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## 'Terrorist Lakhvi became father while being in jail': Asaduddin Owaisi

The Sikh Times  
Sanjay Kumar

New Delhi, Jun 01: AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday launched a scathing attack on



Pakistan over its dubious record on fostering terrorism, saying Islamabad's tactics to shelter terrorists fuel instability in South Asia. Addressing the Indian community in Algeria as part of an all-party parliamentary delegation, Owaisi also gave an example of Islamabad's complicity in terrorism, saying that a terrorist had become a father while officially being incarcerated in Pakistan. "There was this one terrorist called Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi – no country

in the world would allow a terrorist who's facing a terror charge (come out of jail). But he became a father to a son while sitting in prison. However, the trial progressed immediately when Pakistan was put on the Grey List (of FATF)," Owaisi said, highlighting how international pressure had briefly forced Pakistan to act. Asaduddin Owaisi expressed hope that if Pakistan is placed back on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Grey List – a global watchdog that monitors countries for terror financing – terror incidents in India would decline. Owaisi warned

that the issue was no longer just a regional concern, saying, "It's not only a question of South Asia. We are the 4th largest economy. What will happen? Do you want all this carnage to spread to different parts of South Asia," he asked. "It is in the interest of world peace to control Pakistan, which is the main sponsor of terrorism. It has to be brought back in the FATF Grey List," Owaisi added.

## Air Marshal Khanna assumes charge as AOC-in-C of Southern Air Command

New Delhi, Jun 01: Air Marshal Manish Khanna, an accomplished officer with over 4,000 hours of flying experience on various fighter and trainer aircraft, on Sunday assumed the charge of the Southern Air Command. He was commissioned in the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force on December 6, 1986, the government said in a statement. "Air Marshal Manish Khanna Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Vayu Sena Medal, assumed command of the Southern Air Command as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief on June 1, 2025 at Thiruvananthapuram," it said. The air officer is a category 'A' Qualified Flying Instructor and an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College, College of Air Warfare and National Defence College. "The air officer has over 4,000 hours of flying experience on various fighter and trainer aircraft," it said. Apart from his rich operational experience in air defence, ground attack, strategic reconnaissance and electronic warfare, the air marshal has wide ranging experience in the training domain, including an international assignment as the Chief Flying Instructor with the Botswana Defence Forces, it added.

## "Operation Blue Star: A Historical Wound Still Bleeding – Why Was the Military Option Chosen?"

The Sikh Times  
Gurcharan Singh Babbar

New Delhi, June 1: In the first week of June 1984, the Indian nation witnessed a deeply tragic and controversial event that altered the course of its secular and democratic ethos – the launch of Operation Blue Star by the Indian Army at the holiest shrine of the Sikh community, Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar. The decision to send the Indian armed forces into a sacred place of worship, resulting in hundreds of deaths and the near-destruction of the revered Akal Takht Sahib, continues to evoke deep anguish, resentment, and unanswered questions among the Sikh community – not only in India but around the world. The central question remains: Why did the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi choose a full-scale military operation instead of peaceful alternatives? Critics, human rights activists, and historians have long argued that many other

democratic, non-violent, and lawful plex situation in Punjab. If the govern-

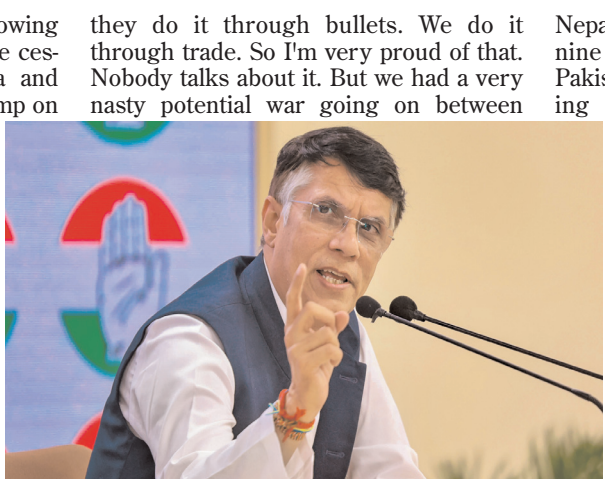


options were available to handle the com- 1984 general elections. Contd...page-3

ment's sole objective was to arrest a few individuals inside the complex, that could have been achieved through:

- Intelligence-led operations
- Negotiations with community leaders
- Imposing curfews and communication cutoffs
- Infiltration strategies without public religious confrontation

The use of tanks, artillery, and full military might inside a sacred religious place – and that too, during a major religious period – was not just seen as excessive, but deeply offensive to the religious sentiments of Sikhs across the world. Many believe that the military action was not merely a security operation but a calculated political move by Smt. Indira Gandhi to present herself as a strong leader before the



## 'Did you make Op Sindoor deal out of fear of losing trade': Pawan Khera

The Sikh Times  
Tejinder Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Jun 01: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Saturday sought clarification from Prime Minister Narendra Modi over US President Donald Trump's recent statement, in which he claimed that trade diplomacy helped de-escalate tensions between India and Pakistan after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. Speaking in Delhi, Khera said, "Prime Minister Modi is going around the country, doing a fancy dress competition. He hasn't brought up Donald Trump even once." He insisted that only the Prime Minister could provide clarity on the matter, saying, "Now, only our Prime Minister can respond for Donald Trump, you and I certainly cannot. What is this pressure to respond, what is this fear about?" He added, "We are repeatedly asking: Did you make a deal over Sindoor (Operation Sindoor) out of fear of losing trade? That has been our question from day one." His remarks

come amid the political row following Trump's claim about influencing the cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan. US President Donald Trump on Friday (local time) had once again claimed credit for brokering a cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan, asserting that his administration's trade negotiations potentially averted a nuclear war between the two nations. During an interaction with reporters, Trump expressed pride in achieving peace through trade rather than military conflict, reigniting debates over the US role in the recent India-Pakistan ceasefire following the escalation of tension after the Pahalgam Terror Attack and India's subsequent reply through Operation Sindoor. "I think the deal I'm most proud of is the fact that we're dealing with India, we're dealing with Pakistan, and we were able to stop potentially a nuclear war through trade as opposed to bullets. You know, normally

they do it through bullets. We do it through trade. So I'm very proud of that. Nobody talks about it. But we had a very nasty potential war going on between

Nepali national. The operation targeted nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), leading to intense clashes, including Pakistan's attempted drone attacks on Indian cities along the International Border and Line of Control (LoC) and shelling along the LoC. Before India could officially announce any understanding of cessation of hostilities with Pakistan, US President Donald Trump announced the "full and immediate ceasefire", claiming that the US played a key role as mediator. However, India refuted the claims made by the US President, reiterating its policy that India and Pakistan bilaterally address any matter related to the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The MEA further stated that the "issue of trade" did not come up between Indian and US leaders since the commencement of 'Operation Sindoor' and the cessation of hostilities.

Pakistan and India. And now, if you look, they're doing fine," the US President said. The cessation of hostilities between the two nations came on May 10 after India's 'Operation Sindoor', launched in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 tourists, including a

## Armed forces united by uniform not divided by religion: Delhi HC

The Sikh Times  
Sourabh Sharma

New Delhi, Jun 01: The Delhi High Court has upheld the termination of services of a Christian army officer over his consistent refusal to fully participate in the weekly regimental religious parades and said the armed forces were united by their uniform rather than being divided by their religion. A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Shalinder Kaur rejected the petition by the Indian Army Lieutenant, who served as a 'Troop Leader' of a squadron, against the termination order passed on March 3, 2021, that dismissed him from the Indian Army without pension and gratuity. Know the latest trending news. The court opined



that the petitioner kept his religion above the lawful command from his superior, and disobedience was an offence under the Army Act. "In the present case, the question is not of religious freedom at all; it is a question of following a lawful command of a superior. It is not disputed by the petitioner that his superiors have been calling upon him to attend the religious parades by even entering the sanctum sanctorum and perform the rituals if this would help in boosting the morale of the troops. In the present case, the petitioner has kept his religion above a lawful command from his superior. This clearly is an act of indiscipline," said the bench. "Our Armed Forces comprise personnel of all religions, castes, creeds, regions, and faiths, whose sole motto is to safeguard the country from external aggressions, and, therefore, they are united by their uniform rather than divided by their religion, caste, or region," it stated. The petitioner submitted that his regiment maintained only a temple and a gurudwara for its religious needs and parades, and being of monotheistic Christian faith, he sought exemption from entering the innermost part of the temple while accompanying his troops for the weekly religious parades and other events. The authorities defended the termination, saying efforts were made through other Christian officers in the army, and he was also taken to the pastor of a local church, who told the petitioner that entering the 'sarv dharm sthal' as part of his duties would not impinge on his Christian faith. However, he remained undeterred.

## Simhashta Kumbh Mela to begin in Nashik-Trimbakeshwar on Oct 31 next year

The Sikh Times  
Naresh Malhotra

Mumbai, Jun 01: The Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Simhashta Kumbh Mela will begin on October 31, 2026, with the traditional hoisting of flags at the two prominent pilgrimage towns, while the first 'Amrut Snan' or ritual dip in the Godavari river will take place on August 2, 2027. The much-awaited dates were announced at a meeting of sadhus and mahants in Nashik chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who said the world would be awestruck by the scale of arrangements to be made for the magnificent congregation. Know the latest trending news with HT. Read detailed articles here The Simhashta Kumbh Mela will begin on October 31, 2026, with 'Dhwajaroohan' at Trimbakeshwar and Ramkund in Nashik. On July 29, 2027, 'Nagar Pradakshina' will be held at Nashik, while the first 'Amrut Snan' will be held on August 2, 2027. The second Amrut Snan will be held on August 31, 2027, and the third and last one will be held in Nashik on September 11, 2027 and on September 12, 2027, at

Trimbakeshwar. The flag will be taken down on July 24, 2028, which will mark the conclusion of the Simhashta Kumbh Mela, which is held once in 12 years. The previous Simhashta Kumbha



Mela was held at Nashik and Trimbakeshwar in the year 2015-16. The Kumbh Festival is traditionally held at Nashik-Trimbakeshwar, Prayag, Haridwar, and Ujjain. Ardh Kumbh is held at Prayag and Haridwar after every six years. The

Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Kumbh is unique as Vaishnav Akhadas and Shaiva Akhadas bath separately here. Fadnis said the meeting was attended by seers of all 13 main "akhadas" and representatives of the Purohit Sangh. He said those who attended the meeting were provided details of the works being carried out by the state government for organising the mega event, among the largest in the world. "Tenders of works costing ₹4000 crore have been issued. Tenders for another set of works entailing expenditure of ₹2000 crore will also be issued soon. Work on the sewage treatment plant, cleaning of Godavari river and land acquisition for 'Sadhugram' are in progress as well," Fadnis told reporters. On crowd control and management to ensure there is no stampede-like situation, the CM said 'Amrut Snan' dates have been announced and since the event will run for a long time, devotees need not rush just on partic-

ular days and must space out their visits. "The government is making every effort to make Simhashta Kumbh Mela a memorable and very well-planned affair," Fadnis asserted. He also accepted a suggestion during the meeting from Mahant Rajendradas Maharaj that 'shahi snan' should be called 'Amrut Snan' the way it was done in the recently concluded Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. "Maharashtra Government will make every possible effort to ensure that the upcoming Kumbh Mela is held in a safe, pure, and sacred atmosphere," Fadnis said, adding that all necessary facilities will be made available for the devotees. He said since Kumbh Mela symbolises the ancient Indian culture, it draws attention from across the world. "With everyone's cooperation, a magnificent and memorable event will be organised that will leave the world in awe," Fadnis added. The processions and spiritual direction of Kumbh are led by akharas, sadhus, and mahants, while the state government's role is to serve and provide the best possible amenities. The chief minister assured excellent facilities by the government and accommodating the feedback of sadhus and mahants for better planning. "Unlike 2015, when there was little prepa-

ration time, this time, with ample lead time, the government is aiming for thorough preparation," he said. Noting that preserving the sanctity and continuous flow of the Godavari River is the primary objective of the Kumbh, Fadnis said projects to manage sewage and wastewater are underway to ensure that only clean water enters the river. "Efforts are being made to maintain water purity by preventing pollution and planning for uninterrupted river flow, ensuring clean water during and after the Kumbh Mela," Fadnis said. He said necessary facilities would be provided to the Akharas. A road network is being developed across the city for the Kumbh. Crowd management plans at places like Kushavarta in Trimbakeshwar are also being worked out. "Quality infrastructure will be set up in both Nashik and Trimbakeshwar, with no shortage of funds," the Chief Minister's Office stated in a release. He emphasised the importance of ensuring the safety of devotees by prioritising security measures during planning. Highlighting heritage development, the Chief Minister announced a development plan of ₹681 crores for Choudi, the birthplace of Ahilyadevi Holkar.



## NEWS BOX

## Andhra Pradesh signs MoUs with IBM, TCS, and L&amp;T to establish India's first Quantum Valley in Amaravati

**VIJAYAWADA.** In a significant development towards positioning the State as the leader in the Quantum technology sector, the government has ratified the three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with IBM, TCS, and L&T on the Quantum Valley Project. Orders to this effect were issued on Friday.

The Andhra Pradesh Quantum Valley Project aims to establish India's first dedicated hub for quantum computing and technology in Amaravati. Scheduled for inauguration on January 1, 2026, this project aims to position Andhra Pradesh and India as global leaders in this cutting-edge field.

Inspired by the success of Hyderabad's HITEC City, a similar hub in Amaravati is conceived with a focus on quantum technologies.

As part of this, the State government engaged with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and International Business Machines (IBM) to explore potential partnerships and strategies for establishing a quantum computing hub. These engagements laid the foundation for the formal agreements and the unveiling of the Quantum Valley Project in Amaravati.

## Karnataka to set up its first flight training centre at Shivamogga airport

**SHIVAMOGGA.** The state government will establish its first Flight Training Organisation (FTO) at the Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Airport (RKA), Shivamogga, aiming to bolster the state's aviation training capabilities.

The airport, the first and only airport being maintained and operated by the state government, will also see the Karnataka State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (KSIIDC) provide key infrastructure support for the first FTO whose operations, aircraft, and admissions will be managed. The initiative, announced by Large and Medium Industries Minister M B Patil, plans to train 100 cadets in its initial phase, with 50 students commencing training in the first year.

The FTO plans to train 100 pilots in its initial phase, with 50 students commencing training in the first year. To promote inclusivity, 25% of the seats will be reserved for Karnataka students and women, who will also benefit from concessional fees. The facility will encompass aircraft hangars, simulators, a library, and a radio telephony training centre, spread over 3,500 square metres. The tender process for the project has already commenced. "The FTO will include hangars, simulators, classrooms, and briefing facilities, all in compliance with DGCA, MoCA, and BCAS norms," Patil posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Patil said that the selected agency will manage operations, aircraft, and admissions, while KSIIDC will provide key infrastructure support, including air traffic control (ATC), safety, and maintenance. Aircraft deployment is expected to commence within three months, with full operations anticipated to begin within nine months of signing the agreement.

Shivamogga Airport, officially named Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Airport, was inaugurated on February 27, 2023, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

## No discretionary ouster of nominated members, says Andhra Pradesh HC

**VIJAYAWADA.** In a significant ruling, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has struck down the State government's move to remove nominated members from their posts for political reasons before the expiry of their tenure. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur, and Justice Ch Ravi, in a recent verdict, made it clear that the government lacks legal authority to issue orders for removal or resignation of nominated members without statutory provisions. It rejected the application of the 'Doctrine of Pleasure', which permits discretionary removal, emphasising that such power cannot be exercised without legal backing.

The case centres on the government's action against nominated members of the District Livestock Development Associations (DLDA) in Prakasam, West Godavari, Vizianagaram and Chittoor. The government issued a note on June 7, 2024, directing collectors to secure resignations from nominated chairpersons, directors and members of various corporations, educational institutions, and autonomous bodies, including DLDA.

**Collectors can only appoint, not remove, says HC**

On June 13, 2024, the Animal Husbandry Department followed up with a memo instructing the Collectors to enforce the directive. Consequently, the District Collectors initiated proceedings demanding that DLDA members resign, prompting legal challenge from the affected members.

The petitioners, representing the four districts, contested the State government's note, the department's memo, and the Collectors' proceedings in the High Court.

Although the single judge initially dismissed their petitions, and upheld the government's authority to remove nominated members at its discretion, the High Court division bench overturned it.

## After flood and intense heat, wind shakes up Kerala's disaster roster

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** Strong winds are emerging as a major disaster in the state after floods, landslides and extreme heat and rain events. The early onset of the southwest monsoon, marked by 60-70-km-per-hour westerly winds, has left a trail of destruction across the state. The strong winds have led to a surge in weather-related incidents, including uprooted trees and damaged property. Emergency response teams, including that of the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) and the Fire and Rescue Services, have been operating round-the-clock to manage the crisis. Fallen trees and power lines have disrupted transportation and electricity supply in many areas, while residential and commercial properties have suffered structural damage. KSEB has suffered a Rs 126-crore loss from rain- and wind-related havoc across the state.

Power Minister K Krishnakutty told that most of the incidents were because of non-cooperation on the part of the public in trimming branches ahead of the monsoon.

"We have recommended that the chief secretary issue special powers to district collectors to take decisions on fragile trees on private land to avoid similar disasters in the future. The majority of incidents happened because of trees or tree trunks on private premises. People often go to court to prevent authorities from cutting branches or trees. There are a large



number of such cases in courts across the state," he said. He said the department will study the issue to improve its handling of such cases.

The fire department has attended to over 2,500 calls relating to the uprooting of trees between May 24-30 across the state. M Noushad M, director (technical) of the Fire and Rescue Services department said the widespread destruction has been unprecedented.

"These issues can be easily mitigated if a tree is properly managed. There is no dedicated agency under the state government to manage trees and the responsibility falls on respective government departments. Also, there should be some regulations and specifications on erecting hoardings so that the structures can resist winds of up to 40 km per hour," said Noushad.

The lack of a comprehensive tree-management

policy on the part of local self-government institutions (LSGIs), apathy in invoking the Disaster Management Act to address tree-related hazards, and unchecked and haphazard hoardings on highrise buildings and roadsides have worsened the crisis.

K G Thara, former head of the State Institute for Land and Disaster Management Centre, said that soil conservation should be given priority to protect trees against extreme weather events. She said the pruning of trees by local bodies is not happening in the state.

