining them for religious and charitable endowments of other religions constitutes hostile discrimination against Muslims and is violative of Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution, which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion."

**AIMPLB knocks prez door**  
The All India Muslim Personal Law Board sought an urgent appointment with President Droupadi Murmu to express their concern before her assent to the Waqf Bill.

## IGIA to begin trials for full-body scanners from May

NEW DELHI. The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) will soon have advanced full-body scanners to enhance security while maintaining accuracy. Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), operator of the IGIA announced on Friday that the trials for the scanners will begin from next month following the latest guidelines from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS). The airport operator said that four state-of-the-art scanners have been procured for the trials. Two of them will be installed at Terminal 1 (T1), while the other two will be placed at Terminal 3 (T3).

It further said that the IT interface of these machines is currently being finalised. After the completion of the three- to four-month long trial, a BCAS-led committee will go through the findings and establish a Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for full-scale implementation. The scanners will be using millimeter-wave technology operating between 70 to 80 GHz. DIAL said that unlike conventional X-ray scanners, they do not emit radiation, making them safe for all travellers, including pregnant women and individuals with medical implants. "These advanced scanners detect both metallic and non-metallic threats, including explosives, significantly improving upon traditional metal detectors. The technology, already in use at major international airports in the US, Canada, and Australia, enables rapid screening, with each scan taking just three seconds and a maximum throughput of 1,200 scans per hour," the DIAL said. The airport operator further said that the scanners ensure no personal images are stored, while generating a standardized 2D image on a preset human avatar. These can scan in individuals between 3.3 feet to 6.7 feet in height.

DIAL CEO Videh Kumar Jaipuria said, "Delhi Airport remains committed to deploying the latest technology to enhance security while ensuring a seamless passenger experience. The introduction of these body scanners is a game-changer in security screening, allowing for faster checks."

## Delhi hospitals to get 20 per cent hike in compensation and incentives

NEW DELHI. A special tariff is planned for Delhi hospitals under the Ayushman Bharat Yojna, which will begin in the national capital on Saturday. The tariff includes a 20% hike in compensation of treatment rates for hospitals enrolled in the scheme. Also, hospitals with the best performance will receive an incentive of up to 30%. A senior official says, "The treatment tariffs in Delhi are higher compared to other cities. The



stakeholders have communicated that enforcing the standard tariff will not be sustainable for hospitals here." The official says the incentive for top-performing hospitals will be based on multiple parameters, including the turnaround time for surgeries and medical interventions, clearance of bills, and patient feedback.

On Saturday, Delhi will become the 35th state to implement the Centre's flagship Ayushman Bharat scheme and an MoU will be signed between the National Health Authority and the Delhi government.

Ration card holders under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana and citizens above 70 years old will be among the first beneficiaries of the scheme. Verification of senior citizens' details will be done through the voter list, while ration card holders' info will be cross-checked via National Food Security Act portal.

## Cabinet nod to Rs 500 crore elevated road in Sonia Vihar to ease traffic hurdles

NEW DELHI. The Delhi government has announced plans for a 6-km elevated road in the Pushta Sonia Vihar area, with an estimated cost of Rs 500 crore. The first capital project of the newly formed BJP government in the city aims to ease traffic congestion and improve connectivity in the trans-Yamuna area.

According to officials, the elevated road will stretch from Nanak Sar Gurudwara to Shani Mandir (UP border), relieving thousands of daily commuters. The move was initiated considering the long-pending demand of trans-Yamuna residents for a solution to the traffic problems in Sonia Vihar. Considering the severe congestion in the area, the Public

Works Department (PWD) has decided to construct this flyover, which will provide relief to local residents, they



added.

The stretch, currently under the jurisdiction of the flood department, will be transferred to PWD, which will prepare the Detailed Project Report and commence work soon. According to the

officials, the people of Sonia Vihar have been struggling with severe traffic congestion, making this project essential. However, due to the large number of trees in the area, it was now decided to build an elevated flyover. On Thursday, CM Rekha Gupta and PWD Minister Parvesh Verma discussed this, and the project got approval.

"The Nanak Sar Gurudwara Chowk area, a locality in Wazirabad, has been a priority for the government due to its significance as a community hub," Verma said.

In the Budget, Rs 28,000 crore has been allocated for capital expenditure, a dedicated sum of Rs 3,843 crore has been set aside for improving roads and bridges to ensure smooth commuting and connectivity.

## DMRC starts integrated app to ease last-mile travel

**A bike taxi or auto-rickshaw will be booked to pick up the user from their location to the nearest metro station.**

NEW DELHI. Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has introduced an integrated travel solution through its 'DMRC Sathi-Momentum 2.0'

app, allowing commuters to book bike taxis and auto-rickshaws for first and last-mile connectivity alongside metro tickets in a single transaction. Developed in collaboration with Autope Payment Solutions Ltd., the initiative aims to streamline the commuter experience by eliminating the need for multiple bookings and bridging the gap between metro stations and final destinations. Users can enter

their destination on the app, which then suggests the nearest metro stations and the best transport options for first and last-mile travel.



A bike taxi or auto-rickshaw will be booked to pick up the user from their location to the nearest metro station. Once the user reaches the destination station, another ride will be arranged

for the last-mile connectivity. If the station is within walking distance, the app will not suggest a vehicle, but walking navigation will be available soon. DMRC has partnered with Rapido for bike taxis and auto-rickshaws and SheRyds, a women-led startup offering bike taxi services exclusively for female commuters.

Speaking on this, Vikas Kumar, MD, DMRC, said, "With the launch of this integrated service, we are addressing one of the most pressing challenges in urban commuting—first and last-mile connectivity. Sathi-Momentum 2.0 makes metro travel more accessible, efficient, and convenient for all."

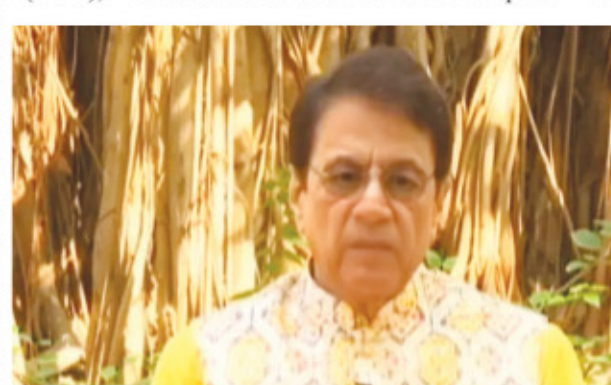
## "Government Should Take Strict Action": BJP's Arun Govil On Mahadev Betting App

New Delhi. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Arun Govil on Friday said that strict action should be taken against those involved in a case related to the Mahadev Betting App. "Mahadev App has been in controversy and people from Bollywood to politicians - leaders from Chhattisgarh have been questioned in this case. The government should take strict action against those who are involved in illegal activities... Youth are the future of the country and if they are getting involved in this, committing suicide, then the future of the country will not be bright. The government should take strict action," Mr Govil said. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has named former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister and Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel as one of the accused in the Mahadev Betting app case. On April 1, the CBI made public its first information report (FIR) in connection with the Mahadev online betting app case.