"Trees are toppling because they are not being protected. Trees are becoming fragile and unable to withstand heavy rain and wind because of top soil erosion. The cutting of trees is not at all a solution and we should not forget that trees also help mitigate many disasters. Soil conservation should be given more focus. Instead of disaster response we need to focus on all this to mitigate such disasters," she said.

## Here to stay?

IMD director Neetha K Gopal said that the south westerly wind was strong compared to average surface level wind the state experiences. "Amini Island, which is our first observation point, recorded a wind speed of 80-90 km per hour over the past days. If all the elements driving the monsoon are favourable this might happen again. Last July, we had similar strong winds but the rain was less compared to this year," said Neetha.

## Puducherry launches Rs 110 crore integrated solid waste management project

**The new initiative marks the end of services rendered by Swachhata Corporation, whose contract concludes on June 30.**

**PUDUCHERRY.** The Union Territory is poised to roll out a comprehensive Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) project for its urban areas, with a pilot phase commencing on June 1. Full-scale operations will follow from July 1, to be executed by Green Warrior Agency (GWA), which has been awarded the contract. The new initiative marks the end of services rendered by Swachhata Corporation, whose contract concludes on June 30. GWA will be responsible for the entire waste management cycle, including door-to-door collection, segregation, transportation, processing, composting, recycling, and biogas generation. Funded under the Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the '110-crore project includes a Central capital subsidy of Rs 18.76 crore. It seeks to overhaul the existing system by phasing out community bins and adopting a decentralised, household-level waste collection model.

The trial run will be launched in Chief Minister N Rangasamy's Thattanchavady constituency and at



the Raj Bhavan, aimed at acclimatising residents to the new waste handling procedures.

Speaking to , Director of Local Administration S Shaktivel said the Kurumbapet dump yard (KDY) is being readied with advanced infrastructure for processing various waste streams, including electronic waste. A 10.5-acre portion of the site has been earmarked for infrastructure development. 60-tonne-per-day pyrolysis plant is being established at the site to

produce 12 to 15 tonnes of Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) daily. Additionally, a 100-tonne-per-day Compressed Biogas (CBG) facility, costing '25 crore, is expected to yield 2.5 tonnes of biogas each day.

Mechanised systems will handle segregation to facilitate composting and recycling of plastics, wood, and other recoverables. The facility will also manufacture paver blocks, with all end products marketed to industries as part of a circular economy model. GWA will be remunerated at '3,300 per tonne of waste processed. Spanning 23 acres, the Kurumbapet yard is also undergoing legacy waste clearance. Since 2021, Zigma Global Environment Solutions, based in Erode, has removed 10.5 lakh tonnes of legacy waste, reclaiming 14 acres in the process.

A resource park and testing laboratory are currently being set up at the site, which will also accommodate the relocated solid waste management wing of the Local Administration Department.

## TN Finance Minister Thennarasu urges ASI to act on neglect of Adichanallur artefacts

**An ASI official said the thatched roof shed at the C-site was damaged in 2024 and so the tarpaulin sheet was spread to preserve the antiquities.**

**THOOTHUKUDI.** Following report on the lack of attention to the historically rich Adichanallur archaeological site by the Union government, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu and Madurai MP Su Venkatesan have urged the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to protect the priceless artefacts.



ThNE's detailed report, "Shelter in Adichanallur damaged, treasures at weather's mercy," published on Saturday, highlighted the poor condition of the shelter at the C-site. The damaged structure has left ancient artefacts exposed to the open sky, making them vulnerable to rain and weather damage. In a post on X, Thennarasu said it was saddening to see the ancient artefacts, including burial urns, damaged and unprotected in the rain. He described Adichanallur as "one of

the oldest civilisations of India" and urged the ASI and the Ministry of Culture to take urgent steps to protect these treasures, which are symbols of the country's rich heritage.

Madurai MP Su Venkatesan also posted on X, pointing out that Adichanallur, an archaeologically rich site excavated since 1876, is now in a neglected state. He said the site clearly reflects the Iron Age but remains uncared for. An ASI official said that a thatched shed at the C-site was damaged in

2024. A tarpaulin sheet had been put in place to cover the artefacts. However, the shed was further damaged by strong winds. The official added that steps are being taken to protect the items and that senior ASI officials are likely to visit the site soon. "The proposal for an on-site museum at the C-site will be considered quickly," he said.

Attempts by to contact Tiruchy Circle Superintending Archaeologist Rahul R Bhosle were unsuccessful.

It is worth noting that Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced plans to develop Adichanallur as one of six "iconic site museums" in the Union Budget 2020-21. An on-site museum at the B-site was inaugurated on 5 August 2023, while a proposal for a museum at the C-site is still pending.

## Depressed over eating sambar cooked in morning, woman ends life in Karnataka

**BENGALURU.** A 38-year-old woman ended her life after she felt guilty about having to eat the same sambar she had cooked in the morning, preliminary investigation by the police revealed. The deceased, Nagaratna of Savakanahalli in Devanahalli taluk on the outskirts of Bengaluru, had a history of mental health issues. She was short-tempered and used to get upset over petty things, the police said. That could have pushed her to take the extreme step, they added.

Nagaratna, a tailor, is survived by her husband, who works as an real estate broker, and two children. On Thursday, Nagaratna had prepared sambar in the morning before leaving for work. When she returned home later that evening, she was upset that she had to eat the same food. Her husband tried to console her and even offered other food items. Around 8.30 pm, she went to the bathroom and did not come out for a long time. When she did not respond, her husband broke

open the door and found her hanging by her dupatta.

He alerted the police. Based on a complaint filed by Nagaratna's daughter, the Vishwanathapura police registered a case of unnatural



death. Police are also probing if she took the extreme step for some other reason.

## HELPLINE

If you are having suicidal thoughts, or are worried about a friend or need emotional support, someone is always there to listen. Call Sneha Foundation - 0424640050, Tele Manas - 14416 (available 24x7) or iCall, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences' helpline - 02225521111, which is available Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 10 pm.

## Post two-day ordeal, Kerala fishermen emerge from the depths of fear

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.** "It felt like every time we rowed a kilometre, we were being dragged four km back into the sea. That was how strong the wind was," said Robinson, his eyes still filled with fear as he narrated his two-day ordeal at sea. He was among four fishermen who were rescued and brought back to shore on Saturday evening after their boat went missing off Vizhinjam coast.

"The strong winds wrecked both our engines: One was lost at sea, and the other split in two. We tied the broken pieces together to survive. We had just a day's food on board. For three days, the rain was relentless," added Robinson. The fishermen had left Vizhinjam harbour at 2 pm on Thursday. Just two hours later, the weather warning arrived. But by then, Robinson, 62, Davidson, 34, Dasan, 45, and Sabariyar, 52, were already in deeper waters.

They were stranded 35 nautical miles off the Vizhinjam coast after their engine failed. They were supposed to return by 6 am on Friday, but there was no communication. At 10.30 am on Friday, Robinson managed to

contact his son, Robin, and informed him that they had lost an engine and all their fishing gear.

According to Robin, the initial response from the fisheries department was disappointing. Despite sending their location, help didn't arrive. So they took matters into their own hands and arranged four men—Job, Winson, Shekhar, and Aloshiyus—to go out searching. However, the missing fishermen's position had changed, and the rescue team could not locate them.

When the first team failed and returned with the news, a second team, including Robin, set out at 5 pm on Friday to the updated location. But, that too ended in vain. Both search teams made it back to shore by 7 am on Saturday. It was only by 10 am on Saturday that the missing team reported being near Kanyakumari, adding that their makeshift engine might only last another hour. This triggered coordinated action, involving the fisheries

department, Coast Guard, and police. Ward councillor Paniyattil Johny received a phone message that helped trace the fishermen's location. He passed this on to



Vizhinjam coastal police. SHO Vipin and SI K G Prasad informed the fisheries control room.

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## 43 Noida condos lack pollution board nod to operate STPs

**Noida.** An RTI reply has revealed that 43 group housing societies in the city lack the mandatory consent to operate (CTO) for their sewage treatment plants (STPs). CTO is a mandatory authorisation issued by the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act. It permits industries, commercial establishments, and group housing societies to operate their facilities while ensuring that their emissions, effluents, and waste management systems comply with environmental standards.

Amit Gupta, a resident of Prateek Wisteria in Sector 77, had filed an RTI application on April 29 asking the pollution control board for the list of societies without CTOs, the action taken against them, fines imposed and recovered, and the names of those societies against which cases were filed in the Special Pollution Court in Lucknow.

In its reply dated May 20, UPPCB stated that 43 group housing societies did not obtain the required CTO for their STPs. The list included prominent names such as Lotus Boulevard, Supertech Capetown,

Sikka Karmic, Logix Blossom County, Antriksh Golf View, Ajnara Grand Heritage, Prateek Wisteria, NRI City Homes, and Logix Blossom Zest, among others.

As per the reply, prosecution proceedings have been initiated against 34 of the identified societies. Of these, environmental compensation amounting to Rs 27 crore has been imposed on 30. Notices were sent to the rest. However, the board stated it had no data in its records on how much of the fines were actually recovered. The current status of these cases in the special court was not available with the office.

Lack of CTOs does not necessarily mean that societies do not have functional STPs. On the other hand, in some cases, it may also indicate that societies never had STPs to begin with. Additionally, many of them lack Occupancy Certificates (OC) and Completion Certificates (CC), pointing to a major procedural failure.

For example, Gupta's society, Prateek Wisteria, does not have a CTO but has had a functional STP since 2019. "A large number of societies do not have CTOs to



operate STPs, which suggests that occupancy and completion certificates were issued without the Authority verifying the status of STPs. Of these 43 societies, about 60%-70% are located in sectors 74, 75, 76, 77, and 78. Many of them cannot even install STPs now due to lack of space within the premises and insufficient funds, as the builder has already handed over the project. The Authority should intervene and lay a separate sewage pipeline connecting these societies to the nearest operational STP in Sector 50," Gupta told.

Pointing out the lack of coordination between the UPPCB and the Noida Authority, Gupta stated, "The Authority and the pollution control board are not working together on this issue. They conduct inspections separately and impose fines independently. Often, they are not even aware of each other's actions. Also, the responsibility of establishing STPs and obtaining CTOs lies with the builder, as per the law. It is not the responsibility of the AOA."

Meanwhile, Noida Authority officials said they are monitoring societies flouting environmental norms. Noida CEO Lokesh M said, "OC/CCs are issued after checking whether societies have facilities such as STPs, fire safety, and lift clearances. It is more of an operational issue, as the societies fail to run these facilities properly after homebuyers start living there. The Authority takes action as public health is at stake. However, it is the pollution control board's primary responsibility to impose fines and take legal action. As far as the Authority is concerned, we will continue with our enforcement drive."

## NHAI gives nod, footbridge work on Sohna highway can now begin

**Gurgaon.** Construction of a much-needed foot overbridge (FOB) at CD Chowk on the Sohna highway moved a step closer to reality, as the NHAI granted the long-pending no objection certificate (NOC) for the project. However, a similar proposal for Raheja Mall was turned down, citing technical constraints. The NOC for the CD Chowk FOB was pending for months, with the GMDA awaiting clearance before initiating construction. Following a review by an independent engineer and recommendations from the concessionaire, the NHAI found the location to be technically feasible and critical for pedestrian safety. The proposed FOB at CD Chowk is part of a larger plan to enhance pedestrian connectivity along the busy NH-248A corridor, particularly the stretch between Subhash Chowk and Vatika Chowk, which experiences high foot traffic due to nearby malls, office complexes, and residential and commercial establishments. While the CD Chowk project was approved, NHAI deemed the FOB near Raheja Mall unviable, citing "space limitations, high utility shifting costs, and pedestrian safety concerns". "With the NOC in place for CD Chowk, we will soon begin construction. As for Raheja Mall, we will continue to pursue the matter and explore possible solutions, as the area experiences heavy footfall," said a senior GMDA official.

These two locations are part of GMDA's broader plan that includes four FOBs across the city, with a total estimated cost of Rs 16 crore. GMDA awarded the contract in Dec last year, and it plans to complete the entire project within 18 months. All the proposed FOBs will be made of stainless steel and equipped with escalators, the official said. Construction work has already begun near the Sector 14 market. However, consensus remains elusive over the proposed FOB near the Sheela Mata temple. Last Wednesday, a meeting was held between representatives of the Sheela Mata Mandir Trust, GMDA, and MCG to resolve the issue.

## Salesman slapped by excise inspector for charging 10 extra for a beer bottle

**Noida.** A liquor salesman in Greater Noida was allegedly slapped and pelted with a belt by an excise inspector for overcharging customers. The district excise officer has initiated a departmental inquiry. Manish Kumar (29) of Dadri, who works as a salesperson at a model shop in Jagat Farm, claimed he sustained severe injuries on his limbs and chest after he was brutally assaulted by excise inspector Chandra Shekhar. His family staged a protest outside the DM's office on Saturday after cops refused to register a complaint.

The victim claimed Shekhar and a constable came to the model shop around 8.30 pm on Friday and accused him of overcharging customers. "When I told the officer that I did not overcharge, the inspector slapped me multiple times. He removed the CCTV camera's DVR and then put me into his vehicle and took me to the excise office in Greater Noida's Sector Delta 3. Once in the office, he assaulted me with a belt and left me there in a severely bruised state," Manish claimed. The salesman claimed he was left in the excise office for hours before his brother, Rohit, who also works at the model shop, got to know about the assault later that night and came to pick him up around midnight.

The family subsequently tried to submit a formal complaint on the emergency helpline, Dial 112, and then at several police posts, but in vain. On Saturday, they gathered outside DM's office in Greater Noida.

The district excise officer, Subodh Kumar, told TOI their team had received a complaint against the salesman for charging customers Rs 10 more than MRP for beer bottles on Friday. "Excise inspector Chandra Shekhar and a constable were sent to the shop for an inspection. In his initial statement, the inspector said that when he reached the shop, the salesperson was drunk and misbehaved with them. The two officials took the salesperson to their car to impose a challan, but the latter fled from the spot," the DEO said, adding that it was possible that Manish may have hurt himself later.

## "Operation Blue Star: A Historical Wound Still Bleeding – Why Was the Military Option Chosen?"

Contd...Front page

By portraying an internal enemy and executing a show of strength, her government may have sought political mileage — but it came at a devastating cost. The destruction of Shri Akaal Takht Sahib, the temporal throne of Sikhism, was not just physical damage. It was a psychological and spiritual assault on the very identity and dignity of the Sikh community. Even after four decades, the Sikh community has not fully recovered from the trauma of Operation Blue Star. The events of June 1984 created a deep divide between the Indian state and its own citizens. The alienation, pain, and mistrust continue to simmer silently. This alienation led to the tragic chain of events later that year — including the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi and the horrific anti-Sikh riots of November 1984. It is now time for the Government of India to take a positive, bold, and reconciliatory step. The nation deserves to know:

● What were the real motives behind Operation Blue Star?

- Why were peaceful options not chosen?
- Who was responsible for the decision?
- How can justice and healing be restored?

A transparent and official statement from the Government of India, explaining the necessity and rationale behind the military action, can begin a long-overdue healing process. It is essential to restore the trust of the Sikh community in democratic institutions and reaffirm that every citizen, every faith, and every culture matters equally in our republic.

Operation Blue Star was more than a military operation — it was a moral failure of the Indian state. The damage to the soul of the nation is still evident. A nation that wishes to move forward must first come to terms with its past. A public acknowledgment and sincere effort toward truth and reconciliation will not weaken India — it will strengthen its democracy and prove that India belongs to all Indians equally.

## Elderly couple 'abandoned' in their Gurgaon flat for 3 years, community steps in

**Gurgaon.** Behind the closed doors of an apartment at Ridgewood Estate, the muffled cries of a nonagenarian man and his octogenarian wife have stirred neighbours into action, making it a rare case of a community seeking the state's intervention to guarantee care, safety and dignity for the allegedly abandoned couple. Left in the care of two untrained attendants by their son who is abroad, residents of the society, also members of Ridgewood Estate Condominium Association (RECA), said they repeatedly tried to contact the son, but their appeals fell on deaf ears. The association then approached Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC), which took cognisance immediately and ordered a comprehensive medical, psychological, and social assessment of the couple by govt. The couple has been living here for three years, when the son purchased the flat and moved them, transferring power of attorney to his father, according to RECA. However, two caregivers working in day and night shifts became the couple's only connection with the outside world soon after. Concerned neighbours visited, making inquiries and offering assistance, but were turned away at the door. Residents said the son regularly made online payments for maintenance charges for the flat, but the association had no information about his whereabouts except his phone number and email ID in the society's records. None recollected having seen him in the compound either.

"All we know is that he lives somewhere abroad. Earlier, a lady would visit the elderly couple, but she stopped coming a few months ago. We requested the son to visit his parents or arrange some help for them, but to no avail. The woman is bedridden, and the man's cries of distress echo in the corridor. It's deeply distressing," said Kittu Mathur, the association secretary. Mathur said they had no information about the couple, not even their names.

## Name game: Man who tricked cops to walk out of Neemka jail nabbed in Bihar

**Faridabad.** A man, who tricked his way out of Neemka jail in the city using a namesake's identity, found that freedom was short-lived as police caught up with him in his village in Bihar. Accused in a Pcoso case from 2021, Nitesh Pandey escaped police custody on May 26 when a local court granted bail to Nitish (with an 'i', not 'e') of Old Faridabad. This Nitish was arrested in connection with a case of trespass and physical assault. What confused the cops was that both accused had their fathers' names as Ravinder in jail records. Pandey sniffed the opportunity last week after coming to know that Nitish would walk out on bail. "When Nitish's name was called out in the jail premises, the actual person was absent. Pandey falsely identified himself as Nitish of Old Faridabad and deceived the jail staff into releasing him, despite knowing that the



bail documents weren't in his name," a police officer said. For two days, jail officials weren't even aware of the deception. The escape finally came to light on May 28 when the actual Nitish enquired about his release. An FIR was registered at Sadar Ballabgarh police station and two jail officials were

suspended for negligence. A crime branch team, which led the investigation, was sent to Bihar and tracked down Nitesh at his village in Kalyanpur in Patna on Saturday. During interrogation, Pandey confessed to the impersonation. "He was aware of Nitish's bail and exploited the confusion to secure his release through deception. By posing as Nitish from Shastri Colony, he successfully walked out of jail," an official said. Pandey was produced before a local court and remanded in judicial custody. "We are investigating whether any jail staff were involved in his escape," another official added. Police officials assured strict action against anyone found negligent in the verification process of inmates. They also announced that security protocols in jails would be reviewed to prevent similar incidents in the future.