According to the FIR a total of 21 people have been named as accused including: Ravi Uppal, Shubham Soni (Pintu), Chandra Vhushan Verma, Assem Das, Satish Chandrakar, Nitish Deewan, Saurabh Chandrakar, Anil Agarwal (Atul Agarwal), Vikas Chhapriya, Rohit Gaulati, Vishal Ahuja, Dheeraj Ahuja, Anil Kumar Dammani, Sunil Kumar Dammani, Bhim Singh Yadav, Harishankar Tibarwal, Surendra Bagi, Suraj Chokhani and two other unknown persons, including a police officer.

The CBI has charged the accused with Sections 120 (B), 420, 467, 468 under the Indian Penal Code (IPC); Sections 11, 7, 8, 4 of the Chhattisgarh Gambling (Prohibition) Act, 2002, and Section 4 (A) of the Public Gambling Act. On

March 26, the investigative agency also conducted a 14-hour search at the residence of former CM Bhupesh



Baghel, confiscating three phones." 15 days ago, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had conducted a thorough raid and questioned what more the CBI could uncover now." He also revealed that the CBI had taken original documents from his residence, and despite his request,

they did not provide photocopies," Baghel said. He asserted that if action had been taken in time, submitting the required documents would have been beneficial.

The FIR, originally received on March 4, 2024 alleges that Mahadev Online Book is operating betting services illegally. The complaint also alleged that other websites are also being operated in association with the promoters of the Mahadev betting app, naming "skyexchange," which is allegedly being operated by Hari Shankar Tibrewal in association with Mahadev Online Book.

The complaint alleges that Mahadev platform provides illegal betting services in different "live games" including poker, card games, chance games, betting on sports. The app rose to significance five years ago, in 2019-2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown.



# Simple tips to do up your Car Interiors



New cars may be rolling on to the roads today, but not many would like to shell out big bucks with their dipping bank balance during the on going recession. In such times, you can still 'own a new car'; all you need to do is give your car a much-needed makeover with interior car accessories.

The interior of a car is often the most overlooked area, when it comes to customizing or redoing a car. However, people fail to realise that it's the interior of the car that you see more often than the exterior.

So, dress up your 'old' car to make it a 'new' one. Pick one or all of the car accessories that will help dress up your car, after all, when you are driving in your 'new' car, you'll feel better too!

## Replace old seat covers

Since seats make up a large part of the car interior, changing their

colours can make a big difference in how the car looks and feels.

With time while leather seats get scratched, fabric seats show stains and tears.

Replace old seat covers with new ones to help cover up those stains and scratches and give your car a 'renewed life'. Car seat covers are easy to install, and cost much less than it would to replace leather seats.

## Change floor mats

Rubber floor mats will not only cover up worn out spots on your car's floor, but will also give it a cleaner look. Everyday, mud, sand, slush, and debris are tracked into your vehicle and mats protect the car carpet from these. Easier to maintain, these can be



Just like we do up the interiors of our homes, we should also do up our car interiors. Here is how...

washed from time to time with just water. You can also customize the floor mats to perfectly fit the model of your car.

## Place sun films

The installation of these films on front windshield, back windshield or side windows helps combat ultraviolet rays. It helps cut annoying glare on your windshield reducing intense bright spots on sunny days and blinding headlights at night. These films also make your air conditioner functioning more effective.

## Cover the steer

Leather steering wheel covers are easily available and slip onto your steering wheel, giving it a new sporty look. The contoured ribs in the steering wheel cover help your hands relax while you drive.

## Seat cushions

Jazz up your car interior with colourful seat cushions. Not only will this add to the accessories, if you buy a massage car cushion or heated cushion, you can have a comfortable ride home from work.

## Music to soothe your ears

Replace the old audio cassette music system in your car with a high tech MP3 music. This will not only allow you to increase your choice of music, but will eliminate the tedious work of changing cassettes. And for all the tech savvy people, get a USB slot installed in your car to plug in your ipod to it. To experience better sound, you could get



amplifiers and woofers installed too.

## Install SatNav guides

SatNavs not only save you from getting lost, but also eliminate the task of asking people for direction. The technology however is still at a nascent stage in the country. The GPS technology and digital mapping keep you on the move with easy-to-follow directions, through simple and clear voice prompt and visual directions. All you have to do is enter the street name that is located closest to where you would like to go. And the guide will calculate the best route for you.

## Get the sporty look

Many car enthusiasts add sporty pedals and gear knobs, antilock brakes, to their vehicles in an effort to reduce weight and increase foot traction. You could also install tachometer, ideally meant for speedsters, to know engine RPM (revolutions per minute). It merely tells you that how fast your engine's crank-shaft is rotating and has nothing to do with fuel efficiency.

All of these accessories can turn even the oldest car into a flashier car. Well, how much will it cost for a 'car makeover' depends on what you buy and where you buy it from

## Turn your bath area into a glam zone

Taking a shower in a very glammed up and pleasant bathroom is a rejuvenating experience. Here is how can make your bathroom the best place in your house:

### Deck up the interiors

Starting from the bath tub to the bathroom fittings, make sure there is class and plan the combinations out. Match the colour of the walls with that of the bathtub or choose reverse colours or contrast colours if you



like it to be spunky.

### Colour code the bath place

Taking from the bath linen to colours of the tiles and the wash basin, plan what colours will pep up your mood and get your bathroom designed accordingly. Color therapy works everywhere, even in the bathroom. So pick up the colour sheet and work out some best colour combos for tiles, fittings as well as walls.

### Jazz it up with tech

Starting from installing a wireless phone to making the bathroom a wi-fi zone to installing a touch screen panel with internet connectivity and to touch sensitive bathroom fittings, you can think of all the high end stuff that will totally revamp and make your bathroom an envious special zone. This will only pep up the atmosphere of your bedroom.

### Stock up some spa essentials

Essential oils, body and face scrubs of your choice and a little bit of aroma therapy. What else do you need? A sauna? Well if you can install it, wonderful, otherwise a hot shower or a hot water bath in the Jacuzzi will let you rejuvenate equally.

### 1. Don't clutter with furniture

"People tend to have too much furniture in their house in a bid to show off their taste. This doesn't give a feeling of lightness, but only creates clutter and makes your room look smaller than it already is," says interior designer Shehzad Khan.

Conversely, spacing your furniture out and resting it flat against the wall is a fool's errand. It doesn't ensure a bigger room, instead your room ends up looking sparse. The trick is to angle it right. For instance, you can place a small console behind the sofa to create a sense of space. You can do the same thing with your bed and a side table in the bedroom.

### 2. Don't use too many small paintings

Fine art lends aesthetics and a sense of timelessness to your home. However, scattering small paintings or prints all over the walls will make a shoebox-sized home look smaller and more congested than it already is. Instead, invest in one life-size three-dimensional scenic painting on canvas, the keywords here being life-size and scenic. "Use wall cladding on the chosen surface and install the 3D canvas on it," says Gogia. Scenery gives a lot of depth to the wall. A DIY option is to paint the wall yourself. This way, you get to express and show off your creativity too. The market is also flooded with readymade wallpapers of scenic pictures that can be directly purchased and applied to one wall.

### 3. Do install French windows

Floor-to-ceiling glass windows is how the French won the West over, at least when it comes to decor. French windows automatically give spaciousness to the room. There are two reasons for this. They provide more natural light to stream into your room. Also, instead of an opaque wall, you have glass and openness extending beyond it.



# 6 ways to make your room Look bigger

From optical illusion to colour schemes and fine art, there are plenty of ideas to dig into for a more spacious-looking living space

### 4. Do have a white floor or ceiling

This may sound too stark for us Indians, since we love colour and all things vibrant. Having a stark white ceiling or floor is an international trend that is catching on in India. The easiest option for a white floor is marble. There is a variety available out there, so feel free to experiment. For a bit of warmth, lay out a soft rug. As for the ceiling, white is usually right. Says Girish Gogia, former interior decorator, "A milk white

ceiling doesn't feel heavy on the head." Pure and pristine, white is the best colour to instill a sense of airiness. Choose from ghost white, eggshell, pearl, cream or the popular 'off white'.

### 5. Do invest in multi-functional decor

Streamline your room with multi-functional pieces. For instance, a dining table that folds into a coffee table or seater. A trunk or an ottoman with built-in storage to keep your reading material in. In the mood to splurge? A number of decor labels are now available in India. For a DIY approach, look up the internet to design your own functional pieces.

### 6. Do use paints in pastels

As far as walls are concerned, try to paints from the pastel family to make it appear brighter. Pastel colours are also easy on the eyes. "In fact, you can take the pastel theme further and do up your home with upholstery in pastel shades," says interior decorator Suraj Dutta.

"Looking at the current scenario in Mumbai



where the apartments are small, opt for lighter shades. The flooring shouldn't have too much design. It should have straight lines. Silver leafing and champagne leafing on the walls and even on the ceiling make your room appear larger. The technique adds a royal touch to your home and is quite the rage right now. It looks equally good in a 2 BHK flat as it does in an apartment studio of a bachelor."





## India's IT Services Companies To Report Subdued Growth During 4QFY25: Report

**New Delhi.** India's information technology sector is expected to report subdued growth for the fourth quarter of FY25 (January-March period), according to a report by Systematix Institutional Research. The report attributed this slowdown to seasonal weakness and reduced discretionary spending on digital transformation projects by global clients.

It said, "We expect IT services companies within our coverage to report subdued growth during 4QFY25 on seasonal weakness and lower discretionary digital transformation spends." It also mentioned that Indian IT companies, which earn a major share of their revenues from the US market, continue to face a challenging business environment as the US deals with macroeconomic uncertainties. Just as the sector was hoping for a recovery in discretionary tech spending, the report stated that the situation has become more complex due to fresh tariff announcements by the Trump-led administration, recessionary concerns, and a cut in IT budgets by Elon Musk-led DOGE. These developments are causing delays in large-scale tech transformation projects. Instead, clients are now focusing on cost-saving measures, including vendor consolidation and budget reallocation, which is affecting new project flows and revenue visibility for IT firms.

The report expects large-cap Indian IT companies to post a quarter-on-quarter revenue decline of 0 to 2 per cent in dollar terms. Among the major players, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is likely to see revenue pressure due to a ramp-down in its deal with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL).

Infosys and HCL Technologies may experience a dip in revenues due to seasonal factors, while Wipro, Tech Mahindra, and Sonata Software are expected to report weaker results due to company-specific challenges. Despite the pressure on revenue, EBIT (earnings before interest and tax) margins are expected to remain largely stable across companies.

However, margins for Infosys and HCL Technologies could be slightly affected due to seasonality and wage increases. Overall, the outlook for the IT sector remains cautious, as companies brace for a quarter marked by soft demand, client budget tightening, and global economic uncertainties.

## Income Tax Return 2025: What's New In ITR-2 Filing Process Find Out Here

**New Delhi.** The new financial year has started and so has the tax filing season. Taxpayers can now file their Income Tax Return (ITR) for the Assessment Year 2025-26 (Financial Year 2024-25). Just like every year, the ITR filing process is available in both online and offline modes, making it convenient for everyone to get started. The Income Tax Department has introduced a new Excel-based utility for ITR-2 which was launched on March 25, 2025. This form is meant for individuals and Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs) who don't have income from business or profession. A key update is the addition of the option to file a revised return under Section 139 (8A).

So, if you spot an error or need to update any details in your return, you can now do it without hassle. This new feature is especially helpful for salaried individuals, pensioners, and other non-business taxpayers.

Who Should File ITR-2?

ITR-2 is for individuals whose annual income exceeds Rs 50 lakh or those who earn from sources like rent, capital gains, or other income. You'll also need to file ITR-2 if you're a director in a company or hold shares in an unlisted company. Plus, if you own any foreign assets, this is the form you need to use. Choosing the right ITR form depends on where your income comes from. If your total annual income is below Rs 50 lakh and you earn only from salary, pension, interest, dividends, or rent from just one property, then you should file ITR-1. So, whether you earn from salary, rent, capital gains, or other sources, picking the right ITR form is key to hassle-free filing and staying compliant with tax rules.

## Forex kitty continues to gain for 4th week, RBI adds \$6.6 bn

**NEW DELHI.** The reserves rose \$6.56 billion to \$665.4 billion as of March 28, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. This marks the highest level in nearly five months.