## What are Aravalis' main threats Greens give Centre, state report

**Gurgaon:** Based on what they say is ground observations made over a year of visits, a group of environmentalists has submitted their findings to the central and state govts, seeking urgent measures to protect the Aravalis. Compiled as a 70-page report titled 'State of the Haryana Aravalis: Citizens' Report Part I', the findings raise critical questions for water security, air quality and biodiversity of Delhi-NCR, which are intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of the Aravalis. Copies of the report were handed over to Union environment minister Bhupender Yadav and chief minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday. Rampant violations like construction of illegal farmhouses, colonies and commercial establishments on protected Aravali land have repeatedly come under Supreme Court's scrutiny. Last week, it rapped the state govt for an illegal road being laid at Basai Meo in Nuh with stones quarried from a hillock that led to its collapse. The report contains four main demands — a legal declaration of the entire Haryana Aravali range as 'no-go zones'

for mining and stone crushing, introduction of a law that treats destruction of Aravalis as an ecological crime punishable with strict penalties, including action against negligent officials, implementation of strict



enforcement and ecological restoration measures, compensation for communities suffering from pollution and displacement, and a policy shift that requires the real estate and infrastructure sector to adopt construction materials other than Aravali-sourced stones. Neelam Ahluwalia, founder member of People for Aravalis, the group that compiled the report, said, "We are hoping the demands

for Aravali protection given in this report can act as a blueprint for govt to create and deliver policies and plans to protect what is left of India's oldest hill range. We hope our wildlife does not lose its home and our current and future generations can live with dignity without gasping for breath or being choked in the dust storms coming from Thar desert or fighting over water." Rajasthan-based water conservationist Dr Rajendra Singh said, "In 2009, Supreme Court banned mining completely in the Aravali hills in Gurgaon, Nuh and Faridabad. Time has now come to look at the 670km Aravali range spread across four states as one ecosystem critical for survival of millions of people living in north-west India." The report illustrates how licenced mining and stone crushing units across the Haryana Aravalis flouted rules, and how illegal mining continues despite a 16-year-old ban. It also states how out of the seven districts where the Aravalis are present in Haryana, licenced mining wiped out most of the range in Bhiwani and Charkhi Dadri.

## Hands up! Bhondsi prison inmates take a lesson in yoga

**Gurgaon.** More than 3,000 inmates of Bhondsi jail participated in a yoga session on Saturday to promote health and wellness behind bars.

The event, jointly organised by the Haryana prisons and the Ayush department, saw enthusiastic participation from both male and female prisoners. Of the total 3,045 participants, 2,940 were male inmates, while 105 were female prisoners. The session, conducted under the guidance of a professional yoga instructor, saw inmates practising various yoga poses and breathing exercises held within the jail premises. The session was attended by the director general of the jail, Mohammad Akil. "This programme is part of our ongoing efforts to promote holistic wellness among inmates and aid in their rehabilitation process," said DG Jail as he encouraged them to seek good employment opportunities upon release, leave behind a life of crime, and wish for a happy life for themselves and their families. Dr Brahm Prakash from the Ayush department conducted the yoga session following the International Yoga Day protocol. He stated that regular yoga and pranayama not only keep the body healthy but also improve mental health. The AYUSH Department team included six yoga instructors,



comprising two female and four male assistants, who provided yoga training. For security reasons, the yoga practice was conducted at three different locations: women in the women's ward, inmates in Phase 1, and inmates in Phase 2. Naresh Goyal, superintendent of Bhondsi Jail, said a group yoga session would also be held on International Yoga Day, June 21, in the prison complex. A structured routine is followed at the district jail in Gurugram for the overall development and welfare of the inmates, he added. A green environment has been created in the jail

to ensure oxygen supply and maintain aesthetics. Gurgaon: More than 3,000 inmates of Bhondsi jail participated in a yoga session on Saturday to promote health and wellness behind bars.

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NEWS BOX

Hit the jackpot, lost the girl: Canada man sues ex over missing \$3.6 million

**world.** A man in Canada has filed a lawsuit claiming his longtime girlfriend disappeared with his lottery winnings after he asked her to collect the prize on his behalf, as reported by the New York Post. Lawrence Campbell alleged he bought the winning ticket, worth \$3.6 million, but was unable to claim the prize himself because he had lost his wallet and identification. He said he trusted his girlfriend, Krystal McKay, to collect the money, as they were in a “loyal, committed and promising romantic partnership,” his lawyer told CTV News. The couple had been dating for a year and a half and were living together at the time, according to Campbell. However, things took a dramatic turn less than two weeks after McKay received the check. Campbell claimed she suddenly vanished and failed to return to the hotel room they had been sharing. “He set out to visit a few of her known spots where she would party and, sure enough, after some investigation, he found her in bed, with another guy,” Campbell told CTV News. “She ghosted him, refused to take his calls or answer his messages, she blocked him on her social media accounts, and even took out a protection order,” he added.

7 dead, 30 injured as bridge collapse derails train in Russia near Ukraine border

**world.** At least seven people were killed and 30 others sustained injuries after a passenger train derailed late Saturday in Russia’s western Bryansk region following a bridge collapse, Reuters reported, citing Regional Governor Alexander Bogomaz. The train was travelling from Moscow to Klimov when it came off the tracks in the Vygonichskiy district. Authorities said the collapse was caused by “illegal interference in transport operations,” but did not provide further details. The regional governor, Alexander Bogomaz, confirmed the incident on Telegram, saying emergency services were on the scene. The derailment occurred near a federal highway, and multiple rescue units have been deployed, according to Russia’s emergency ministry. Russian state news agencies RIA and TASS reported that the train’s driver was among the dead. Independent Telegram channels Baza and SHOT, which often cite sources in law enforcement, claimed the bridge may have been deliberately blown up, though these reports have not been independently verified. There has been no immediate comment from Ukrainian authorities. Photos shared by government agencies from the scene showed passenger train cars torn apart and scattered among chunks of concrete from the collapsed bridge. Additional videos circulating on social media appeared to have been recorded from inside vehicles that narrowly missed crossing the bridge moments before it gave way. Since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine over three years ago, its border regions including Bryansk, have seen repeated drone strikes, sabotage attempts, and cross-border shelling. US President Donald Trump has urged both Moscow and Kyiv to cooperate in reaching a peace agreement to end the conflict, as Russia has suggested holding a second round of in-person talks with Ukrainian officials in Istanbul next week.

I am not taking drugs! Elon Musk denies damning report

**WASHINGTON.** Elon Musk on Saturday denied a report that he used ketamine and other drugs extensively last year on the 2024 campaign trail. The New York Times reported Friday that the billionaire adviser to President Donald Trump used so much ketamine, a powerful anesthetic, that he developed bladder problems. The newspaper said the world’s richest person also took ecstasy and mushrooms and traveled with a pill box last year, adding that it was not known whether Musk also took drugs while heading the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) after Trump took



power in January. In a post Saturday on X, Musk said: “To be clear, I am NOT taking drugs! The New York Times was lying their ass off.” He added: “I tried ‘prescription’ ketamine a few years ago and said so on X, so this not even news. It helps for getting out of dark mental holes, but haven’t taken it since then.” Musk first dodged a question about his drug use at a bizarre farewell appearance Friday with Trump in the Oval Office in which the Tesla and SpaceX boss sported a noticeable black eye as he formally ended his role as Trump’s main cost-cutter at DOGE, which fired tens of thousands of civil servants. News of the injury drew substantial attention as it came right after the Times report on his alleged drug use. The daily recalled erratic behavior such as Musk giving an enthusiastic Nazi-style salute in January of this year at a rally celebrating Trump’s inauguration. Musk said he got the injury while horsing around with his young son, named X, when he told the child to hit him in the face. “And he did. Turns out even a five-year-old punching you in the face actually is.

Buzz on Washington streets as 250 million bees escape after truck crashes

**Around 250 million honeybees escaped after a truck carrying hives overturned near Lynden, Washington. Local beekeepers rushed to rescue and restore the displaced hives.**

**Washington.** There was a buzz in the air Friday in northwestern Washington state as about 250 million honeybees escaped a commercial truck that overturned. The truck hauling an estimated 70,000 pounds (31,751 kilograms) of honeybee hives rolled over around 4 a.m. close to the Canadian border near Lynden, the Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office said in social media posts. It appears the driver did not navigate a tight turn well enough, causing the trailer to roll into a ditch, county emergency management spokesperson Amy Cloud said in an email. The driver was uninjured, Cloud said. Deputies, county public works



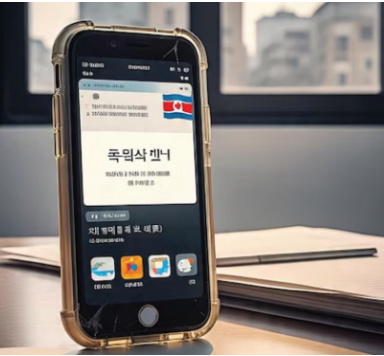
employees and several bee experts responded to the scene. The box hives later came off the truck, and local beekeepers swarmed to help recover, restore and reset the hives, according to the sheriff’s office. The plan is to allow the bees to return to their hives and find their queen bee in the next day or two, according to the sheriff’s office.

deputies dove into in their squad cars at times to avoid being stung. Honeybees are crucial to the food supply, pollinating over 100 crops including nuts, vegetables, berries, citrus and melons. Bees and other pollinators have been declining for years, and experts blame insecticides, parasites, disease, climate change and lack of a diverse food supply. In 2018, the UN General Assembly sponsored the first “World Bee Day” on May 20 to bring attention to the bees’ plight. Beekeepers often transport millions of bees from one location to another because leaving them in one location for too long can deplete resources for other pollinators, The Seattle Times reported. Alan Woods, president of the Washington State Beekeepers Association, told the newspaper the state should have a standardised “emergency bee response” for bee vehicle crashes. In 2015, 14 million bees escaped a truck north of Seattle on Interstate 5 and started stinging people, the newspaper reported at the time.

From 'oppa' to comrade: North Korea's phones auto-correct to fit party line

**world.** Everything South Korean is banned in Kim Jong Un’s North Korea, a country that enforces strict censorship across all forms of media to shield its citizens from the realities of the outside world. A mobile phone smuggled out of the country has now revealed fresh insights into how one of the world’s most extreme censorship regimes operates. The surveillance and censorship methods range from autocorrection of certain South Korean words to routine data sharing with authorities, all while denying users access to the internet, according to a BBC report. For instance, the word ‘Oppa’, which is widely used in South Korean popular culture to refer to boyfriends (though it literally means older brother), is automatically corrected to ‘Comrade’ on North Korean smartphones. Additionally, a warning displayed just below the keyboard further instructs users that “this word can only be used to refer to siblings”. Similarly, if someone tries to type ‘South Korea,’ the phone automatically changes it to ‘Puppet

State’, a term North Korean authorities use to describe the South, claiming it is under US control. The phone takes screenshots every five minutes and stores them in a specific folder that is inaccessible to users. Only authorities have access to this folder, allowing them to monitor user activity in



detail. From radios to smartphones, communication devices in North Korea are pre-configured to receive only state propaganda and are sealed to prevent tampering. Altering these devices to access external content is

considered a serious criminal offence. For ordinary citizens, access to the global internet is virtually nonexistent. According to a recent report that included testimonies from 649 North Korean defectors, the regime under Kim Jong Un has intensified its crackdown on “Western influence” and the flow of outside information. Officials are said to routinely inspect mobile phones for contact names, language, and slang that suggest exposure to South Korean culture. Kim has also banned K-pop and K-dramas, South Korean music and television dramas that have gained global popularity, as part of efforts to curb foreign cultural influence. A human rights report by South Korea’s Unification Ministry earlier revealed that North Korean authorities publicly executed a 22-year-old man for listening to and sharing K-pop music and films, underscoring Pyongyang’s brutal crackdown on foreign cultural influence.

At least seven dead after Russian bridge collapses onto railway

**MOSCOW.** At least seven people were killed and dozens injured after a bridge collapsed onto a railway in a Russian region bordering Ukraine late Saturday, officials said, in an incident the railway operator blamed on “illegal interference”. A train travelling from the Russian border town of Klimovo to the capital Moscow was derailed in the incident, authorities said, without giving details. Videos posted on social media showed rescuers working at the site of a large mound of rubble covering what appeared to be a train belonging to national operator Russian Railways, while another showed people shouting in distress. “There are seven dead as a result of the collapse of a bridge onto railway tracks,” Alexander Bogomaz, the Bryansk region’s governor, wrote on Telegram. At least 66 others were injured, including three children, he said, giving a revised toll. Moscow



Railways, a state-owned subsidiary, said a passenger train derailed “between Klimov and Moscow due to the collapse of a road bridge span, as a result of illegal interference in the operation of transport”. The incident happened at 10:44 pm (1944 GMT) between the Pilshino and Vygonichi stations in the Bryansk region, the national railway operator said on Telegram. The incident did not affect other train traffic, the firm added. In one video posted on social media, someone can be heard screaming as eyewitnesses rush to find help. “How

did the bridge collapse? There are children there!” a woman can be heard shouting in the video. **Illegal interference** Photos published online by Russian authorities showed a collapsed section of the bridge and damaged vehicles, as rescue workers were deployed overnight. The disaster area is around 100 kilometres (62 miles) from the Ukrainian border. Russia’s emergency ministry said a team was on site, while Russian Railways said it had dispatched repair trains to the scene. An AFP reporter in central Moscow saw ambulances parked at Kievsky railway station awaiting the arrival of injured passengers. Prosecutors said they had opened an investigation. Authorities did not explain how the incident happened and what the railway operator meant by “illegal interference”.



called the “Taiwan issue” China’s “internal affair” and said foreign countries had no right to interfere. China considers the self-ruled democratic island as its territory and has not ruled out using force to take control of it. Hegseth also accused Beijing of “illegally seizing and militarising lands” in the disputed South China Sea. Beijing claims almost the entire waterway, despite an international ruling that its assertion has no merit. The foreign ministry on Sunday claimed there had “never been any issue” with navigation in the waterway. China “is committed to safeguarding its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in accordance with the law”, a ministry spokesperson said. Beijing also accused the United States of turning the Indo-Pacific region into a “powder keg” by deploying weapons in the South China Sea.

Iran one step from using enriched uranium for nukes: UN watchdog report

**world.** Iran has significantly expanded its stockpile of uranium enriched close to weapons-grade levels, according to a confidential report by the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), seen by the Associated Press. The IAEA also urged Tehran to urgently alter its course and cooperate with the agency’s long-running investigation into its nuclear activities. The IAEA report, released Saturday, arrives at a diplomatically delicate moment. US President Donald Trump is reportedly seeking a deal with Tehran to rein in its nuclear program, but several rounds of negotiations between the two sides have so far failed to yield a breakthrough. According to news agency AP, the Vienna-based IAEA reported that as of May 17, Iran had amassed 408.6 kilograms (900.8 pounds) of uranium enriched up to 60 per cent. This marks an increase of 133.8 kilograms (294.9 pounds) — nearly per cent, since the

agency’s previous quarterly report in February. The AP notes that “60 per cent enriched material is a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90 per cent.” **WHAT’S INSIDE THE REPORT** The report emphasised that Iran is now “the only non-nuclear-weapon state to produce such material,” which the agency described as a matter of “serious concern.” The IAEA also pointed out that “approximately 42 kilograms of 60 per cent enriched uranium is theoretically enough to produce one atomic bomb, if enriched further to 90 per cent.” Citing the IAEA from a confidential report, the BBC reported that Iran saw an alarming 50 per cent increase in uranium enriched to 60 per cent purity in the last three months. The watchdog further estimated that Iran’s total stockpile of enriched uranium, including lower enrichment levels, had reached 9,247.6 kilograms (20,387.4 pounds), reflecting an increase of 953.2 kilograms (2,101.4 pounds) since February. While Iran continues to assert



that its nuclear program is purely peaceful, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi has warned that the stockpile is sufficient to produce “several” nuclear bombs if Iran chooses to proceed. Tehran pushed back forcefully against the report. In a joint statement, Iran’s Foreign Ministry and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran rejected the findings, accusing the agency of relying on “unreliable and differing information sources” and said the report was “biased, unprofessional and lacking crucial,

updated information.” “The Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its disappointment about the report, which was prepared by imposing pressure on the agency for political purposes, and expresses its obvious objection about its content,” the statement said. It also reiterated that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has issued a religious decree prohibiting nuclear weapons. Iran further criticized the IAEA for failing to acknowledge the impact of the US’s unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal in 2018, a decision made by the Trump administration, which Tehran sees as the root cause of the current nuclear impasse. The IAEA has also raised questions about past undeclared activities at three sites believed to be part of a structured nuclear weapons program Iran allegedly ran until the early 2000s. The agency said these sites may have involved the use of undeclared nuclear material. Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts continue.



## NEWS BOX

## Five men arrested for kidnapping assistant Film director in Arumbakkam over relationship dispute

**CHENNAI.** Five men have been arrested on charges of kidnapping a 29-year-old assistant film director on Thursday from Arumbakkam and stealing his two-wheeler and mobile phone. According to the Greater Chennai Police, the victim Rajkumar works as an assistant to Suseenthiran. He is allegedly in a relationship with a woman and it was opposed by certain people. On Thursday evening, a complaint was lodged with the Arumbakkam police station as he was not reachable. The next day, Rajkumar turned up at the police station and narrated the turn of events. On Thursday, when he stopped his vehicle at a tea stall in Arumbakkam, a car suddenly crashed into his two-wheeler.

Five men got out of it and took him by force into the car. He was beaten up and warned to stay away from the girl. Later, Rajkumar was thrown out of the vehicle, while his two-wheeler and mobile phone were taken away by the gang, police said. After launching an investigation, the Arumbakkam police zeroed in on G Chandrasekar (33), M Karthikeyan (25), M Lalith Aditya (21), V Dhivakar (21), and J Augustine (21), who are residents of Chennai.