During the reporting weekend, the rupee appreciated by 0.6% against the dollar, supported by the renewed foreign investment in the Indian equities. This means the central bank did not sell much dollars to defend the currency. March also saw the rupee making its best monthly gain in nearly seven months, since November 2018, gaining close to 2.3%. However, the currency closed the last fiscal with a loss of 2.46%. The foreign exchange reserves continue to gain, adding \$6.596 billion to a five-month high of \$665.4 billion in the week to March 28, according to the latest data from the central bank. In the previous three weeks, the RBI cumulatively added \$20.1 billion. According to the government, this can cover 11 months of imports and makes the country's reserves the fourth largest in the world after China, which has over \$3.3 trillion in its reserves, followed by Japan with \$1.23 trillion, and the tiny Switzerland at the third place with \$927 billion, which is 1.5 times of our forex reserve.

The rupee opened strong at 84.95 on Friday as the dollar index fell massively after the bloodbath on the Wall Street following the tariff war unleashed on Thursday. The rupee edged up in volatile trades, holding near three month high against the dollar and closed at 85.22, up 33 paise from the previous close. The dollar index currently quotes at 101.76, nearly at five month low. The RBI said the reserves by \$6.6 billion in the latest reporting week, following a cumulative increase of \$20.1 billion over the previous three weeks. Movements in foreign currency assets within the reserves are influenced by the central bank's market interventions and fluctuations in the value of foreign assets.

# JP Morgan warns of 60% chance of global recession after Trump's tariffs

## Trump's tariffs spark trade war fears with China

## S&P Global and Goldman Sachs increase US recession probabilities

## Brokerages slash US stock targets due to tariff impacts

**New Delhi.** JP Morgan ratcheted up its odds for a US and global recession to 60%, as brokerages scrambled to revise their forecast models with tariff distress threatening to sap business confidence and slow down global growth. The Trump administration imposed tariffs on dozens of countries earlier this week. China

retaliated on Friday with its own levies on US goods, adding to worries about an escalating trade war and wreaking havoc on global financial markets. JP Morgan said it now sees a 60% chance of the global economy entering recession by year end, up from 40% previously. "Disruptive US policies have been recognised as the biggest risk to the global outlook all year," the brokerage said in a note on Thursday, adding that the country's trade policy has turned less business friendly than anticipated. "The effect... is likely to be magnified through (tariff) retaliation, a slide in US business sentiment and supply-chain disruptions." S&P Global also raised its "subjective" probability of a US recession to between 30% and 35%, from 25% in March. Last week, before the April 2 tariff announcement, Goldman Sachs also raised the probability of a US recession to 35% from 20%, noting economic fundamentals were not as strong as in the previous years. HSBC said on Thursday that the recession narrative will gain traction, but added some of this is already "priced in". "Our equity market implied recession

probability indicator suggests equities are already pricing in (about) 40% chance of a recession by the end of the year," HSBC analysts added. Other research firms including Barclays, BofA Global Research, Deutsche Bank, RBC Capital



Markets and UBS Global Wealth Management also warned the US economy faces a higher risk of slipping into a recession this year if Trump's new levies remain in place. Barclays and UBS warned the US economy could enter into contraction territory, while other analysts forecast economic growth broadly between 0.1% and 1%. US equity markets

rallied in November after Trump won a second term in the White House on expectations of business-friendly policies. Following Trump's tariffs announcement in January, it has been a forgettable three months for Wall Street's main indexes, with the benchmark S&P 500 down over 8% so far this year. Brokerages including Barclays, Goldman, RBC and Capital Economics slashed their year-end targets on US stocks, with UBS downgrading its recommendation to "neutral" from "attractive". Capital Economics cut its index target for the S&P 500 to 5,500, the lowest among major brokerages, closely followed by RBC's 5,550.

### RATE-CUT HOPES

While tariffs could stifle economic growth, some analysts expect this could give more room for the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates further in order to boost economic activity. JP Morgan said it expects the tariff shock to be "modestly dampened" by the prospect of further rate cuts. Goldman estimates three interest rate cuts by the end of the year.

# SBI Report Urges India To Expand PLI Scheme As Trump Announces Reciprocal Tariffs

## India is reportedly willing to significantly reduce tariffs on over USD 23 billion worth of American goods sold in India as part of the India-U.S. trade deal, which could help in resolving the issue.

**New Delhi:** According to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI), India should strengthen its Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes in light of growing global trade competitiveness—especially after U.S. President Donald Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on several countries, including India. The report stated that India has a strong opportunity to benefit from the global shift in trade, particularly with the U.S. imposing higher tariffs on Chinese goods. It recommended that the Indian government expand the current PLI schemes across key sectors like

textiles, engineering goods, and gems and jewellery. The report suggests widening the coverage of the scheme to include more products and extending its duration by three more years. This would help boost investments in domestic industries and make Indian products more competitive in the global market. It stated, "The Indian government should



expand existing Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes in these sectors to cover a wider range of products and extend their duration by three years, thereby bolstering domestic industries' investment and global competitiveness." One of the key areas where India stands to gain is

in exports to the U.S. With tariffs on Chinese goods increasing, India can capture a larger market share in sectors such as textiles, apparel, and footwear. Additionally, India has manufacturing strength in iron and steel products, which can also benefit from these trade changes. However, the report also pointed out that the U.S. has imposed a 26 percent tariff on Indian goods, compared to India's 15 percent tariff on American products. This imbalance, it says, should be addressed through ongoing trade negotiations between the two countries. India is reportedly willing to significantly reduce tariffs on over USD 23 billion worth of American goods sold in India as part of the India-U.S. trade deal, which could help in resolving the issue. The report also mentioned that the reciprocal tariffs being imposed by the U.S. on countries like China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Indonesia could give Indian exporters an edge. India may benefit from the expected shift in global supply chains, opening up new opportunities for export growth.

# Kerala 'adventurously experimenting' with alternatives for investment amid constraints: Minister MB Rajesh

**MADURAI.** With Kerala headed towards assembly polls next year, the CPI(M)-led LDF has pitched the concept of 'Nava Kerala', and the state government is "adventurously experimenting" with alternatives for investment amid "constraints imposed by the BJP-led Union government," Kerala Minister MB Rajesh told PTI.

In an interview with PTI, Rajesh, Minister for Local Self Government of Kerala, said the devolution of Finance Commission to the state has reduced, and borrowing has also been limited.

Amid criticism from within the party folds over recent decisions of the state to allow private universities and inviting private investments for restructuring public sector units (PSUs), Rajesh denied that the Left party was deviating from its policies, and said they have first focused on strengthening government universities and PSUs. Rajesh said the first

communist-led government laid the foundation stone for a modern Kerala in 1957, when they introduced land reforms, educational reforms and that was the basis on which the Kerala model of development was created.