## BBMP Chief Rao sets three-month deadline for Hosakerehalli Junction flyover work

**BENGALURU.** BBMP Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao on Saturday set a three-month deadline for Palike officials to complete the Hosakerehalli Junction flyover work. He issued the directions while inspecting projects in the Rajarajeshwari Nagar zone. "Almost 75% of work on the 500-metre flyover near PES College on Outer Ring Road (ORR) has been completed. Work on the down ramp is in progress and a proposal has been submitted to widen the adjacent service road," he added.

The land for the service road should be acquired fast and directed BBMP officials to work in tandem with the Bengaluru traffic police for its smooth execution, he said.

At Nayandahalli junction, he directed officials to clear encroachments and material dumped by scrap vendors on footpaths along the service road. He said motorists should not be allowed to park under the flyover as it affects the movement of vehicles. He reviewed a plan to construct an additional vented bridge across the Vrishabhavathi river with funds from the World Bank. He told the officials to invite tenders for the project once funds are released and to complete the work without delay. He instructed officials to clear clogged stormwater drains (SWDs) to ensure free flow of rainwater. The vacant BBMP land near the Nayandahalli stormwater drain should be cleaned and beautified, he told them. On sewage getting into Vrishabhavathi river, he directed officials to take immediate action to prevent it.

## Learning through experience: Shreejita provides hands-on education for children in rural Odisha

**BHUBANESWAR.** Inside a thatched house at the remote Khuntgaon village of Sundargarh district, children take turns to purchase small amounts of grocery from a dummy shop at one corner. In another corner of the room, a mock bank operates for them.

Under the watchful eyes of Shreejita Das, they learn to speak in English, Odia and carry out basic calculations by doing simple transactions, something that has only been taught to them on blackboards by their teachers at the local school. Every week, a new learning experience awaits the children.

In fact, learning is never a dull moment in this community learning centre set up three years back by Shreejita, a 30-year-old voluntary teacher, with the help of a local organisation called Koru Foundation. She has been providing free remedial learning to children of the village and nearby areas, belonging to tribal (Munda and Bhuyan) and SC communities, who do not meet the borderline learning outcomes in foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN).

"In these remote villages, the FLN standard of children usually does not match their education level. For example, children who are in 7th grade cannot write a straight line in Odia or English or know the basic mathematical applications like calculating a large sum in a real life situation," she said. Which is why, she has created a curriculum (learning by doing) that would teach the students practical application of language and maths. "For example, in the mock bank and shop, children learn to interact with one another in English or Odia, learn to write their names, do basic calculations, plan expenditures, etc. There are no school books involved here but it is all about strengthening their foundational skills which will make it easier for them to integrate the knowledge into their school curriculum," said Shreejita, who has done her Masters in Chemistry and BEd.

## Massive protest in Tumakuru against Dy CM DK Shivakumar's pet water project

The incident forced Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to intervene and suggest to Tumakuru district in-charge minister Dr G Parameshwara, also the Home Minister, to resolve the issue.

**TUMAKURU/BENGALURU.** Tension prevailed at Sunkapura in Gubbi taluk of Tumakuru district after a protest against Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's pet project of "diverting" the Hemavathi river waters from Tumakuru canal to Ramanagara district intensified at the project site on Saturday. The agitators, numbering over 5,000, including farmers, led by BJP MLA B Suresh Gowda, JDS MLA MT Krishnappa, and several religious heads, blocked the road. They set tyres on fire and deflated the tyres of several KSRTC buses on the Bengaluru-Shivamogga highway. The police took hundreds of agitators into custody for violating the prohibitory orders under Section 163 of BNSS. The incident forced Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to intervene and suggest to Tumakuru district in-charge minister Dr G Parameshwara, also the Home Minister, to resolve the issue. Parameshwara later held talks with Shivakumar, who is also the Water Resources Minister, on the sidelines of the DCs and zilla panchayat CEOs meeting in



Bengaluru. Meanwhile, the protestors called off the strike setting a deadline of one month to the government to stop the project.

Parameshwara, defending the Hemavati Express Link Canal as it is being built based on a report given by the technical committee, said BJP's protest was politically motivated.

"It was decided to build the canal at a cost of Rs 1,500 crore. As the work started, BJP opposed it. Shivakumar later held a meeting that was

attended by the MPs and MLAs concerned. They demanded that a technical committee be formed and based on its report, the work was being carried out. If the report had said the link canal would cause problems, it would not have been taken up. BJP is opposing it for political reasons," he said.

Maintaining that 40% of the project has been completed, Shivakumar said, "There is no reason to stop the work. Those who are there (in Tumakuru) and those who are here (in Ramanagara) are all our farmers. We will protect the interests of everyone.

MLAs Krishnappa and Suresh Gowda were aware of the project but are now opposing it." On Union Minister of State and Tumakuru MPV Somanna's letter to Siddaramaiah, urging him to shelve the project, Shivakumar said, "He (Somanna) is a big man... a union minister. Let us also seek his guidance." Somanna on Thursday, wrote to Siddaramaiah, urging him to discontinue the project to divert Hemavathi waters to Kunigal and parts of Bengaluru South district (formerly Ramanagara).

## Panel on cards to erase 'colony' from names of habitations, govt records

Discussions under way at level of senior officials to formulate plan and guidelines

**CHENNAI.** After Chief Minister MK Stalin made a socially significant announcement in April in the Assembly to remove the term 'colony' from the names of habitations of SC people in official records and public usage, the government machinery is now preparing for its implementation. The humongous exercise not only involves renaming lakhs of streets across TN, but also making changes in government records of individuals to capture those alterations.

Sources said discussions are under way at the level of senior officials in formulating a plan and guidelines. The government is inclining towards constituting a committee, which will include the ministers for municipal administration and rural development and senior officials from the departments concerned, to implement the work.

Deliberations are under way on whether to seek suggestions of names from people living in the



respective localities through the staff at village panchayat, the block development officers and other revenue officials, who could then shortlist or choose one in accordance with guidelines to be suggested by the government.

To guide this process, officials may provide a framework outlining certain conditions for suggestion of names. One such condition could be that the new name should be neutral and non-

identifiable in terms of the residents' social background," a person involved in the discussions shared. In addition to this, villages with names containing an explicit identifier of any of the SCs, especially in an undignified manner, are also expected to be renamed.

An alternative idea being floated is for officials to suggest a broad list of names, from which the residents can choose one for their street or locality.

The removal of the term 'colony' also involves the extensive process of updating addresses in all official documents of residents, including ration cards, Aadhaar cards, voter IDs, bank passbooks, etc. When contacted by TNIE, writer Imaiyam, vice-chairperson of Tamil Nadu State Commission for SC and ST, said, "The new names could be inspired by flowers, ancient Tamil poets or even renowned scientists like Newton and Edison, and philosophers such as Socrates and Plato."

## SFI activists booked for assaulting KSU workers in Kollam



**KOLLAM.** The Kilikkollur police have booked members of the SFI for allegedly assaulting KSU members. The police said the accused include Sahil, Arun, Nithin, Vivek, and eight others who are yet to be identified.

The incident reportedly took place on Friday night. The victims — Gowri Mohan, a resident of Sooranad village; Adi SP; and Meenakshi from Panmana village — were assaulted while attending the Kerala University arts festival at TKM Arts College, Karikode. They had come to support the drama team from DB College, Sasthamcotta, which has a KSU Students Union. The SFI members allegedly attacked KSU activists without any provocation, causing them serious physical and mental distress. The victims were later admitted to Kollam District Hospital.

In response, the KSU district committee has announced a protest march to the Kollam District Collectorate on June 3, demanding the immediate arrest of the accused.

## Over 1.13 crore register in first 10 days of AP's Yogandhra campaign, surpassing target by 162%

Yoga awareness activities are being conducted at an unprecedented scale across all districts, including in schools, colleges, community centres, and public spaces.

**VIJAYAWADA.** The State government's month-long Yogandhra campaign, launched to promote yoga awareness and participation, has received an overwhelming public response. Within the first 10 days of its launch on May 21, over 1.13 crore people registered to participate, exceeding the targeted registrations for the period by more than 162%.

Special Chief Secretary and State Nodal Officer for Yogandhra, MT Krishna Babu, reported the milestone to the State Ministers Committee on Friday night. The campaign, launched in the lead-up to International Day of Yoga on June 21, aims to achieve 2 crore registrations Statewide. "The official



target for registrations between May 21 and May 30 was 69.92 lakh, but the actual turnout far exceeded expectations with 1,13,47,935 people signing up," Krishna Babu said. He added that Master Trainer registrations reached 408% of the target, while Trainer registrations stood at 113%, indicating strong grassroots enthusiasm and effective coordination by district administrations. Yoga awareness activities are being

conducted at an unprecedented scale across all districts, including in schools, colleges, community centres, and public spaces. The drive continues to gain momentum as the State prepares to host the main event on June 21, which will be attended by PM Narendra Modi. The International Day of Yoga celebration is scheduled

along the scenic coastal stretch from RK Beach to Bhimili in Visakhapatnam, where lakhs of participants are expected to perform yoga together. Officials say the surge in participation reflects growing awareness of yoga's physical and mental health benefits. At the current pace, the State is expected to surpass its two-crore participation target well ahead of schedule, positioning

## IUML brings 'Op Sindoor' to Nilambur bypoll campaign

**KOZHIOKODE.** IUML leader K M Shaji has brought in Operation Sindoor, India's reaction to the massacre of 26 people at Pahalgam in Kashmir, in the campaign for the ensuing Nilambur by-election, asking LDF candidate M Swaraj whether he sticks to his earlier stand on the futility of wars.

Speaking to reporters in Nilambur on Thursday, Shaji said the most important political issue in the country now is war. "Swaraj's Facebook post on war was widely discussed. He issued another post when it became a talking point," Shaji said.

"Our leader E T Muhammad Basheer, among others, is travelling to all parts of the world to convince them that the war was instigated by Pakistan. We would like to know whether Swaraj sticks to his earlier stand that the war was unnecessary after he became a candidate," Shaji asked. "We feel that the war was imperative. It was a wound on the self-respect of Muslims as believers," he said. The insistence of the terrorist to recite 'kalima' and the murder of the male members in front of women were a bullet that passed through the hearts of Muslims, he

said. "We view the war from this perspective. Our reaction would have been the same even if it was done by Saudi Arabia. How does a social activist view the war? I think this is a question Swaraj has to answer in the beginning itself," Shaji said. In his post, Swaraj had said that people will enjoy war till a missile hits their courtyard. Quoting from a novel by M Mukundan, he underlined the futility of all wars and asserted that wars leave a trail of destruction and untold miseries for the people.

Swaraj's another post on Palestine is also being discussed after the announcement of his candidature. MSF state president P K Navas said not just what Swaraj said, but his silences should also be discussed. Navas said Swaraj was silent when the Pinarayi government pursued the Sangh Parivar agenda in many issues. "Muslims cannot be tricked merely by a Facebook post," he said. Speaking on these reactions, Swaraj said he will stick to his stand come what may. "It is the stand of Communists all over the world that there should not be massacres in the name of religion, language, caste or



language," he said. **BJP to take call on June 2**

Thiruvananthapuram: The BJP state leadership will take a call on Nilambur by-election by June 2. Party president Rajeev Chandrashekar told the media on Saturday that party will decide on the issue of whether to contest or not and whether the seat would be given to BDJS by Monday. Meanwhile, BDJS leader Thushar Vellappally told that no decision has been taken.

**Aryadan files papers; Grand reception for Swaraj in Nilambur**  
Malappuram: Aryadan Shoukath, the UDF

Giving voice to marginalised communities: Venkatarama Reddy's 'Kondapolam' now roars in English as 'Tiger Lessons'

**KADAPA.** S annapureddy Venkatarama Reddy, a retired government school teacher and author from Balarajupalle in Kadapa district, has had a profound impact on Telugu literature. His notable work, the novel Kondapolam, has been translated into English by Narasimha Kumar under the title Tiger Lessons. The translation is set to be officially released on June 3 by Bloomsbury. Born on February 16, 1963 to Lakshmireddy and Chennamma, Reddy's love for literature was cultivated early. His father used to read the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and at a young age, Reddy was handed the Ranganatha Ramayanam, a moment that shape his literary future.

As a youth, he delved deep into Indian epics and classical poetry, eventually embracing modern literature during college. Reddy's formal education took him through a website of VR College, Nellore, and a BEd from the Regional College of Education, Mysore. He began his teaching career in 1989 and retired in March 2024 after serving in various schools across Porumamilla, Kashinayana, and Kalasapadu mandal.

Since 1987, Reddy has penned over 200 poems, 90 short stories, and 9 novels, many of which have won prestigious awards. His novel Kondapolam, grounded in the real-life struggles of shepherd communities from the Nallamala forest, has not only received literary accolades but was adapted into a critically acclaimed Telugu film directed by Krish Jagarlamudi, starring Vaishnav Tej and Rakul Preet Singh.

In 2019, the novel earned the Telugu Association of North America (TANA) award with a prize of 2 lakh, marking the highest cash award given to a Telugu novel at the time. His writings reflect the pulse of rural Andhra.

His notable collections include the poetry collection Badi, story collections Kottadupatti (2008), Batuku Sedyam (2009), and Katharavanti (2022), and novels Palegatte, Tolubommalata, Chinukulu Savvadi, Kadi, Ontari, and Oka Vaana Chalu, among others.



Borne identity:  
Looming AI threat

Dario Amodei, CEO of Anthropic, the company that runs the Claude artificial intelligence model, has stepped out of line from his peers and confirmed a crisis hiding in plain sight. While the industry and governments minimise the threat of AI, claiming that it will only take over menial, clerical, repetitive functions, Amodei recently said that it is very likely to wipe out white-collar jobs and deepen unemployment, especially among young people. For example, AIs seem to be better persuaders than people. In September 2024, chatbots were reported to be good at debunking fake news and persuading conspiracy theorists to see sense. It was an important finding, since urban legends are used to amp up divisive politics. In April, researchers at the University of Zurich covertly addressed the popular subreddit, r/changemyview, via AI chatbots to see how efficiently large language models can persuade people. The forum performs an important function in highly polarised times, reminding people that it is normal to have multiple viewpoints. Concealment made the experiment controversial, but its draft report found that AIs are three to six times more persuasive than humans.

In May, researchers at Lausanne pitted 900 people against human and AI debaters to discuss points like the utility of school uniforms and the value of AI. They found that when AIs know something about their opponents, they are formidable persuaders. Now that clever people know this, AIs could be deployed in prestige roles as lobbyists, political campaign managers and marketers of all things from missiles to toothpaste. Dare we say, religion, too? This is not how it was supposed to play out. From the Industrial Revolution until the late 20th century, from the age of steam to that of silicon, machines have been presented as labour-saving devices whose most valuable product is leisure. But since mechanisation was a purely Western project, European ideas like utility applied. In the narrative about the golden age of machines, even the time freed up by reducing drudgery was supposed to have utility? it would give everyone the opportunity to create art and culture. Unemployment and underemployment would be wellsprings of creativity. But if work remains a marker of identity? consider how profession is embedded in South Asian caste names, and in English surnames like Carpenter and Carter? leisure spells erasure, not creation. Ironically, chronic unemployment is a feature of booming economies like India and China.

Urban families were typically bankrolled by a sole breadwinner. In the 1980s, yuppie aspiration created families called DINKs (double income no kids) and DINKYs (Y for 'yet'). Now, double income with kids is becoming the urban norm. Seen through the lens of women's participation in the workforce, it is a positive development. But it also points to the soaring cost of living? while one income could finance a family earlier, it now takes two. And someone who does not work has no identity. This erasure will be deepened if AI culls jobs on a scale not seen for decades? and across the rank and file this time. AI was supposed to take over basic and repetitive tasks, leaving workers free to supervise machines or turn to higher things. Exactly the opposite is happening. AIs can write words and code, create images from words, analyse gigantic datasets and work in mathematics, science and music. Because they learn by mimicry, they can even write poetry and literary fiction in the manner of acclaimed writers. But for want of manual dexterity, AIs are no good for everyday work. They can make fast food because it's standardised, but they can't make a home-cooked meal. Disappointingly, while the household robot has been a stock character in science fiction, intelligent machines can't perform any household function reliably, except for keeping floors somewhat clean. Jobs deemed to be low-quality may prove to be durable while a lot of white-collar roles go to machines. Even industries like the press, which depend heavily on human instincts and originality, are being affected. The buzz is about 'liquid content'? text, graphics and other components formatted to be widely shared, which can be decanted into various formats and channels.

Newton's Third Law in Punjab

THE GREAT GAME: Why does no one in the BJP, not even Modi-Shah, care about a bypoll in a corner of Punjab?

TWENTY days before the Ludhiana West Assembly constituency goes to the polls on June 19, the Punjab BJP is asking two questions. The first is, Ludhiana West where? And the second, Ludhiana West who?

The crisis in the party in the state is totally at odds with a juggernaut that has been caterwauling across the country over the last several months and mopping up all the governments it sets its eyes on. Haryana. Maharashtra. Delhi. Even in Manipur, the BJP folks are claiming the support of a majority of the MLAs (44) in an attempt at upsetting the local appalcart.

The BJP blitzkrieg didn't need Operation Sindoor to underline the 24x7 presence of the world's largest political party — with a 90-crore membership, the BJP claims to be even larger than the Communist Party of China. Certainly, Operation Sindoor has magnified PM Narendra Modi's importance not just in the party, but also across the country and in the international arena. He took the decision, first, to target terror infrastructure inside Pakistan. Then, when the Pakistanis struck back by raining drones and missiles on Indian military infrastructure from Baramulla to Bhuj, it was the PM who decided to escalate the air war by bombing Pakistan's 11 bases and runways.

The BrahMos missile certainly did its job well, but the credit for the decision to play eyeball-to-eyeball with Rawalpindi until Rawalpindi blinked, must certainly be given to Modi. Close by his side, the powerful Home Minister and Modi's closest confidante, Amit Shah, has demonstrated how there's no sunlight between the PM and he. It's as if they complete each other's sentences. Between them, there's full control over the party and the country. The thing about Amit Shah, as has been made clear again and again, is that he doesn't leave anything to chance. It is said he fights every election, from panchayat to Lok Sabha, as if he's astride the Mahabharata chessboard, thinking through every move three moves before. Within days of the end of the India-Pakistan conflict, as the PM travelled across the country talking to people about the conflict just ended, Shah was back in the Jammu region to assess the damage on the



ground.

Perhaps, none of this is new. Modi-Shah have had the BJP and the country in their grip since the party came to power in 2014 — dividing the Opposition, influencing both society and media, invoking the gods and conflating it with nationalism, although, as we know, one of the most endearing things about Hindu gods is that they have feet of clay. All the party presidents, both past and present, know that.

Current incumbent JP Nadda, the mild-mannered gentleman from Himachal Pradesh, must be wondering till when and how long his extended presidency is going to last.

The RSS is said to be fully on board the Modi train, its message of Hindutva being seeded across the length

life Amarinder Singh, who left the Congress to teach it a lesson and joined the BJP, is far removed from the heat and dust of politics and is planning a summer of travel. Vijay Rupani, the man from Gujarat who is in charge of Punjab, hides when he rolls his eyes in boredom, but everyone can see. Ludhiana West is a predominantly Hindu constituency, as much as 85 per cent, perfect territory for the BJP to showcase its determination to do much better than the only two MLAs it has today. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP didn't do too badly, winning 18 per cent of the vote. The PM, who spent a large time in Punjab during the Emergency, is said to have a fond corner for Punjab. But a certain je ne sais quoi is clearly missing.

Local Ludhiana boy Bikram Singh Sidhu is said to be a likely candidate from Ludhiana West — he had contested the election the last time too — except, the local 'sanghathan' or RSS man, Manthri Sreenivasulu, doesn't approve. Sreenivasulu, instead, likes Jeevan Gupta, another local who pays full obeisance to the 'sanghathan', but as a wag offered, "won't get even 10 votes." Sreenivasulu, meanwhile, is most unpopular in the Punjab BJP. A god-fearing, Telugu-speaking gent, he earnestly clocks the miles, going from 'pind' to 'pind', village to village, but to little avail. It's not really his fault. The Punjabi is mystified by him, and he is mystified by the Punjabi. Newton's Third Law prevails here; every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

For sure, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, via Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, India is one, but the BJP must know that some local flavour is always welcome in the Maggi. Back, then, to the original question. Why is the BJP not interested in fighting Ludhiana West? Perhaps, Punjab with only 13 Lok Sabha seats doesn't matter that much; and without the Akali Dal, it's difficult for the BJP to enter the state's Sikh-dominated villages.

Perhaps, none of the above is true and the real reason is that Punjabis, so used to resisting the idea of the Delhi Durbar for centuries, find it easy to escape the charms of the saffron party. So, why doesn't the BJP want to change that state of being?

Growth-inflation mix should spur spending, private investments

At a time when several countries are facing stagflation risks, India is witnessing a benign growth-inflation environment. That should spur consumption and investments, paving the way for a steady growth of 7 percent

India's GDP growth is blowing hot and cold. If the January-March quarter saw an impressive 7.4 percent growth, beating consensus estimates, the figure for the full 2024-25 fiscal year printed at 6.5 percent — the lowest in four years. Even though the economic momentum seems to have picked up in Q4, the projections for the current fiscal are set at 6.2-6.5 percent, implying that instead of a recovery, growth may slow down sharply. The provisional estimates released Friday also show that the Indian economy's size stood at \$3.9 trillion in 2024-25, as against \$3.6 trillion in 2023-24. So it needs a run-rate of at least 6-7 percent to emerge as the world's fourth largest economy, overtaking Japan at \$4.19 trillion, anytime soon. Besides a higher headline rate, we also urgently need a broad-based growth, not the current mix of sub-sectoral surges. While manufacturing and construction — two key employment generators — picked up pace in Q4, they ended the full year on a disappointing note. Private consumption, a key demand driver, stood at its highest in at least two decades, outpacing GDP growth



last year. But analysts suspect that rural consumption was the main engine, while urban spending sputtered. Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran noted that the transmission of interest rate cuts and personal income tax benefits will likely boost urban consumption this fiscal. Helpfully, rural consumption, which saw an improvement

due to rising agricultural wages, is expected to retain the momentum, thanks to the above-normal monsoon predicted. While private investments rose in Q4, government expenditure fell with a giant thud. Worse, it's expected to grow at a slower rate this fiscal, which means we need more private investments now.

Investment demand will likely remain sluggish due to the heightened global uncertainty. But a rising domestic demand could, in part, entice companies to expand production. Note that Friday's data includes provisional estimates and the final numbers will undergo revisions, hopefully upwards. While 2025-26 began on a sour note owing to global trade headwinds, the outlook for domestic growth seems relatively resilient. As Nageswaran noted, at a time when several countries are facing stagflation risks, India is witnessing a benign growth-inflation environment. That should spur consumption and investments, paving the way for a steady growth of 7 percent. At least, that's the hope at this point.

Evolutionary or revolutionary — Visualising the digital battlefield

Cyberattacks are increasingly targeting e-vehicle charging stations, and there is credible concern that these stations could be used as a vector to spread malware to hundreds of cars.

NOW that Operation Sindoor has been paused, there will be debates on the lessons learned from the short yet sharp encounter and how a future conflict involving the two neighbours could play out. In this context, I came across a paper by Pavithran Rajan titled 'Visualising the AI Battlefield — A Realist Perspective'. Rajan is a former intelligence officer of the Indian Army who writes and lectures extensively on information warfare and technology.

Rajan outlines a futuristic scenario in which the Pakistan Army responds to an Indian airstrike on terrorist camps with a ground offensive towards Amritsar. The physical assault is accompanied by a coordinated cyberattack that targets India's digital infrastructure. With full backing from China, the operation leverages pre-planted vulnerabilities in Chinese-manufactured devices across India.

Thousands of smartphones explode in the hands of civilians and military personnel. Electric vehicles, remotely controlled through previously installed backdoors, crash into military targets. Accompanying the Pakistani soldiers are swarms of drones with facial recognition software to hunt down high-value individuals. Simultaneously, India's Information and Communication Technology backbone, seeded with Chinese hardware and software, begins to destabilise. Backdoors embedded in routers, switches and servers allow Chinese cyber warriors to selectively shut down communication networks, power stations, water treatment plants and transportation systems. Not all Chinese devices in India are weaponised; only 5 per cent are carefully selected to maximise the impact, with some Western devices also becoming victims of supply chain

poisoning. This is a two-front war for India involving Pakistan and China but unfolding in ways that Indian planners did not visualise. Is such a war realistic or in the realm of science fiction? To answer that, we must examine two critical questions: Do such technologies already exist, and can they be weaponised at the scale envisioned in the scenario? Looking first at the current state of technology. Can smartphones be made to explode? There are known examples of malware, such as BadPower, that work by tricking the adapter into sending more electricity to the phone than it can handle, which, over time, will melt the internal components and start a fire.

Modern lithium-ion batteries of phones have built-in protection circuits that monitor temperature, voltage and current. If dangerous conditions are detected, these circuits disconnect the battery to prevent catastrophic failure. However, the equipment manufacturer can modify the battery management system to deactivate some of its safety features if pressured by the country of its origin.

E-vehicles are essentially "computers on wheels" and vulnerable to hacking. Of late, cybersecurity researchers have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to remotely compromise e-cars, including critical functions like steering and braking, through software vulnerabilities.

A famous example is the 2015 Jeep Cherokee hack, where researchers Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek remotely disabled the Jeep's transmission and brakes while a Wired reporter was driving on the highway. In another case, a Tencent Keen Security Lab team took remote control of a Tesla Model S from 12 miles

away, manipulating its door locks, dashboard and brakes. Cyberattacks are also increasingly targeting e-vehicle charging stations, and there is credible concern that these stations could be used as a vector to



spread malware to hundreds of cars.

Drones with facial recognition software are already a reality. In 2023, the US Department of Defense awarded a contract to develop drones that use machine learning and facial recognition to identify human targets for special operations forces. China is the leader in facial recognition technology and a dominant force in drone technology. There is no doubt that the two technologies have been combined for military purposes. Experts have long warned that when a foreign adversary's equipment is embedded within national infrastructure, it may carry hidden "kill switches" capable of disabling critical systems. Like other countries, India has heavily relied on cost-effective Chinese-made routers, switches and industrial control systems to build its cellular

networks and power grid, thereby creating a potential vulnerability. In April 2022, US cybersecurity firm Recorded Future revealed that Chinese state-sponsored hackers had targeted India's power grids in Ladakh. In October 2020, malware deployed by Chinese group RedEcho caused a power outage in Mumbai, which halted trains, shut down stock markets and hit hospitals for 10 to 12 hours. So, can these technologies be weaponised at scale to unleash mass destruction and disruption? Orchestrating a multi-pronged cyberassault synchronised with a conventional military offensive would demand an extraordinary level of operational sophistication. It implies that well before the conflict turned kinetic, the adversary would have infiltrated supply chains, weaponised key systems, mapped targets and deployed AI to minimise the need for human control.

This degree of sophistication is far beyond the reach of private hacking groups but well within the grasp of state actors like China, whose cyber capabilities are both advanced and expansive. It is not a question of if such planning is underway but how far along it already is. In February 2024, then FBI Director Christopher Wray confirmed that China has "offensive weapons within our critical infrastructure poised to attack whenever Beijing decides the time is right." Then, US federal agencies warned that Chinese hackers have, at times, "secretly" hidden in US infrastructure for up to five years, ready to conduct a disruptive or destructive cyberattack. It would be naïve to assume that India's critical infrastructure is not already the target of silent infiltration and strategic compromise.



Share some

Kitchen

time with Kids

this summer

Although it isn't always convenient to invite them into the kitchen to help, it can be a fun activity for both of you as you get together to rustle up some delicious meals. Here are a few options...

Kids of different age groups learn different lessons

Younger children can watch and help out with small tasks, like stirring, shifting or setting the table.

Slightly older ones can be taught to do easy



things like buttering bread, boiling pasta, cracking eggs or mixing ingredients while baking.

Teenagers would like to enhance their cooking skills and take important tips for future. Older

ones will be interested in experimenting with different cuisines.

Beginners can see how the dishes are done and put together.

They can also enhance their math skills while

trying to measure and combine ingredients for recipes. Tip Cooking time can also be used to talk about issues as well as good nutrition. It can lay the foundation for healthy eating and living for the future

Here's how you can go about it

Take a lot of time Cooking with kids cannot be a hasty affair; it should not be done on a tight time schedule. Involving them while cooking a quick meal is not a great idea.

Set a menu Plan in advance what you'll prepare together. Beginners should consider starting with simple dishes with less than seven ingredients, so that they can remember them easily . A pizza or a mix pasta salad can be a good starter projects.

Do it stepwise Before starting to cook, list the ingredients and the method on a neat piece of paper or a magic board and fix it close to the counter. Discuss the steps that your child can do independently . Make sure you follow the right order of preparation so that your child doesn't get confused with the sequence. Make note of small steps like turning off the fire while adding the cream or keeping boiled potatoes in cold water for five minutes before peeling them, to ensure convenience.

Give it a cookery show feel to it Prepare the ingredients in advance, and set them in separate bowls and containers on the kitchen counter. This will not just make it easy for the child to pick up ingredients while cooking, but also give him/her the feel of being on a cookery show, where chefs always have things laid out in front of them. This will make the exercise even more interesting.

Teach them post-cooking cleaning Kids cannot be counted on to be neat in the kitchen, hence, be prepared for some extra mess while they are at it. However, make sure that you seek their help while clearing up the kitchen after the cooking is done, so that they learn the importance of maintaining hygiene and keeping things in order.

**Veggie crunch pizza**

Ingredients

- Pizza base -7 inch
- Pizza sauce -2 cups
- Grated mozzarella cheese -2 cups
- Sliced bell peppers (red and yellow) -1 cup
- Blanched and diagonally cut baby corn -1 cup
- Tomatoes cubed -1 cup
- Onion cubes -½ cup
- Dry red chilli flakes (paprika) -1½ teaspoon

The kitchen is just the place to help your kids look beyond playing their favourite games through the day during summer vacations. It's also a learning ground, where they can see grown-ups at work, watch the steam rise from pots on the stove, and smell and experience all that goes into the making their daily meals.

Take the pizza base, and spread a layer of pizza sauce evenly on it

Add grated mozzarella cheese on this layer

Then add the onions, bell peppers, baby corn, tomatoes, chilli flakes, mixed herbs and salt

Finally , sprinkle the remaining mozzarella cheese evenly over it

Place the pizza on a greased baking tray and bake in a pre-heated oven at 200°C (400°F) for 15 minutes (help them with the microwave settings)

Cut into equal wedges and serve immediately

**Mango strawberry smoothie**

Ingredients

- Ripe mangoes peeled and chopped-3 (substitute with strawberries as per your choice)
- Yogurt-5 tablespoons
- Chilled milk-3 cups
- Ripe mango peeled, and cubed -1

**Method**

Take the yogurt in a blender

Add mango pieces and milk and blend till smooth

Pour the smoothie into a glass, and add some crushed ice

Garnish with more mango cubes

**Mix pasta salad**

Ingredients

- Macaroni, penne and fusilli -2 cups
- Red and green bell peppers chopped -2
- Tomato -1 cup
- Olive oil -1 tablespoon
- Mayonnaise -1 cup
- Mushrooms -1 cup (can be substituted with chicken)
- Bean sprouts -½ cup
- Oregano mix -1 tablespoon

**Method**

Boil a large pot of lightly salted water, and add the different pastas to it and cook till they get soft

Drain, and rinse with cold water, and transfer them to a large bowl

Stir in red and green bell peppers , tomato, mushrooms (or chicken), bean sprouts and olive oil

Mix in mayonnaise, and sprinkle the oregano mix; toss the salad properly

Refrigerate for a few hours before serving

4 popular bedtime

Beverages

*After a long day, all you want to do is unwind with a hot cup of steaming coffee. We list down a few delicious alternatives that you can sip on, on a cold wintry night.*

**Peppermint tea:**

This herbal tea has properties that will help your body de-stress, relax and eventually sleep better. It is a great option to calm jittery nerves, reduce nausea and relieve anxiety.

**Cocoa:**

The most popular bedtime drink in the world, this is a winter favourite because of its delicious taste. Even the ancient Mayans consumed it by roasting the cocoa beans and adding some spice to it.

**Chamomile Tea:**

Like peppermint tea, it is also another non-milk tea that has soothing qualities. For best results, drink this tea around 30 minutes before your bed time.

**Hot toddy:**

This traditional alcoholic beverage involves pouring hot boiling water in a little whiskey and adding a twist of honey, lemon and cinnamon stick for flavour. It is good to prevent cold and flu during winter and is very delicious.



Simple fruit

jelly recipe

Great with kids, this quick and easy recipe is also a great dessert option for summer

- 1 1/2 cup assorted fruits
- 200 grams sugar
- 300 ml water
- 3 tbsp gelatin
- 1 ¼ tbsp citric acid
- 1 tbsp raspberry red essence
- ½ tbsp red color

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Boil 150 ml water and keep separately.
2. Add sugar, citric acid, raspberry essence and red color to remaining 150 ml water and boil till sugar melts.
3. Add gelatin to a cup of water and mix thoroughly.
4. Add mixed gelatin with boiled water and cook till blending of gelatin.
5. Blend this mixture with other mixture thoroughly.
6. Lastly, pour it into a container and add



fruits when it cools. Refrigerate it for 4-5 Hours.



# Flash floods, landslides kill 25 in Northeast after 2 days of torrential rain

**Torrential monsoon rains have claimed at least 25 lives across Assam, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur, unleashing deadly landslides and flash floods. Authorities have issued alerts across the region as more rain looms.**

New Delhi. At least 25 people have been killed across the Northeast following days of relentless monsoon rains that triggered widespread landslides and flash floods, officials confirmed on Sunday.

In Assam's capital Guwahati, a mudslide buried several homes, killing five people — including three members of a single family. The incident occurred as heavy rains pounded the city, weakening the slopes and prompting fresh warnings from local authorities. Floods claimed three more lives, including two in Golaghat and one in Lakhimpur.

Neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh, which shares a border with China, reported seven deaths after a vehicle was swept away by surging floodwaters. In a separate incident, two people drowned, bringing the state's toll to nine.

Eight deaths have been reported across Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya over the past 24 hours. Officials attributed the deaths to a combination of flash flooding and landslides



**Five killed in Guwahati mudslide, including three from one family**  
**Arunachal Pradesh reports nine deaths from floods and drowning**  
**8 deaths in Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya from floods and landslides**

caused by the unrelenting downpour.

In Manipur, three days of relentless rainfall have brought daily life in the state capital Imphal to a standstill.

Waterlogging has been reported from several parts of the city, prompting authorities to issue

flood warnings and urge evacuation of residents living along the floodplains of the Imphal River. Nearly 1,500 tourists were stranded in various parts of north Sikkim as the main road was blocked due to landslides triggered by incessant rains. One person was killed, two injured, and eight others went missing when a vehicle in which 11 tourists were travelling plunged into the Teesta river in Mangan district earlier this week.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of continued heavy rainfall across the region in the coming days. It has issued red and orange alerts for parts of Assam and issued orange and yellow alerts for the rest of the northeastern region.

In Assam, a total of 17 districts were hit by floods and landslides and over 78,000 people were affected, with over 1,200 taking shelter in five different relief camps. Lakhimpur is the worst-hit district with more than 41,600 people affected, according to news agency PTI.

## BJP claims Pinarayi Vijayan's son-in-law sponsored 'spy' YouTuber's Kerala trip

New Delhi. BJP leader and former Kerala state president K. Surendran on Saturday alleged that YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra, recently arrested for espionage for Pakistan, was hosted by the Kerala Tourism Department under a state-sponsored program during her visit to Kannur. The department is headed by Tourism Minister P.A. Mohammed Riyas, who is also the son-in-law of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Surendran took to social media platform X (formerly Twitter), questioning the purpose behind Malhotra's Kerala trip.

"Pak-Spy Jyoti Malhotra's Kannur trip was sponsored by Kerala Tourism, run by none other than Pinarayi Vijayan's son-in-law. Who did she meet? Where did she go? What's the real agenda? Why is Kerala rolling out red carpets for a Pak-linked spy?" Surendran said in a post on X.

The post comes weeks after Malhotra, a resident of Hissar and creator of the 'Travel with JO' YouTube channel, was arrested under Operation Sindoor, a coordinated crackdown across Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh targeting an alleged ISI-backed spy network.

She faces charges under the Official Secrets Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Investigators revealed that Malhotra maintained direct contact with Pakistan's ISI, allegedly passed sensitive data, and had multiple interactions at the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi. She also reportedly made two trips to Pakistan, and one surfaced video shows her in Lahore's Anarkali Bazaar under armed escort. She was remanded to 14-day judicial custody on 26 May 2025.