"Kerala social development and human development indicators are widely acclaimed. But by the early 1990s, we realised that this model of development has its own limitations and we have to rejuvenate this model," Rajesh said. "We decided that now we need to focus more on economic development with social justice and inclusion. So we need to invest heavily on infrastructure and on social sectors and welfare schemes," he said. Rajesh said to sustain the social development and human development indicators, they felt a need to invest more on social sectors and social welfare schemes. "But at the same time, we have to generate sufficient resources to

make more investment." He alleged the state has been a "victim of hostile policies of the central government led by the BJP". "Kerala's devolution between the 10th and 15th finance commissions came down by half. The revenue deficit gap and GST compensation have been stopped," he alleged. "It became extremely difficult for us to pursue any alternative policy other than neo-liberal policy. But we were not ready to succumb to this pressure. So we are adventurously experimenting with an alternative within these constraints imposed by the BJP-led government," he said. Listing the work done by the state, he said they have invested in highways, water metro, digital science park, digital university, schools, hospitals, and within the constraints, the state has not diluted its commitment to social sectors and welfare schemes.

# Wall Street shatters as Trump tariffs trigger worst day in US markets since 2020

## S&P 500 drops 6%, worst since Covid-19 crisis

## China retaliated with matching tariffs, fuelling global market fears

## Trump sticks to his tariff strategy, keeping markets uncertain

**NEW DELHI.** Wall Street faced its sharpest downturn since the height of the Covid-19 crisis on Friday. The S&P 500 plunged 6% after China retaliated against President Donald Trump's tariff hike, stoking fears of a trade war spiralling into a global recession. It was the S&P 500's worst week since March 2020, when the pandemic severely impacted the economy. The Dow Jones dropped 2,231 points (5.5%), while the Nasdaq tumbled 5.8%, falling over 20% from its December high. On Friday, US stock exchanges saw a record-breaking 26.79 billion shares traded, surpassing the previous high of 24.48 billion on January 27, 2021. The Nasdaq dropped 962.82 points to 15,587.79, confirming the tech-heavy index was in a bear market after falling more than 20% from its December

16 record closing high of 20,173.89. The Dow Jones Industrial Average declined 2,231.07 points to 38,314.86, marking a correction from its December 4 record closing high of 45,014.04. Meanwhile, the S&P 500 slid 322.44 points to 5,074.08, its lowest close in 11 months, according to Reuters.

### GLOBAL MARKETS SLIDE AMID TRADE WAR FEARS

Global stock markets also continued their downward spiral, driven by growing investor fears that Trump's reciprocal tariff strategy could fuel inflation and potentially tip the global economy into a recession. The uncertainty has amplified concerns across financial markets worldwide. However, the US government urged investors to stick behind Trump's policies. "To anyone on Wall Street this morning, I would say trust in President Trump," press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in an interview on CNN. "This is a president who is doubling down on his proven economic formula from his first term: this is indeed a national emergency, and it's about time we have a president who actually does something about it."

**NO WINNERS AS STOCK PLUNGE**

**ACROSS THE BOARD**  
Stocks for all but 12 of the 500 companies that make up the S&P 500 index fell on Friday. The price of crude oil tumbled to its lowest level since 2021. Other basic building blocks for economic growth,



such as copper, also saw prices slide on worries the trade war will weaken the global economy.

### CHINA HITS BACK WITH MATCHING TARIFFS

China's response to US tariffs caused an immediate acceleration of losses in markets worldwide. The Commerce Ministry in Beijing said it would respond to the 34% tariffs imposed by the US on

imports from China with its own 34% tariff on imports of all US products beginning April 10. The United States and China are the world's two largest economies. US-listed shares of Chinese companies dived, with JD.com and Alibaba and Baidu all down more than 7.7%. Companies with exposure to China also fell across the board, with mega-caps such as Apple dropping 7.3%.

### TRUMP REMAINS DEFIANT

Trump seemed unfazed. From Mar-a-Lago, his private club in Florida, Trump headed to his golf course a few miles away after writing on social media that "THIS IS A GREAT TIME TO GET RICH."

However, Trump gave mixed signals on Friday. Trump said Vietnam "wants to cut their tariffs down to

ZERO if they are able to make an agreement with the US." Trump also criticised China's retaliation, saying on his Truth Social platform that "CHINA PLAYED IT WRONG, THEY PANICKED - THE ONE THING THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO DO!"

Trump has said Americans may feel "some pain" because of tariffs, but he has also said the long-term goals.



## NEWS BOX

## India readies bid to host 2036 Olympics; plans to develop 10 training centres

**NEW DELHI.** India has been strongly advocating its bid for hosting the Olympics in 2036 but faces formidable competition from nations including Saudi Arabia (host city Riyadh), Qatar (Doha), Turkey (Istanbul), Indonesia (Nusantara) and Hungary (Budapest), which have been assertively showcasing their strategic vision and financial prowess to deliver a successful Games. With a new dispensation taking over at the IOC, the Indian govt has accelerated its endeavours to establish itself as a serious contender and match the efforts mounted by others. Go Beyond The Boundary with our YouTube channel. SUBSCRIBE NOW!

It's been learnt that an Indian delegation comprising Sports Ministry and IOA officials will deliver a comprehensive power-point presentation to the IOC's Future Host Commission at its headquarters in Lausanne, emphasising the country's preparedness to organise the Games in Ahmedabad. With the submission of an edition-specific formal bid — which would be



assessed by the host commission — India wishes to enter the next phase of a process called the "targeted dialogue".

India plans to develop 10 Olympic training centres. Taking inspiration from prominent Asian sporting powerhouses such as China and Japan, the Indian govt has decided to establish 10 state-of-the-art Olympic training centres across the nation where future elite athletes will be groomed with the objective of enhancing the country's medal tally at the Summer Games. The high-performance training facilities will be established in major Indian cities and will operate under a public-private partnership (PPP) framework, TOI has learnt. Each specialised centre will be dedicated to one specific sport from the 10 selected disciplines, where a maximum of 150 sportspersons will be accommodated to prepare for the Olympic Games and other multisport events. The athletes will be chosen from the Khelo India Youth and University Games — KIYG and KIUG — and the National Games organised by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

## Go easy on us: R Ashwin playfully asks DC's KL Rahul to gift CSK two points

**New Delhi.** Ahead of their key Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 clash on April 5, Chennai Super Kings spinner R Ashwin shared a light-hearted moment with Delhi Capitals' star wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul, jokingly asking him to "go easy" on CSK and hand them two points. The banter took place during a training session at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, with the two players seen chatting in front of the CSK dressing room. In a video recently uploaded by Delhi Capitals' official social media handle, Ashwin was seen in a jovial mood, requesting Rahul to give CSK a win, also praising Delhi's impressive form this season. Ashwin added that DC have been "too good" in IPL 2025 so far. The experienced spinner also asked after Rahul's daughter, showing a warm personal touch to the conversation. Delhi Capitals have indeed looked in formidable touch this season, winning both of their opening matches against Sunrisers Hyderabad and Lucknow Super Giants. They now head into Saturday's fixture as the favourites, given their current



momentum and Chennai's inconsistent start to their campaign.