## Covid-19 on the rise again in India: Kerala tops list with over 1000 cases

New Delhi. Coronavirus is once again raising its head in India and in several other countries of the world. Several states in India have reported cases of Coronavirus since mid-May. The country has so far reported 3,395 Covid cases. Within a day, Friday and Saturday, the country reported 695 new Coronavirus cases and at least 4 deaths. The deaths due to Covid were reported from Delhi, Kerala, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

### State-wise Coronavirus cases in India

The state of Kerala has the highest number of Coronavirus cases, with 1,336 people having tested positive for the virus. Next in line is Maharashtra, which has 467 cases, Delhi has reported 375 cases, while Gujarat has reported 265 cases. The other states where Covid cases have been reported are Karnataka, which has reported 234 cases, West Bengal has 205 cases, Tamil Nadu has reported 185 cases and Uttar Pradesh has 117 cases.

On Saturday Maharashtra reported 68 new Coronavirus cases. The new figure takes the total number of people who have tested positive for the virus in the state in 2025 to 749.

The country has recorded 26 Covid-19 deaths since January 1, 2025. The data from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare shows that 8 states have reported more than 100 active Covid-19 cases. A 60-year-old woman in Delhi died due to the virus, making it the first death due to Coronavirus in the national capital, this year.

However despite the rise in cases and deaths, there is also some good news. A total of 1,435 patients have recovered from the virus, across the country. The government and doctors have advised people to remain vigilant. They said that the situation is being monitored closely and any suspected cases of Covid are dealt with according to the established procedure.

## Villager injured in Naxal-planted IED blast in Jharkhand's Saranda forest



New Delhi. An innocent villager was critically injured on Saturday after stepping on an IED allegedly planted by Naxalites in the Saranda forest area of Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district. The incident occurred around 11 am in Baliba village, under Chotanagara Police Station limits.

According to Superintendent of Police Rakesh Ranjan, the IED was intended to target patrolling security personnel. However, it was accidentally triggered by Sahu Barjo, a local resident who had entered the forest to collect firewood. The explosion left Barjo severely wounded. Security forces arrived at the scene and transported him to Manoharpur government hospital.

He was later referred to a higher facility for specialised treatment. Notably, the injured man remained without medical attention for nearly nine hours, reaching the hospital only around 8 pm. Locals expressed outrage over the delay, alleging that a quicker response would have been ensured if the victim had been a security personnel. This incident highlights the persistent threat posed by IEDs in Naxal-affected regions, where civilians continue to suffer the fallout of ongoing conflict.

## 'Secularism isn't a shield for some and a sword for others': Pawan Kalyan hits out at TMC, Kolkata police after influencer's arrest

New Delhi. "Secularism isn't a shield for some and a sword for others. It must be a two-way street," wrote BJP ally and Andhra Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan after Kolkata Police arrested influencer Sharmistha Panoli following a communal post. Kalyan also flagged West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks and posted a video of her speech. On Saturday, Kolkata Police arrested Sharmistha Panoli, a 22-year-old law student, over social media videos where she used abusive and inflammatory language with communal overtones, while also slamming Bollywood stars for not speaking out during Operation Sindoor.

The FIR against Panoli was filed after a complaint in Kolkata. She was booked under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections and was produced in court and later, remanded in judicial custody for 14 days. Taking to X, Jana Kalyan Sena leader Pawan Kalyan posted: "During Operation Sindoor, Sharmistha, a law student, spoke out, her words regrettable and hurtful to some. She owned her mistake, deleted the video and apologized. The WB Police swiftly acted, taking action against Sharmistha."

He went on: "But what about the deep, searing pain inflicted upon millions when elected leaders, MPs of TMC, mock Sanatana Dharma? Where is the outrage when our faith is called 'Gandha Dharma'? Where is their apology? Where is their swift arrest?" Posting a video of the TMC chief's statements, Kalyan said, "Blasphemy must be condemned, always! Secularism isn't a shield for some and a sword for others. It must be a two-way street. West Bengal Police, the nation is watching. Act justly for all. #StandwithSharmistha. #EqualJustice."

Kolkata Police have pointed out that 'certain social media narratives suggesting an unlawful arrest of a law student are factually incorrect and misleading'.

In a post on X, it said: "All legal procedures were duly adhered to. All attempts were made to serve notice, but she was found absconding on every occasion. Consequently, a warrant of arrest was issued by the competent court, following which she was apprehended lawfully from Gurgaon. She was thereafter produced before the appropriate magistrate and granted transit remand as per due process of law. We urge all concerned to refrain from spreading unverified or speculative content and to rely on authentic sources for information."

## Illegal gun manufacturer from Bihar caught in West Bengal with arms consignment

New Delhi. The Special Task Force (STF) of West Bengal arrested a notorious illegal arms manufacturer from Bihar on Saturday. Acting on a tip-off, the STF apprehended 40-year-old Md Firdous Alam, also known as Laddu, a resident of Mafassil in Munger district, a region long known as a hub for illegal gun-making.

The arrest took place near the HP petrol pump at Palasdiha, along the Asansol-Gourandi Road, opposite the old Burnpur cement factory, under the jurisdiction of the Asansol North Police Station.

The STF seized a large cache of illegal firearms and ammunition from the suspect, who is reportedly a veteran in the trade of manufacturing semi-automatic illegal firearms. Alam had travelled to West Bengal to deliver the



weapons himself when he was intercepted.

**A known illegal arms manufacturer from Bihar was arrested by STF**  
**The suspect was arrested in West Bengal and is now under investigation**  
**Md Firdous Alam came to deliver the weapons himself**

During the operation, the Special Task

Force recovered a significant cache of illegal arms and ammunition. The seized items included five single-shot pipe guns, two 9 mm pistols along with two matching magazines, and two 7 mm pistols accompanied by four magazines. In total, six pistol magazines were recovered—two compatible with 9 mm pistols and four suited for 7 mm pistols.

Additionally, officers seized four live cartridges of 9 mm calibre and ten live cartridges of 7.65 mm calibre. A case has been registered at Asansol North Police Station, and a detailed investigation is underway by the STF.

Authorities suspect that the arms were being supplied to various criminal networks operating in West Bengal and possibly beyond.

## CBI arrests senior revenue officer, his aide for accepting Rs 45 lakh bribe

**While one, Harsh Kotak, was arrested in Mohali after being caught red-handed accepting the bribe, the 2007-batch IRS officer, Amit Kumar Singhal, was taken into custody from his Delhi residence.**

New Delhi. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested Additional Director General Amit Kumar Singhal, who was posted to the Directorate of Taxpayer Services, and another person for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 25, the central agency said on Sunday.

Singhal, a 2007-batch IRS officer, was arrested from his residence in New Delhi's Vasant Kunj area. The second accused has been identified as Harsh Kotak.

According to CBI, a case was registered on May 31, 2025, following allegations that Singhal had demanded



illegal gratification amounting to Rs 45 lakh from the complainant.

In exchange, he allegedly promised favourable treatment from the Revenue and Income Tax Department.

"The demand for the bribe was accompanied by threats of legal

action, imposition of heavy penalties, and harassment in case of non-compliance," a CBI statement read.

Acting on the complaint, the CBI laid a trap and caught Harsh Kotak red-handed while accepting Rs 25 lakh in cash as partial payment of the total demanded bribe. The transaction reportedly took place at the IRS officer's residence in Mohali.

Both the accused be produced before a competent court. Simultaneously, CBI teams are conducting searches at multiple locations across Delhi, Punjab, and Mumbai in connection with the case.

## 71 killed as Karnataka sees highest pre-monsoon rains in 125 years

New Delhi. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's office on Saturday said that 71 people lost their lives due to excessive pre-monsoon showers in the state since April. The pre-monsoon rains in 2025 is the highest rainfall recorded during the pre-monsoon seasons and in the month of May in the last 125 years, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a statement. The state normally receives 74 mm of rainfall in May, but the actual rainfall was 219 mm, which is 197 per cent higher than the average normal rainfall, it said.

Similarly, in the pre-monsoon period of 2025 (March 1 to May 31), the state normally receives 115 mm of rainfall, but the actual rainfall was 286 mm, which is 149 per cent higher than the average normal rainfall. The rainfall, including thunderstorms and gales, was observed across the state during the 2025 pre-monsoon period (March 1 to May 31), with all districts receiving very high and above-normal rainfall, the statement said. During the period from April 1 to May 31,

48 people were killed due to lightning, nine due to falling of trees, five due to house collapse, four due to drowning, four due to landslides and one due to electrocution, it added.

A total of 71 lives were lost and emergency compensation of Rs 5 lakh has been distributed to the heirs of the deceased, the statement said.

It said that 702 animal losses occurred, out of which compensation has already been distributed to the concerned in 698 animal loss cases. (Large animals - 225 and small animals - 477). The statement said that 2,068 houses have reportedly been damaged, out of which compensation has already been distributed to 1,926 houses. (fully damaged - 75 and partial damage - 1993).

A total of 15,378.32 hectares of crops have been damaged (agricultural crops - 11915.66 hectares and horticulture - 3462.66 hectares), said officials, adding



that crop damage details have been provided to be entered in the compensation software and the compensation payment process is in progress.

As per the revised 2025 Southwest Monsoon Forecast released by the India Meteorological Department on May 27, there is a possibility of above-normal rainfall across the state during the 2025 Southwest Monsoon (June-September) period and except for a few districts in the southern interior, all the remaining districts are likely to receive normal and

above normal rainfall in June. There are a total of five NDRF teams in the state, out of which four teams have already been deployed, one each for Kodagu, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada districts for emergency response during the monsoon season.

Another team is in Bengaluru. Apart from this, the fire brigade, SDRF and other emergency service teams will be available for emergency response and rescue operations as required.

As on May 31, the total storage in 14 major reservoirs of the state was 316.01 TMC, which is 35 per cent of the total storage capacity (895.62 TMC) as against 179.95 TMC (about 20 per cent of the capacity) during the same period last year, the CMO said. Overall, the major reservoirs of the state recorded a cumulative inflow of about 718,193 cusecs (62.05 TMC) between May 19 and May 29, with the inflow generally increasing from May 25 due to widespread and heavy rainfall in the catchment areas.





# Hot wedding Food trends

Culinary trends take a sophisticated turn at the Great Indian Wedding with tasting stations, vegan, sushi platters and push pops for dessert.

Alavish spread is a thing of the past. This season, you'll dig into larger dessert stations, sit in for a familystyle dining experience, or get your culinary fix from food trucks to sushi carts and personalised cocktails at weddings. Modern couples and experimental chefs are coming together to make wedding food fare the most exciting part of D-Day. Here are a few ideas for your nuptials that'll get everyone talking about your wedding day.

**GET BRUNCHY**

Brunch spreads are perfect for morning weddings. Wedding planner Sonali Thakore says, "Earlier, morning weddings began with breakfast and moved to lunch. These days, brunches are taking over. They are classier, have far more options and are economical since you are cutting one meal out." From pancakes to egg stations, truffle burgers to pancakes, omelette stations to croissants, there's a bevy of options to choose from. And these foods can be enjoyed at any time of the day.

**FAMILY STYLE DINING**

Buffet is out. Classy family-style dining is in. Cosy, comfortable and more intimate, this dining style echoes a more inclusive atmosphere. No more queues. Your guests have a sit-down comfortable meal. Says chef Michael Swamy, "Fine dine



plating is when a prominent chef's menu is created and exclusively used for the family dinner at weddings. Usually caterers want to put all cuisines on the menu and make a mess of everything. But this season, less is more classy."

**TASTING STATIONS**

Tasting stations are perfect for creative couples who want to give a different food experience to their guests. A popsicle cocktail station instantly cools you down at a summer wedding. You can have a tandoori tasting station, cheese on

wheels, or a soup shooter station.

**THINK FRESH**

Farm-to-table is the new slogan. If you haven't gone totally regional and organic, you haven't got it right. The menus include bajra, ragi and jowar and makki-ki-roti served with brown rice and rajma. Says chef Michael Swamy, "You can win the guests' hearts instantly by putting light and 'good-for-stomach' options on the menu, like a green salad or dal-rice. With more people choosing vegan and gluten-free options, wedding food fares are also becoming health-conscious affairs. No more popping antacids before attending a wedding."

**SHRINK IT DOWN**

Miniature is the buzzword. Mini versions of your favourite meals are making a huge statement. A single meatball topped with spaghetti, a bite-sized pizza or a bite of Amritsari fish, dipped in chutney, are just some of the one-bite options that guests are being served. Says chef Bharat, "Indian weddings now have one or two classy dishes being served rather than 10 usual dishes that people anticipate."

**DIM SUM, SUSHI DELIGHTS**

Dim sum allows guests to sample different fillings without filling up. Carts of dumplings and sushi can be wheeled around from one corner to the other. Ask your caterer to pair the dim sums with mini sake shots. Food blogger Nikhil Merchant says, "Gone are the days of flash stirfrys and curries. Now, we have steamed



disappointed anyone. Invite a dessert chef to whip up flambe to impress everyone. There's also an option to tell the caterers to create a 'tea party' room, where different flavours of tea (ange pekoe, black tea or green tea) can be served with lemon cakes. Chef Bharat says, "Coffee and tea spaces are getting priority at weddings. Right now, we see top coffee chains of the country put up their stalls at big weddings."

That apart, you can also see a line-up of top dhabas, say from Delhi to Amritsar, created with the same ambience to give an authentic experience. So, you have dancers, the traditional chulha, charpais etc.

**GOING RUSTIC**

The food served here is usually family style, depending on the region the couple belongs to. If the bride and the groom belong to different regions, the wedding is the perfect occasion to display their culinary heritage with aplomb. From homemade jams and honey to tribal food, the humble regional dishes get a classy make-over and the guests get a lesson in India's rich history of food.

As the temperature steadily escalates in Nashik and across India, one of the few delightful consolations of this season is the arrival of the king of fruits — mango.

# Mango obsession has just begun

From a mango flavoured drink to the modest aamras prepared at home — Nashik is already drooling over the mangoes available in the market. Here's a lowdown on what can be done with this royal fruit.

**Mango Silk**

**40**

Mango silk is a unique dessert and has recently been discovered by Nashikites. It



is an impeccable combination of condensed milk, cream and mangoes with a topping of melted chocolate. Doesn't this sound mouth-watering?

**Mango Mastani**

**100**

The mastani is a famous drink available in the city during summers. Pallavi Pandit, a housewife, said, "I was mesmerised with the dessert-drink because I had never imagined of having something so delicious made up of mangoes. It is so filling that we generally skip our dinner after having it and it is also heavenly to relish the taste before going to bed. I even prepare the same at home with a topping of cashews, cream and strawberry pieces."

**Mango Milkshake**

**30**

Mango milkshake is one of the most sought after milkshake recipe in India. When you are looking to beat the summer heat, mango milkshake with lots of ice is the best anyone can offer you.

**Mango Mousse**

**45**

Mango mousse is made using a quick recipe of mangoes and cream blended together to give a creamy, light and airy texture to it. Mousse can be served with freshly cut pieces of mango to make a delightful dessert using this king of fruits.

**Ice-cream**

**40**

Dig into a scoop of mango ice-cream to regularise your body temperature in the scorching heat of summer. Though mango ice-cream is available throughout the year but it is the most relished during this season.

**Aamras**

The most famous and mouth-watering delicacy of mangoes is aamras, prepared entirely with mango pulps and with no preservatives so as to improve on the taste. Indulge in the most loved combination of aamras and pooris this summers to take your tastebuds on a delightful journey. Tina Pavan Narang, a homemaker, says "This is quintessentially the most desired delicacy that our guests love. So when summers arrive, this is a must-have item on our food menu."

**Panna** **10 per glass**

Panna is a refreshing raw mango drink renowned for its heat resistant properties. It has a wonderful balance of flavours - sweet, sour and savoury. Poonam Saraf, an architect from the city, says, "It is one of the most delicious drinks I relish during summer. With a dash of cardamom powder, it has the most extraordinary taste. Panna should be served chilled as its coolness adds on to its rich flavour."

**Ambadi**

**650 per kilo**

Ambadi is a mango barfi that is easily available in city markets. It can also be prepared at home with mangoes and coconut to attain the most desirable taste of it.

**Mango cakes** **450**

Mango flavoured cakes are a big hit in the summer season and are easily available now. The subtle taste of this cake is what makes people obsess over this dessert in these hot months.

**Mango Kulfi** **30**

Kulfi in Nashik is not all about malai and gulkand. Come summer and the markets are flooded with the all-time favourite mango kulfi. All the goodness of the juicy alphonso mangoes in a sinfully rich and creamy kulfi gives your tastebuds a treat. Shops even add nuts to give it a fancy look.

**Mango Flavoured Drink**

**20 per bottle**

This drink, manufactured in Nashik, is made of mango. It is as refreshing as it gets. From being a thirst quenching drink on a summery afternoon to the ideal sipper in parties, the drink has many takers.

**Amrakhand**

**240 per kilo**

A popular variation of the mango flavoured shrikhand is the amrakhand. It is one of the easiest mango desserts that can be prepared in no time. It is thick, creamy soft, supple, delicious and a total melt-in-your-mouth delicacy.

**Mango Juice**

**30**

Home-made mango juice prepared from organic alphonso mangoes tastes incredibly good. It is most preferred over mango pieces because it naturally gives the factual taste of mangoes.

## 3 must-try burger recipes

Easy burger recipes you must try!

**PESTO BURGER**

Ingredients

- Ground meat - 1 kilo
- Salt - ½ tsp
- Pepper - ½ tsp
- Mozzarella cheese - 3 slices
- Pesto - ½ cup
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Roasted red peppers - ½ cup
- Burger buns - 4

**Method**

Pound the meat, season with salt and pepper and shape it into rounds. Fry them in hot oil until each side cooks really well. Take a bun add the burger to it, along with a leaf, the cheese. Spread some pesto onto it. Add it to the hot pan and simmer for a minute until the meat is reheated and the cheese gets melted.

**Pizza burger**

Ingredients

- Ground meat - ½ kilo
- Pizza puree - 2 cups
- Onion - ½, diced
- Capsicum - ½, diced
- Mozzarella cheese - ¼ cup
- Mushrooms, roasted - ½ cup
- Oregano - 1 tsp
- Lettuce - few crispy leaves
- Buns - 4

**Method**

Heat a skillet and add some oil to it. Cook the meat till it is well done. Add the pizza puree and cook. Add the oregano as well. Also stir fry the

peppers and onion and add it to the meat mixture. Take a bun, add the lettuce leaves to it as well as the cooked meat mixture.

**RED BEAN BURGER**

Ingredients

- Red beans (rajma), cooked - 1 cup
- Ground zeera - 1 ½ tsp
- Garam masala - a pinch
- Onions - 1, sliced
- Mayonnaise - 3 tbsp
- Dry bread crumbs - ½ cup
- Oregano - ½ tsp
- Pepper - ½ tsp
- Mint leaves - a few, chopped
- Vegetable oil - 2 tbsp
- Buns - 4

**Method**

Heat oil and saute the onion. Add the garam masala and zeera to it. Add the boiled rajma beans to this and saute. Now blend together the bread crumbs, mayonnaise, pepper and oregano to it. Spoon the mixture into the buns and place the burgers in a skillet. Serve with salsa sauce.





# EPFO 3.0 To Launch With UPI & ATM Withdrawals From THIS Date— All You Need To Know

**New Delhi.** The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is likely to roll out EPFO 3.0 in June 2025, as per a DD News report. One of the key highlights of this upgrade is the expected introduction of UPI and ATM-based withdrawals which could make managing and accessing PF accounts faster and more convenient than ever before.

**What is EPFO 3.0?**  
EPFO 3.0 is a new digital platform designed to make services faster and easier for EPF account holders. It is backed by upgraded IT systems and will allow users to do important tasks like withdrawing funds or updating account details more smoothly. This initiative is part of the Labour Ministry's broader effort to simplify and digitise financial services for both salaried employees and those in the informal sector. Using UPI and ATMs to Access Your EPF: What to Expect While the full details are yet to be revealed, EPFO 3.0 is expected to connect PF accounts with UPI and ATM networks. This could soon allow subscribers to withdraw their eligible EPF funds directly through UPI apps or bank ATMs, using secure methods like a PIN or Aadhaar verification. Withdrawal limits and safety rules will likely be in place to protect your funds. When Will EPFO 3.0 Launch and What to Expect Next?

According to a DD News report, EPFO 3.0 is expected to roll out in June 2025, although the exact launch date hasn't been officially confirmed yet. The launch may begin with pilot testing in select regions before expanding across the country. Once fully implemented, the upgrade could benefit over 6 crore EPF account holders across India.//

**EPFO Pension Access from Any Bank Branch**  
Starting January 1, 2025, pensioners under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) 1995 will be able to receive their pension from any bank branch across India. This means retirees won't be tied to a specific branch and can access their pension from any bank location, making the process more flexible and convenient.

## Market in May: FPIs infuse Rs 19,860 cr on strong domestic fundamentals, global indicators

**New Delhi.** Foreign investors continue to exhibit confidence in the country's equity market, injecting Rs 19,860 crore in May driven by favourable global economic indicators and strong domestic fundamentals. This positive momentum follows a net investment of Rs 4,223 crore in April, data with the depositories showed. Prior to this, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) had pulled out Rs 3,973 crore in March, Rs 34,574 crore in February, and a substantial Rs 78,027 crore in January.

Going forward, FPIs are likely to continue their investment in India. However, at higher levels they might sell since valuations are getting stretched, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments, said. According to the data with the depositories, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 19,860 crore in equities in May. The latest flow has helped narrow the outflow to Rs 92,491 crore in 2025 so far. India's equity markets witnessed a sharp resurgence in FPI activity in April. The sustained buying spree that began in mid-April continued in May too, reflecting renewed investor confidence. Himanshu Srivastava, Associate director – Manager Research, Morningstar Investment, said that several factors influenced FPI flows in May. Globally, easing US inflation and expectations of interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve made emerging markets like India more attractive. Domestically, India's strong GDP growth, robust corporate earnings, and policy reforms enhanced investor confidence.

"Global macros like declining dollar, slowing US and Chinese economies and domestic macros like high GDP growth and declining inflation and interest rates are the factors driving FII inflows into India," Vijayakumar said. In terms of sectors, FPIs have been buyers in autos, components, telecom and financials in the first half of May. Apart from equities, FPIs invested Rs 19,615 crore in debt general limit and Rs 1,899 crore in debt voluntary retention during the period under review.

## 4 top valued firms see ?1 trn jump in market valuation, LIC biggest winner

**New Delhi.** The combined market valuation of four of the top-10 most valued firms jumped ?1,01,369.5 crore last week, with Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) emerging as the biggest gainer, in an otherwise sluggish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 270.07 points or 0.33 per cent. While HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India and LIC were the gainers in terms of addition to their market valuation, Reliance Industries Ltd, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever Ltd faced a combined erosion of ?34,852.35 crore on the other hand. The market valuation of LIC surged ?59,233.61 crore to ?6,03,120.16 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Bharti Airtel jumped ?14,084.2 crore to ?10,58,766.92 crore and that of HDFC Bank climbed Rs 8,462.15 crore to Rs 14,89,185.62 crore. However, the mcap of TCS tumbled ?17,909.53 crore to ?12,53,486.42 crore. The valuation of Reliance Industries tanked ?7,645.85 crore to ?19,22,693.71 crore. The mcap of Bajaj Finance dropped by ?4,061.05 crore to ?5,70,146.49 crore and that of ICICI Bank declined by ?2,605.81 crore to ?10,31,262.20 crore. The valuation of Hindustan Unilever Ltd diminished by ?1,973.66 crore to ?5,52,001.22 crore and that of Infosys dived ?656.45 crore to Rs 6,49,220.46 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever Ltd.

# Is 6.5% GDP growth new normal for India

**Economists increasingly fear that growth may plateau around 6–6.5%, and that the ingredients for a return to 7%-plus growth are missing**

**New Delhi.** India's economy posted an unexpected 7.4% GDP growth in the fourth quarter of FY25, pushing the full-year growth to 6.5%. While that's a respectable number, it is the slowest pace in the last four years. More importantly, estimates for the next couple of years remain muted, ranging between 6.3% and 6.5%. So, is India's economic engine losing steam, or is 6.5% growth the new normal? Economists increasingly fear that growth may plateau around 6–6.5%, and that the ingredients for a return to 7%-plus growth are missing. Namrata Mittal, economist at SBI Mutual Fund, says the momentum for higher growth is lacking. "Post-Covid, there was a real

push to boost exports and ramp up infrastructure spending, which lifted economic growth. But all of that is now built into the base. Government capex as a share of GDP is plateauing, and there is no strong structural push to drive consumption either, especially in the absence of visible income growth," she says. India grew at 8.7% in FY22, 7.2% in FY23, and 9.2% in FY24. But growth projections are turning cautious. The IMF projects GDP growth at 6.2% for FY26 and 6.3% for FY27. Even the government's Chief Economic Advisor (CEA), V. Anantha Nageswaran, while optimistic, puts FY26 growth in the 6.3–6.8% range. The FY25 number was propped up by a surge in government capital spending in the fourth quarter. Yet, structural weaknesses remain. Private sector investment continues to lag, and although consumption growth rebounded to 7.2% in real terms (up from 5.8% in FY24), it still lacks underlying strength. In fact, private consumption

growth in Q4 was just 6%, down from 8.1% in Q3 and 6.2% in Q4 FY24. According to the CEA, private consumption accounted for 61.4% of GDP at current prices in FY25 — the highest since FY2004. This suggests that despite its recent slowdown, private consumption remains the primary engine of growth in the absence of robust private investment. Arun Kumar, former professor of economics at JNU, points to weak demand over the past three years, which has kept formal sector capacity utilization at around 75%. "Private

investment remains subdued," he notes. Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF), a key indicator of capital expenditure, slowed to 7.1% in FY25 from 8.8% the previous year. The Q4 capex push — which saw GFCF rise 9.4% — helped salvage the full-year figure somewhat. According to Kumar, while agriculture is doing relatively well, its overall contribution to GDP is small and unlikely to move the needle much. For India to consistently grow above 7%, both the services and industrial sectors need to accelerate. Currently, services contribute 45% to gross value added (GVA), industrial sectors (manufacturing, mining, utilities) account for 27%, and agriculture contributes about 18%. With global uncertainty, intensifying trade tensions, and the looming threat of generative AI disrupting jobs, sustaining 7% growth looks increasingly difficult. Yet, as Kumar says, "Predicting anything in this environment is risky and difficult."



## GIFT Nifty Clocks All-Time High Monthly Turnover Of \$102.35 Billion In May

**New Delhi.** GIFT Nifty has recorded the highest-ever monthly turnover of \$102.35 billion (Rs 8,75, 098 crore) with 2.10 million contracts during May, it was announced on Sunday. GIFT Nifty, which stands as a new benchmark to the growth story of Indian equity market, recorded a new milestone and has added yet another feather in its cap in terms of achieving all-time high monthly turnover. This feat surpasses its previous record of \$100.93 billion set in April this year. "This milestone reflects the growing global interest and trust in the GIFT Nifty as a benchmark for the India's growth story. We are glad to witness the success of GIFT Nifty and express our sincere gratitude to all the participants for their overwhelming support and making GIFT Nifty a successful contract," the National



Stock Exchange of India (NSE) said in a statement. Trading turnover on NSE IX has been growing exponentially since commencement of a full-scale operation of GIFT Nifty on July 3, 2023. Since the first day of full-scale operations, GIFT Nifty has witnessed a total cumulative volume of over 43.28 million contracts with total cumulative turnover of US \$1.93 trillion till May 2025. NSE IX is an International multi assets exchange set up at GIFT City on

June 5, 2017, and recognised by International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA). NSE International Exchange holds a dominant market share of over 99 per cent, highlighting extensive leadership in GIFT IFSC. It offers a diversified portfolio of products including Indian Single Stock Derivatives, Index Derivatives, Currency Derivatives, Depository Receipts and Global Stocks. Meanwhile, NSE has reached a significant milestone, becoming the largest unlisted company in India with over 100,000 shareholders, according to latest industry data. For the financial year ending March 31 (FY25), the NSE reported a 17 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in consolidated total income, reaching Rs 19,177 crore.

## Govt Prioritising Lower Denomination Notes And Digital Transactions: Sitharaman

**In recent years, India has witnessed an unparalleled rise in digital transactions, marking a significant milestone in its journey towards becoming a cashless society.**

**New Delhi.** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday that the priority of the government is to "make sure" that currency in circulation will be in "lower denominations" and spreading more awareness for "doing digital transfers." Answering a question on the future of Rs 500 currency, Sitharaman said, "We are making every effort to make sure that currency will be in the lower denominations, used much

more than the higher, as the Rs 2000 is almost completely out of circulation, except for possibly 0.02, which is still lying outside. Others have given it to the banks." "We need to have more digital awareness built so that people



see a benefit in doing digital transfers," the Union Finance Minister said at the 'National Commemorative Seminar on 60 Years of Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya Integral Humanism Lectures' in the national capital. In recent years, India

has witnessed an unparalleled rise in digital transactions, marking a significant milestone in its journey towards becoming a cashless society. At the forefront of India's digital payment revolution is UPI with a record hit of 16.73 billion transactions in December 2024. In addition to this, Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) and FASTag have emerged as pivotal players, making financial transactions faster, more accessible, and secure. As of recent data from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI has set a new record by processing over 16.73 billion transactions, with a staggering transaction value of Rs 23.25 lakh crore. This is a notable jump from Rs 21.55 lakh crore in November. In 2024, UPI processed around 172 billion transactions, marking a 46 per cent increase from 117.64 billion in 2023. This rise underscores a broader cultural shift toward financial inclusivity, with UPI being a central pillar.

# Singapore leads as India's largest FDI source for seventh straight year

**New Delhi.** Singapore continued to be India's largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) for the last seven years, as the country received the highest inflows of about \$15 billion in 2024-25. The overseas inflow grew 13 per cent to \$50 billion in the last fiscal. The total FDI, which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital, grew by 14 per cent to \$81.04 billion during the last financial year. It is the highest in the last three years. FDI from Singapore in 2024-25 increased to \$14.94 billion from \$11.77 billion in 2023-24, according to the latest government data. ALSO READ: FDI hits \$81 billion in 2024-25, highest in three years: DPIIT Secretary Singapore accounted for around 19 per cent of total inflows in 2024-25. Since 2018-19, Singapore has been the largest source of such investments in India. In 2017-18, India attracted the maximum FDI from Mauritius. In the last fiscal, the country received USD 8.34 billion in foreign inflows from Mauritius. During 2024-25, Mauritius was followed by the US (USD 5.45 billion), the Netherlands (USD 4.62 billion), the UAE (USD 3.12 billion), Japan (USD 2.47 billion), Cyprus (USD 1.2 billion), the

UK (USD 795 million), Germany (USD 469 million), and Cayman Islands (USD 371 million).

According to experts, Singapore's position as a global financial hub, combined with strong bilateral ties and its role as a gateway for global private equity and venture capital, makes it a natural conduit for investments into India. Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said despite turmoil in the capital markets and uncertainties around trade, India has managed to attract huge investments, which are stable and long-term. "Given that Asia is the second largest region to receive foreign capital inflows, a large part of the funds come from Singapore. There are quite a few reasons for that. One, being a low-tax jurisdiction and with a robust legal framework, Singapore is considered the strategic financial gateway to Asia," she said. Double Tax Avoidance Agreement between the two nations helps all Singapore-based organisations to invest in India and reduce the total tax burden on income earned from India, Majumdar added. ALSO READ: Maharashtra tops



FDI equity inflows again; Karnataka bags second spot Lokesh Shah, Partner, IndusLaw, said the India-Singapore tax treaty was one of the major drivers of FD. "Singapore's continued dominance in India FDI now relies more on genuine business and regulatory advantages, Singapore's sophisticated financial market, its status as a regional hub, and political and economic stability," Shah said. Rudra Kumar Pandey, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said that while Singapore will continue to be a

significant and active investor in India, the landscape is gradually evolving. "Singapore's rising FDI into India is anchored in its role as a global financial hub, home to a large number of international private equity and venture capital funds," Pandey said. These investors see India as a high-growth destination, particularly in sectors like financial services, banking, insurance, business process outsourcing, logistics, computer software and hardware, trading, telecommunications and pharmaceuticals and use Singapore as a key base to manage and deploy capital across Asia, he added. Foreign investments are crucial for India to overhaul its infrastructure like ports, airports and highways to push growth. FDI also helps improve the country's balance of payments situation and strengthen the rupee's value against other global currencies, especially the US dollar.



NEWS BOX

Rinku Singh to get engaged with Samajwadi Party MP Priya Saroj on June 8

NEW DELHI. Mumbai Indians (MI) head coach Mahela Jayawardene was full of praise for left-arm seamer Ashwani Kumar, following his marvellous show in the ongoing season of the Indian Premier League 2025 (IPL 2025). Kumar has scalped nine wickets from six innings so far at an average of 19.66. He registered figures of 1/28 in 3.3 overs in the Eliminator fixture against Gujarat Titans (GT) and dismissed Shahrulkh Khan.

Kumar made his debut in the ongoing season against Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and picked up 4/24 in three overs, winning the Player of the Match award. Amid Ashwani's rapid rise, Mahela Jayawardene extolled the 23-year-old seamer, mentioning his ability to rise to every challenge.

"Ashwani is a great talent. This season, he's handled every challenge we've thrown at him really well. He hasn't played much state cricket, but the skill was obvious when we first saw him. We've given him simple plans to avoid confusion, and he's had strong support from players like Boom (Bumrah), Deepak, and Hardik. Execution under



pressure is what matters, and he's done that," Jayawardene said in the post-match press conference. Furthermore, Jayawardene said that it's just the beginning and there's a lot more to come from Ashwani.

"Even in the GT game when he came on as a concussion sub, and in the KKR game, he bowled brilliantly. We use him tactically based on opposition, and he continues to learn. This is just the beginning — there's much more to come from Ashwani, and we're committed to grooming him the right way," he added. Ashwani also scalped 2/28 in Match 56 against Gujarat Titans (GT), albeit in a losing cause. Meanwhile, Mumbai Indians beat GT by 20 runs in the Eliminator fixture. After opting to bat first, MI posted a massive score of 228/5 in their allotted 20 overs as Rohit Sharma played a magnificent innings of 81 (50).

In reply, GT were restricted to 208/6 in their 20 overs and got knocked out of the tournament. They will next take on Punjab Kings (PBKS) in Qualifier 2 on Sunday, June 1.

French Open: India's N Sriram Balaji crashes out in doubles second round

New Delhi. India's N Sriram Balaji couldn't go beyond the second round of the men's doubles in the French Open 2025. On Saturday, May 31, Balaji and Mexico's Miguel Angel Reyes-Varela lost in straight sets to the fourth-seeded Italian pair of Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori. It took Bolelli and Vavassori an hour and 24 minutes to win the match 6-3, 6-4 on Court 7. The Italian duo converted two of the nine break-point chances they got. Balaji and Reyes-Varela didn't get a single opportunity to break, showing how dominating their opponents were. 18 unforced errors didn't help Balaji and his partner. Bolelli and Vavassori also dominated the Indo-Mexican pair with 18 winners in the match. In the third round, Bolelli and Vavassori will be up against the Australian pair of Matthew Ebden and John Peers.

Rohan Bopanna, Yuki Bhambri cruise along Among other Indians, Rohan Bopanna and



Yuki Bhambri will be in action in their respective third-round matches. Bopanna and Adam Pavlasek from Czechia will face the United Kingdom's Henry Patten and Finland's Harri Heliövaara. Bopanna and Pavlasek will go into the third round on the back of a 6-7 (2-7), 7-6 (7-5), 6-2 win over France's Fabien Reboul and Sadio Doumbia in two hours and 10 minutes. Bhambri and America's Robert Galloway, on the other hand, defeated seventh seeds Nikola Mektić and Michael Venus 6-7 (4), 7-6 (7), 6-3 in two hours and 32 minutes. They will next lock horns with America's Christian Harrison and Evan King. Harrison and King had a dominating second round where they got the better of Manuel Guinard and Romain Arneodo, winning the match 6-4, 6-0.

Virat Kohli bailed out of the challenging England tour, claims former spinner

Star India batter Virat Kohli bailed out of the challenging England tour, feels former England spinner Monty Panesar. Kohli announced his retirement from Tests ahead of the all-important series set to begin from June 20.