However, things could take a dramatic turn at Chepauk, with CSK possibly missing regular skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad due to an elbow injury. If Gaikwad is ruled out, MS Dhoni may step in to lead the side — a move that would surely excite the home fans at the iconic venue. The Super Kings are under pressure to find their rhythm after a stuttering beginning to IPL 2025, and a win against a confident Delhi Capitals outfit would be a significant boost.

## Kabaddi, kabaddi, kabaddiction: Former India ace trains budding players for free in Kochi

## Omar Shereef currently trains about 45 girls and 20 boys, from sub-junior to university levels

**NEW DELHI.** In the beach at Kuzhupilly, among the throng of visitors, a few girls are busy warming up. They jog and stretch with discipline. Then, as they start stirring up the sand, one can hear the repeating chant — kabaddi, kabaddi, kabaddi... A practice session for beach kabaddi is underway here. Their coach, 45-year-old Omar Shereef, a veteran player who was part of the 2008 Asian Beach Games gold-winning Indian team, watches on, correcting mistakes and suggesting strategies. "The girls' team is preparing for the upcoming State Beach Kabaddi Championship," he says. Notably, teams coached by Shereef have been winning the district-level games for the past few years. This year, the team's aim is gold. "The game is intense. They need strength, speed, strategy, and a bit of luck. Balancing both speed and dexterity in the

sand is a bit difficult, after all," says Shereef, an India Post official who runs Paravur Kabaddi Academy. Kabaddi is gaining popularity compared to pre-pandemic times, he explains. "With Pro Kabaddi kicking up a storm, and the nature of the game itself changing, it's more visible than when I started out," he says. "Now indoor Kabaddi is played with shoes on a special mat. Much more interesting to watch for an audience." Shereef currently trains about 45 girls and 20 boys, from sub-junior to university levels. What sets Shereef's academy apart is that his training is free.

"The reality is that Kabaddi has just started gaining popularity. And unlike football and cricket, most students who play it are from low-income, marginalised communities. They cannot pay for coaching in hi-tech centres," he says. So, as a professional Kabaddi player who is passionate about the game, he decided to nurture the students. The only ask: train properly and study well. The training is a daily affair. Every day, after he finishes his work at the postal department, he gets into coaching mode. By then, the

students assemble after school.

"The training location changes from many beaches to school and college grounds. Now, we are training for the State Beach Kabaddi Championship. Currently an amateur tournament organised by the KMEA



Engineering College (Pookkattupady) is going on. It will conclude on Saturday. Girls and boys from my academy are part of the tournament. So it's been a busy couple of months," Shereef says, his eyes focused on the girls practising. Shereef has been playing

kabaddi since he was 18 — first for his college team. The beginning was quite coincidental. A few of his friends were in the kabaddi team and they invited him one day for practice. "I fell in love with it," smiles Shereef. Soon, he rose through the ranks and became a national player. "Now, I can't live without it," he adds. Last year, he captained the India Post Kerala circle team, which won the national championship held in Shimla.

"I just love this game," he says, when asked how he manages all these daily duties. And it's this love that he wants to spread among the children — a passion for a game that has made a comeback. However, he adds, some join under him as kabaddi is a good medium for fitness. "Strength training, cardio, overall fitness — kabaddi is good for all, to maintain fitness goals of both adults and children," he highlights.

Above all, Shereef believes in the community and healing power of sports. "In today's world, especially amid the rising concerns of drugs, we need sports more than ever. We should not gatekeep facilities. This is one way in which I am contributing. After all, kabaddi itself is an addiction — a healthy one," Shereef smiles.

## LSG vs MI: Digvish Rathie fined again after repeating notebook celebration

**New Delhi.** Lucknow Super Giants spinner Digvish Rathie was fined for the second successive time in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 season due to his animated 'notebook' celebration against Mumbai Indians. Digvish, who had already been fined for his celebration against his Delhi teammate and Punjab Kings opener Priyansh Arya, was this time fined 50% of his match costs for violating the IPL Code of Conduct. This marked the spinner's second Level 1 breach this season, meaning he has been fined 50% of his match fees and has now accumulated two Demerit Points. Meanwhile, captain Rishabh Pant was also fined for his team's poor over rate during Friday's match against Mumbai Indians in Lucknow. Pant received a fine of ₹12 lakh for his team's first offence of the season. On the very first ball of the 9th over Digvish repeated his controversial notebook celebration after dismissing MI batter Naman

## Freak throw to the head sends Imam ul Haq to hospital in 3rd ODI

## Imam-ul-Haq copped a blow to the face in 3rd ODI

## A concussed Imam was substituted midway through the match

## Pakistan have already lost the ODI series



**NEW DELHI.** Pakistan batter Imam-ul-Haq was hospitalised after being hit in the face in Pakistan's 3rd ODI match vs New Zealand. Imam was forced to leave the field in the third over of the team's chase on Saturday, April 5 after a throw from short cover

slipped through his helmet to hit his face. Imam winced in pain and dropped to the floor right after the ball struck him. He was attended by the team's physio, and was eventually carried off to a medical cart. Imam was checked for concussion and

was substituted later in the game by Usman Khan. The broadcaster later informed that he was hospitalised due to his injury. Imam was batting at 1 off 7 balls at the time of getting injured. Pakistan have already lost the 3-match ODI series. They lost the first two games of the 3-match series at Napier and Hamilton respectively. The Mohammad Rizwan led team were hammered in the first two matches in a team led by Michael Bracewell. In the first match, Mark Chapman scored a terrific hundred which helped the hosts to beat Pakistan by 73 runs.

In the second game, Michael Hay and Ben Sears combined to hand Pakistan a heavy defeat by 80 runs despite them chasing a score of 293 runs.