NEW DELHI. Former England spinner Monty Panesar feels star India batter Virat Kohli bailed out of the upcoming England tour. India are set to take on England in a five-match Test series beginning from June 20, which will also mark the start of World Test Championship Cycle 2025-27. Ahead of the all-important tour, Kohli announced his retirement from Test cricket, leaving everyone surprised. Recently, Monty Panesar shared his thoughts on Kohli's retirement, saying that he expected the



batting stalwart to play in England. The former off-spinner claimed that the former India captain may have been given an ultimatum by the team management and hence he decided to bail out of the tour by

calling time on his Test career. "I think he was definitely going to play. I think England were expecting, everyone was expecting him to play. I'm surprised he's kind of like bailed out. But maybe the fact that outside

Dembele deserves to win Ballon d'Or: PSG boss Luis Enrique after Champions League win

Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) manager Luce Enrique has tipped Ousmane Dembele to win the coveted Ballon d'Or for playing a key role in their Champions League 2025 triumph. PSG beat Inter Milan 5-0 to claim their maiden Champions League title.

New Delhi. Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) manager Luce Enrique has backed Ousmane Dembele to win the prestigious Ballon d'Or for playing a key role in their Champions League 2025 triumph. PSG won their maiden Champions League title as they beat Inter Milan 5-0 in the final played at the Allianz Arena in Munich, Germany on Saturday, May 31.

Ousmane Dembele played a pivotal role in his team's dream campaign as the 28-year-old scored 25 goals this season and was the club's most formidable attacker. Following



his sensational performance, Luce Enrique tipped Dembele to win Ballon d'Or, mentioning his exceptional defence in the final. "Everyone's talking about the Ballon d'Or, I would give it to Ousmane Dembele. Just because of, if we think about how he defended today. He showed just what he was made of. He was a leader, he was humble, he defended. Without a shadow of a doubt, he

deserves this. Not just for the goals that he's scored but also for the pressing we saw. We've seen such a season from him and he was exceptional," Enrique said after his side's Champions League win. Despite not netting the ball in the summit clash, Dembele assisted in his side's two goals. Ahead of the final, he was also asked about his Ballon d'Or aspirations as the France international admitted that the coveted award was indeed in the back of his mind but he was more focused on winning the title for his team. "When you are a PSG player, the important thing is to take home the trophy for the team. Obviously this [the Ballon d'Or] is maybe in the back of my mind, but it's not what I'm thinking about most," Embelle had said on the eve of the final.

Meanwhile, a brace from Desire Doue, along with goals from Achraf Hakimi, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and substitute Senny Mayulu set up Inter Milan's annihilation at the hands of PSG in the Champions League final. Courtesy of their collective effort, PSG became the first French club to complete a historic continental treble by winning Champions League, LaLiga and Copa del Rey.

No Mbappe, No Problem: How Luis Enrique's PSG conquered Europe without superstars

New Delhi. On a historic night in Munich, Paris Saint-Germain finally laid their ghosts to rest. A ruthless 5-0 dismantling of Inter Milan in the Champions League final on June 1 crowned PSG champions of Europe—a moment decades in the making. It was a victory that also sealed a sensational quadruple, but more than the silverware, it marked the rebirth of a club that had long chased glory the wrong way. Paris had always dreamed in gold. But for years, their reflection in Europe's most coveted trophy was nothing more than a glittering illusion. Superstars came and left, millions were spent, and every spring brought more questions than answers. Until one man walked in—not to bask in the spotlight, but to dismantle it. On June 1 in Munich, Paris Saint-Germain didn't just win the Champions League. They tore through Inter Milan 5-0 in a final that felt more like an



execution than a contest. It was the culmination of a season where football finally caught up with fantasy. And at the centre of it all stood Luis Enrique—a man who had once guided Barcelona to continental greatness, but this time did it with a team that had no Messi, no Neymar, no Mbappé. Just an idea. The Architect arrives When Luis Enrique took charge of PSG in July 2023, he wasn't stepping into a project. He

was stepping into a paradox. A club rich in ambition, but poor in cohesion. A dressing room lined with stars, but haunted by collapses. The "Remontada" in 2017? That was his work—from the other side. He came with a Champions League title under his belt, earned in 2015 with a Barcelona side that, yes, had its own galacticos—but also played with terrifying chemistry. Then came his time with Spain. Though he left before their eventual Euro 2024 triumph, it was his tactical groundwork, player integration, and unwavering belief in youth that lit the fuse. The man builds blueprints that last—even when he's no longer around to follow them. So when he arrived in Paris and said, "Our game does not consist in letting Mbappé do what he wants," it wasn't just a quote. It was a warning shot. The celebrity era was over.

off-stump, he's just thinking, well, you know, they may have had a word with him. They said, look, if you don't score well in the first couple of Test matches, don't expect to play all the five. So, he's probably thinking, well, I'll just call it a day and give the youngsters a go," Panesar told Hindustan Times. Furthermore, Panesar said that India have a great chance to win if their middle order, particularly Karun Nair and Shubman Gill, perform well.

"It would depend on how Karun Nair performs, he scored a double-hundred against the England Lions. He and Shubman Gill, that middle-order, how they bat. I think the batters who've played county cricket, if they are able to then transform that same form at the international level, then I think India have got a chance to win," he added.

The upcoming series will also be the first assignment of Shubman Gill as the captain of the Indian Test team, who has been handed over the responsibility following Rohit Sharma's retirement. The 25-year-old has a herculean task at hand to inspire the team full of young stars to help India win a series in England for the first time since 2007.

PSG deserved to win: Simone Inzaghi gracefully accepts loss in Champions League final

New Delhi. Simone Inzaghi gracefully accepted defeat after Inter Milan slumped to an embarrassing defeat to Paris Saint Germain in the final of the Champions League. On Saturday, May 31, Inzaghi's men lost 0-5 to Luis Enrique's PSG at Allianz Arena. Inzaghi said he barely recognised his side as PSG raced to their maiden Champions League title, recording their biggest win by margin in the history of the competition. Inzaghi didn't hesitate in saying that PSG were the deserving winners. "I think PSG deserved to win," Inzaghi told the reporters in a brief press conference. For Inzaghi, it was a chance to make amends after his team suffered a narrow 0-1 defeat at the hands of Manchester City in the Champions League 2023 final in Istanbul. However, PSG didn't give many chances to get a foothold back into the match.

"There is great disappointment and bitterness because the boys have had a great run this season, and it's hard to end with no titles. As a coach, I'm still proud. We're not satisfied with tonight's game. We approached it badly... We



didn't play the final in the best way, but I thanked the boys," Inzaghi said. "We fully deserved the defeat" Inter Milan faltered under pressure as Dsir Dou and PSG's midfield dominated the contest. From the outset, Inter seemed content to let PSG control possession. However, as the match progressed, the French side's midfield asserted itself more aggressively. Inter made an early effort to play out from the back and briefly gained some rhythm, but PSG's relentless pressing quickly laid bare their defensive frailties. "We were more tired than PSG, who clinched the French title several weeks ago while we were fighting for the Serie A until the final weekend. We didn't play well technically, they got there first... We knew they were stronger than us, we knew we had to be better, but we fully deserved the defeat," Inzaghi added.

Kerala alumni association apologises for hosting Afridi in Dubai following social media backlash

In the video, it can be seen that the crowd cheering Afridi and chanting his nickname "boom boom" when he addressed the gathering.

KOCHI. Faced with widespread outrage over it "warmly welcoming" controversial ex-Pakistani cricketer Shahid Afridi in a recent event in Dubai, a Kerala expatriate group, which claims to be an alumni association of Cochin University of Science and Technology (Cusat), has tendered an apology while clarifying that the gesture was "unintentional". The Cochin University Btech Alumni Association (CUBAA UAE) conducted the alumni event at Pakistan Association Dubai (PAD) on May 25. Former Pakistan cricketers Shahid Afridi and Umar Gul attended the programme. A big controversy erupted after a video

showing Afridi being accorded a warm welcome during the event went viral on social media. The former Pakistan captain maintained a strong anti-India stance during the recent military and diplomatic tensions between the two countries and even mocked India post the Pahalgham terror attack.

In the video, the crowd is seen cheering Afridi and chanting his nickname "boom boom". The warm hospitality being extended to Afridi didn't go down well with a large section of social media users who then stormed the accounts of CUBAA office-bearers and attacked them for "shamelessly" hosting the cricketer who had used every opportunity to demean India.

When a social media user described the act as "shameful", another netizen said "they are feting someone who has been trash-talking our country." As the incident triggered a widespread row, the CUBAA office-bearers, on Friday came out with an Instagram post expressing apology over the incident and said it was not intentional. Without naming



Afridi, they said they had booked Pakistan Association Dubai (PAD) as a venue of the second season of an inter-collegiate dance competition much before the tension between India and Pakistan. The same venue was used for the first season of the event last year also due to its affordability, the statement said.

"At the time of our event, the diplomatic tensions had already eased. Due to the unavailability of an alternative venue on short notice, we proceeded with the programme as scheduled at PAD Dubai," they said. Amid the growing outrage, CUBAA office-bearers took to Instagram and tendered an apology, saying it was not intentional. Without naming Afridi, they said they had booked Pakistan Association Dubai (PAD) as a venue of the second season of an inter-collegiate dance competition much before the tension between India and Pakistan, and that the same venue was used for the first season of the event last year due to its affordability.

Cusat disowns association CUSAT on Saturday distanced itself from the alumni event held last week, stating it had no connection with CUBAA UAE. "The university wants to state that it has no affiliation, association or link with CUBAA UAE," it said in a statement.





# Janhvi Kapoor

## DELETES Her New Pics In Saree From Param Sundari Sets

Janhvi Kapoor left fans gushing with her looks in the recently released first look from Param Sundari. She stars alongside Sidharth Malhotra in her upcoming North-meets-South love story. On Saturday, she took to Instagram and posted stunning photos of herself in a saree. And to say that she looked beautiful would be an understatement. However, she deleted the pictures the moment they started trending online. Janhvi Kapoor was a vision in a pink saree, which she teamed with a lemon yellow-coloured blouse. Her hair dropped from her shoulder in waves. She amped her look with a tiny black bindi and accessorised her saree with a nose pin and bangles.

"Pardesiyaaaaa, hain aap sab ke pyaar mein tab se.... mood kuch aisa hain #ParamSundari in theatres on 25th July," she wrote while sharing her photos. However, it isn't known why she took down her photos. Take a look:

Taking to the comment section, her sister Khushi Kapoor had penned, "Most beautiful sundari", followed by multiple hand heart and evil eyes emojis. Her fans wrote, "Wowwww", "Can't waitttttt", and numerous red heart and fire emojis.

For the unversed, the first look of Param Sundari was scheduled to release with Rajkumar Rao and Wamiqa Gabbi's Bhool Chuk Maaf in theatres. And it did. However, before the makers could announce it on social media, excited fans leaked the promo online.

Param Sundari teaser begins with shirtless Sidharth Malhotra flaunting his ribbed abs. His appearance on the big screen was met with loud hoots and cheers by the audience. Soon after, Janhvi Kapoor appears, wearing a traditional saree. Exuding raw charm, intensity, and effortless beauty, Param Sundari is a love story of North-Meets-South set against picturesque landscapes. The film is a cross-cultural love story set against the scenic backwaters of Kerala. It promises a cinematic experience that is captivating and unforgettable. From the very first frame, the duo's electric presence will captivate you. Furthermore, the melodious background score featuring Sonu Nigam's voice makes the film's music album one to watch out for.



### Malavika Mohanan All Set To Join Karthi In Bangkok For 'Sardar 2' Shoot



Malavika Mohanan is on a career high with an impressive lineup of films across various languages, featuring some of the biggest names in Indian cinema. The actor is set to fly to Bangkok in the first week of June to join the next schedule of Sardar 2, her upcoming action-thriller with Tamil superstar Karthi.

This phase in Bangkok is anticipated to be dynamic, featuring high-octane sequences and the shooting of a special song. A source close to the project confirmed, "Malavika Mohanan will head to Bangkok in the first week of June for the next schedule of Sardar 2 with Karthi. The team will also film a special song during this period."

Sardar 2 is her next Tamil collaboration with a major star, already generating buzz for its gripping plot and scale. However, this is just part of the picture. Malavika's rising pan-India appeal is evident from her upcoming projects, which include three major films across different industries — The Raja Saab with Prabhas in Telugu, Hridayapoorvam with Mohanlal in Malayalam, and Sardar 2 with Karthi in Tamil. These films have strong potential to perform well not just regionally but across India, because of its star power.

Apart from her work, Malavika often makes headlines for her bold statements on crucial matters. During a recent interview, Malavika spoke about persisting gender disparity and said that it never really ended. Expressed her anger at the situation, the actor told Hauteffly, "I don't think this disparity has ever ended in the film industry. I also think that men have really gotten smart, and I have seen this in a lot of male actors, suddenly, in the last 5-6 years, they know how to put on the mask of being woke."

She further called them out by saying, "They know exactly what lines to say that make them come across like a feminist, as a very forward-thinking person, someone who treats women as equals. And I have seen them go back from the public eye and become the most misogynistic person ever. It's hypocrisy."

### When Govinda Said He 'Played Dirty' With Neelam, Didn't Reveal He Was Married To Sunita



Govinda and his wife Sunita Ahuja often make headlines due to their public appearances and statements on marriage. However, there was a time when Bollywood wasn't scared of controversies. Celebs would bare their heart out in interviews, not caring whether it'll lead them into trouble. In similar lines, Govinda had once openly spoken about how smitten he was with then co-star Neelam that he broke off his engagement with now-wife Sunita. The former superstar had also revealed that he "played dirty" with Neelam by not informing her about his marriage.

Govinda and Neelam were a hit pair back in the day. However, little did they know that their on-screen chemistry would soon translate into reality. Although he gradually found himself falling in love with Neelam, he remained conscious of his growing dissatisfaction with his engagement to Sunita.

Enchanted by Neelam, he even began wishing that Sunita would emulate her, hoping it might give him a reason to stay in the relationship. However, as his comparisons between the two women became more frequent and intense, tensions rose. Eventually, Sunita lost her temper and made a remark about Neelam that prompted Govinda to end their engagement. Few days later, Sunita called Govinda and the two reconciled. They soon had an intimate wedding in a temple and kept the news of their marriage a secret as the Hero No 1 actor thought it would affect his career. He didn't even inform Neelam about his wedding.

"Neither did Neelam know about it. She got to know only after a year. I probably did not tell her because I did not want to break this successful screen pair. And to be honest, to a certain extent, I did exploit my personal relationship with Neelam for professional ends. I played dirty with her. I should have told her that I was married," Govinda told Stardust magazine during a throwback interview. Govinda openly expressed his deep admiration for Neelam and often shared his desire to marry her. He described her as the ideal woman in his life and admitted that he had already begun imagining her as his future wife. Reflecting on this in an old interview, Govinda said, "Yes, I wanted to marry her. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Neelam was the ideal girl, the kind every man visualises for a life-partner. The kind of girl I wanted. But that was getting emotional. There was another practical side. Just because I had fallen in love elsewhere, I couldn't overlook my commitment towards Sunita. If there was no sense of duty in a man, this would go on. Leave one for another and another for another."

# Naga Chaitanya

## Wishes Sobhita Dhulipala On 33rd Birthday, Drops Dreamy PIC From Vacay

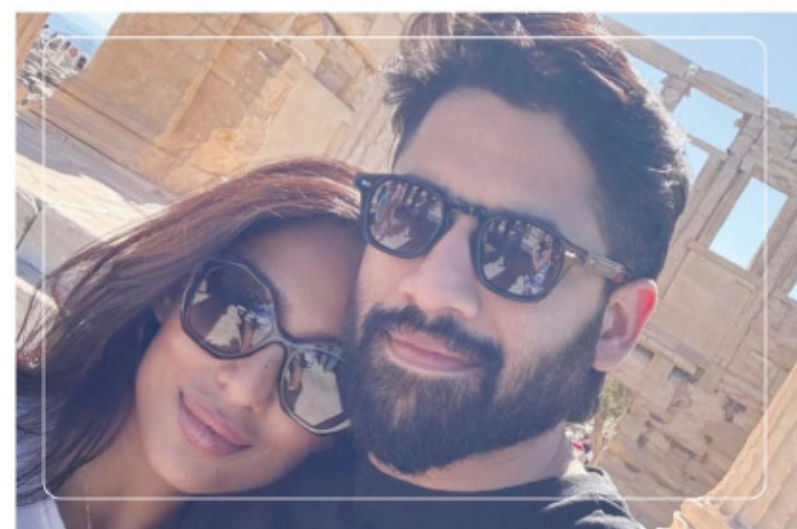
Actress Sobhita Dhulipala is celebrating her 33rd birthday, and social media is flooded with lovely wishes for her. But what fans were most eagerly waiting for, was a special birthday post from her husband, Naga Chaitanya. Much to everyone's delight, Chay has finally shared a sweet post dedicated to his 'lady', featuring a charming photo from what appears to be their holiday in Greece. On Saturday, Naga Chaitanya

photo was taken in Athens, with ancient ruins visible behind them. Sharing the lovely picture, Naga Chaitanya wrote, "Happy birthday my lady @sobhitad." Check out the post below!

### Naga Chaitanya-Sobhita Dhulipala Enjoying Vacay In Greece?

A few days ago, Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala were spotted at the Hyderabad airport, fueling speculation that they were heading off on a vacation to celebrate her birthday. Now, much to fans' excitement, Chay has shared a photo of the two from Athens. However, it remains unclear whether the picture is from their recent trip or a throwback from an earlier getaway. Meanwhile, earlier this month, Sobhita's appearance at WAVES 2025 in a saree sparked pregnancy rumours.

Her recent preference for loose, oversized clothing only added to the speculation. However, a family insider addressed the rumours, putting them to rest. In a quote to ETimes, the source said, "She wore anti-fit, not maternity. It's amazing how a change in silhouette can birth a whole new storyline." Sobhita Dhulipala and Naga Chaitanya got engaged in Hyderabad on August 8, 2024, and tied the knot on December 4 at Annapurna Studios, surrounded by close friends and family. Their union came three years after Naga Chaitanya's split from Samantha Ruth Prabhu, announced in October 2021.



took to his Instagram account to share a photo with his wifey Sobhita Dhulipala. The photo shows Chay taking a selfie with Sobhita leaning in close beside him. She looks stunning in a white top, while Chay keeps it casual in a black t-shirt. Both are sporting dark sunglasses. The backdrop confirms the