## Glenn Maxwell key spinner for PBKS on any venue: Spin bowling coach Sunil Joshi



**New Delhi.** Punjab Kings spin bowling coach Sunil Joshi hailed the side's star all-rounder Glenn Maxwell as one of their key spinners, irrespective of the conditions or venue in the Indian Premier League. As the side gears up to take on Rajasthan Royals on April 5, Joshi once again highlighted Maxwell as a crucial spin-bowling option for the side when they take the field at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Tira,

Punjab on Saturday. Maxwell's new chapter with the Punjab Kings in IPL 2025 has not been outstanding with the bat so far, but the Australian star has seen his bowling prove efficient for the team. He has picked up two wickets in two matches — both being key dismissals of opposition captains, Rishabh Pant of Lucknow Super Giants and Shubman Gill of Gujarat Titans. Speaking at the pre-match press conference ahead of

their clash against RR, Joshi explained how Maxwell's experience on big stages is what PBKS will rely on heavily this season.

IPL 2025 Coverage | IPL Points Table | IPL Schedule "I think Maxwell is one of the key players for us as far as the spin bowling is concerned. Every ground and every venue has different dynamics and he understands most of them. He has delivered for us in the last two games. With his pedigree of experience, I am sure he will perform very well in the home games," Joshi said. PBKS, under the new leadership of captain Shreyas Iyer and head coach Ricky Ponting, have ensured a strong start to their IPL 2025 campaign after winning both of their matches so far against GT and LSG. Their performances have placed them at the top of the points table even before they take on Rajasthan. While the likes of Iyer, Prabhshir Singh and even Maxwell have been in fine form for the side, they will be expecting a stern challenge from Rajasthan Royals, who will have their returning skipper Sanju Samson leading them. The Royals are also coming into the contest on the back of a win against Chennai Super Kings, adding further intensity to what promises to be an exciting encounter in Tira.



Dhir, who had been playing brilliantly before departing for a 24-ball 46. The 25-year-old had previously accumulated 1 Demerit Point and was charged with a Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 for the same celebration after dismissing PBKS opener Priyansh Arya in the second innings of his side's clash against the Shreyas Iyer-led franchise.

While Digvish's dismissal of Naman Dhi played a key role in LSG's thrilling 12-run win over MI and also won him the Player of the Match award — specifically with the batte looking in brilliant touch at that moment o the 204-run chase — his disciplinary issue now get him closer to the risk of suspension.

## MS Dhoni as CSK captain one last time What to expect if Thala returns in role

## MS Dhoni may return as captain as Ruturaj is injured Dhoni last captained CSK in IPL 2023 final Dhoni has the most wins as captain in IPL history

**New Delhi.** When Chennai Super Kings welcome Delhi Capitals to the Chepauk on Saturday, April 5, all eyes will be on MS Dhoni. He is the superstar of the side and captained them to 5 IPL titles and the fan following for the 43-year-old is always sky high. Even in lost matches, the fans stick around to see a bit of

Dhoni magic and a few sixes into the crowd. On Saturday, fans will head to Chepauk with high expectations as news has come in that we could see 'Captain Cool' return. With Ruturaj Gaikwad being a doubt for the game due to an elbow injury, CSK batting coach Mike Hussey said that Dhoni will captain the side if their regular skipper doesn't make the cut. We've got some young guy [Dhoni] coming through. He's behind the stumps. Maybe he can do a good job," Hussey said during the press conference.

This has certainly captured the imagination of the fans as they have a chance to see Dhoni make one more return in his most famous avatar. But can we expect from Dhoni as CSK captain once again?

## Calmness personified

Let's just get this out of the way and say that there will be a lot of calmness once

Dhoni takes over as the skipper. As we have seen in countless situations in the IPL and in international cricket, Dhoni is like that captain who can guide the ship through turbulent waters. "Could he do it? Of course. Will he do it? At 43 years old, MS Dhoni, I'm not sure. It might just be for one game, but this could also be an opportunity for CSK to think about the future," Clarke told the broadcasters after the match. Sunil Gavaskar said he should be given captaincy and shouldn't be asked to step down even if Ruturaj returns. Well, guess we will know more about Dhoni and his call on Saturday at 3 pm IST. If you hear a massive roar after the toss happens and a calm man heads to talk to the commentator, then Chennai would have their Thala back one more time. Is it the last time? Well, we can't say "definitely not" as only Dhoni knows the answer.







# Sara Ali Khan

## Visits Chandramouleshwara Temple In Karnataka To Seek Blessings | Photos

Actress Sara Ali Khan never fails to put her spiritual side on display, often visiting temples and other religious places. Her recent stop was the Chandramouleshwara Temple in Unkal, Karnataka. She visited the holy place to offer prayers and seek blessings from Lord Shiva. Amid the sacred visit, Sara made sure to keep her fans updated with her whereabouts and posted a photo on her Instagram Stories. The collage of pictures showcased her posing on the temple stairs in a no-makeup look. Dressed aptly for her temple visit, Sara Ali Khan looked every bit pretty in her pink and white ethnic wear.

Sara Ali Khan's spiritual choices have always been a subject of debate, with many criticising her for visiting Hindu temples. Recently, she addressed the backlash during her appearance at the Times Now Summit 2025 saying that her



mother Amrita Singh taught her to see beyond religious and caste divisions. Sara said, "I was very young, in school, and even when my parents were married and we used to immigrate together abroad, I used to always wonder... Amrita Singh, Saif Pataudi, Sara Sultana, Ibrahim Ali Khan, what is going on? Who are we? And I remember asking my mom, 'What am I?' And she told me, 'You are Indian.' And I will never forget that." Sara Ali Khan also opened up about her frequent trips to Kedarnath in the same interaction and stated, "I feel comfortable there, I feel peaceful there, I feel happy there."

On the work front, Sara is gearing up for the release of Anurag Basu's anthology, Metro... In Dino wherein she will be seen alongside Aditya Roy Kapur. The much-awaited drama also stars Anupam Kher, Neena Gupta, Pankaj Tripathi, Konkona Sen Sharma, Ali Fazal and Fatima Sana Shaikh in key roles.

Announcing the release date of the film, its makers earlier dropped a post on social media and wrote, "When love, fate and city life collide magic is bound to happen! Metro... In Dino brings the stories of heart from the cities that you love! Experience it on July 4th in cinemas near you". The film is presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series in association with Anurag Basu Productions Pvt Ltd.



## 'It's A Shame'

# Rasha Thadani

## Sonakshi Sinha SLAM Deforestation In Hyderabad's Kancha Gachibowli

Bollywood actresses Sonakshi Sinha and Rasha Thadani have strongly voiced their concerns over the deforestation at Kancha Gachibowli near the University of Hyderabad campus. Raveena Tandon's daughter Rasha questioned the destruction of biodiversity in the name of development. She added that it is a shame to see our country, which is blessed with forests and biodiversity, gasping for clean air. Meanwhile, Sonakshi Sinha also slammed the rapid clearing of 400-acre green cover. Meanwhile, as per the latest update, the Supreme Court has stayed the deforestation drive at the biodiversity-rich area, until further orders.

Sonakshi Sinha re-shared an Instagram post that read, "In Japan, trees are carefully relocated instead of being cut for construction." Expressing her disapproval over the tree felling in Kancha Gachibowli, she added, "And here we just cut down 400 acres of forest overnight. No biggie." Meanwhile, on Friday, Rasha Thadani shared a note on her

Instagram stories, in which she highlighted the importance of forests. "Our India is blessed with biodiversity. Rich, dense forests, home to countless species of birds, animals and plants. Yet, we silently watch as they continue to disappear in the name of development. How much more suffering does our wildlife need to go through!?" she wrote. She further added, "Unfortunately, Us humans are selfish, we only think for our own benefit. With that being said, our country struggles with pollution, we NEED these jungles for clean air, clean water and a healthier future. If not for nature itself, protect our wildlife for our survival!! Every tree cut, every jungle lost, brings us closer to crisis. Temperatures are soaring, water is disappearing. WE NEED OUR FORESTS. Cutting the forests down for development is a contradictory statement. What will we do with this "development" without a healthy and clean place, go live, breathe, survive!?" She then added that people from all over the world come to visit forests in India, that have some of the rarest species, and while tourists are completely amazed, we do not understand its value. "It's a shame to see our country so BLESSED with forests and biodiversity, and yet we're gasping for clean air," wrote Rasha. For the unversed, the Kancha Gachibowli area near the University of Hyderabad has been at the center of major controversy due to its deforestation activities. Tensions ran high at the University of Hyderabad as a scuffle erupted between students and police after authorities barricaded the east campus, where excavators.

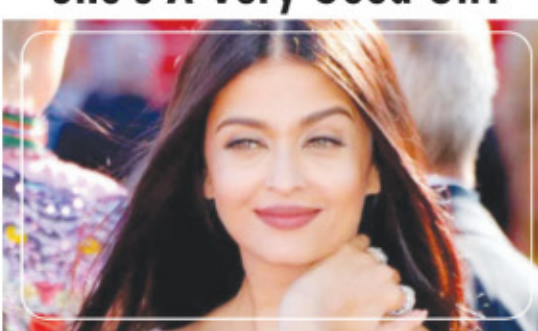
## Ameesha Patel's Savage Response To Salman Khan-Rashmika's Age Gap In Sikandar: 'Jab Jodi Chalti Hai...'



Salman Khan's latest action-drama film, Sikandar, has garnered immense buzz on social media since its trailer launch. Directed by A.R. Murugadoss, the film has received mixed reviews from critics and fans. Starring Rashmika Mandanna as the female lead, Sikandar has generated debate over the 31-year-old age difference between the lead pair. Recently, actress Ameesha Patel reacted to the criticism, defending the on-screen chemistry of Salman and Rashmika. Since the trailer launch of Sikandar, many celebrities have extended their support for Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna's on-screen chemistry. During a recent interaction with the paparazzi, Ameesha Patel also took a toll on social media criticism with her epic response to their age gap.

The Gadar actress was asked about Salman romancing a 31-year younger actress, Rashmika in Sikandar, to which she replied, "Mere aur Sunny (Deol) ji mein bhi to 20 saal ka gap tha, par jab jodi chalti hai to chalti hai, (Between me and Sunny ji, there was an age difference of 20 years, the chemistry anyways works), Salman is just muah (flying kiss gesture)" Ameesha further shared her experience watching Sikandar, saying, "Mujhe to bohot achi lagi, baaki kuch toh log kahenge logon ka kaam hai kehna. Logon ko film yunhi nahi pasand aarahi hai, film achi jaa rahi hai to bolne do jisko jo bolna hai (I liked it a lot, the rest people will anything. People are not liking the film for no reason, the film is going well, so let them say whatever they want to)." At the trailer launch event, Salman Khan was also asked about this controversy, to which he replied, "Heroine ke father ko problem nahi hain. Kal jab inki shaadi ho jayegi, bacche ho jaenge, aur tab bhi kaam kareng. Pati ka permission toh mil hi jayega na (The heroine's father has no problem. Tomorrow, when she gets married and has children, she will still continue working).

## Aishwarya Rai Was Called Arrogant After Miss World Win, But Taal Actress Says 'She's A Very Good Girl'



Actress Jividha Sharma, who shared screen space with Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in Subhash Ghai's 1999 hit Taal, has revisited her experience working with the former Miss World during the early years of their respective careers. In a recent interview with Lallantop, Jividha candidly spoke about the assumptions she had before meeting Aishwarya, and how the actress completely shattered those preconceived notions through her humility, discipline, and work ethic. In 1999, Taal wasn't just a milestone in Aishwarya Rai's career—it was also the first major project for Jividha Sharma, who was making her Bollywood debut. At the time, Aishwarya was just beginning to build her career in films, following her Miss World win in 1994 and her debut roles in Iruvar and Aur Pyaar Hogaya in 1997. By the time she stepped into Taal, she had already begun to attract widespread attention, with expectations running high. With fame, however, came rumors—especially about her supposed attitude.

"People had said she has an attitude because of the Miss World title and all that," Jividha recalled. "So even I went in with that impression. But when I actually met her and spent time with her on set, I realized she was nothing like that. She's very simple, very grounded—a genuinely good person."

The actress was quick to highlight Aishwarya's professionalism on set. "She was extremely hardworking. We had several scenes together, and I observed that she was totally focused. She didn't take her role lightly, even though she already had that big title attached to her name. She would keep rehearsing her scenes, especially dance steps, until she got them perfect." A trained classical dancer, Aishwarya's commitment to nailing her performances wasn't lost on her co-star. "Despite being trained in Kathak and having all those credentials, she didn't take anything for granted. She never acted like she knew it all. If a step didn't look right, she would do it again and again. She wouldn't give up until it was flawless. That really inspired me. I genuinely liked her and even wanted to be like her at that point."

Jividha also offered a glimpse into their dynamic off-camera, revealing that both actresses would often be accompanied by their mothers during shoots. "We mostly talked about our scenes, but sometimes she would ask about my mom. She used to bring her mother along as well. There was a comfort in that, like we were both protected and supported." Though much of their joint screen time was later edited out from the final cut of Taal due to the film's runtime, the time spent together made a lasting impression on Jividha. "We had a lot of scenes together, but many of them were chopped. Still, the experience of working with her was memorable for me," she said.