

Navy escorting tankers via Hormuz

no fuel or gas shortage: Rajnath Singh

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh confirmed the Indian Navy's role in securing oil tanker routes through the Strait of Hormuz and said that India is prepared to tackle any scenario amid the Iran war.

New Delhi.(Agency) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said Indian Navy vessels are escorting and ensuring the safe passage of the country's oil tankers through the sensitive waters of the Strait of Hormuz...



to any situation that may arise. During his speech, the defence minister urged voters to support the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming Kerala assembly elections...

leadership as "24-carat gold" and stated that it has been tested and trusted over time. The Kerala Assembly elections, comprising 140 seats, are scheduled for April 9. Notably, two more Indian-flagged LPG tankers...

PM Modi Plucks Tea Leaves From Assam Garden, Interacts With Workers

PM Modi plucks tea leaves and discusses issues with workers in Assam.



Dibrugarh.(Agency) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday morning spent time with tea garden workers at the Monohari Tea Estate in Dibrugarh before leaving for Mohanbari Airport to attend election rallies in Gogamukh and Behali.

Congress Govt's entry tax anti-people & unacceptable, will be opposed at every level: CM Mann

The Sikh Times SANGRUR, 2 April: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Thursday firmly held the Centre accountable for the attack outside the BJP office in Chandigarh...

public, calling the move anti-people and vowing strong opposition at every level. Reaffirming his government's commitment to farmers, the Chief Minister underscored that Punjab will continue to strongly take up the demands of Aarthiyas with the Union Government...

irrelevant statements on this issue as the area is under the jurisdiction of the Government of India (GOD). These issues have been repeatedly raised with the centre and will again be put up before the Union government.

hand the AAP government is abolishing the tool tax and giving reprieve to the common man whereas on the other hand these people are levying undue taxes on people. This move is totally unwarranted and undesirable and will not be tolerated at any cost...



NDA Will Win 90-100 Seats In Assam Assembly Polls: Himanta Biswa Sarma

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has given out his predictions on the number of seats each political party would get.

Guwahati.(Agency) In an interesting development, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has given out his predictions on the number of seats each political party would get. The Chief Minister has claimed that the ruling NDA will win 90-100 seats in the upcoming assembly polls...

Sarma told reporters. In past many of his predictions in the run up to several polls had turned out to be correct. He further added, "We will win Dhubri and Golakganj. No contest in Guwahati because we will win all the seats in Guwahati with good margin. In Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seats, we will register win in all the seats. We will also win Lakhimpur and Kaziranga Lok Sabha seats. In all the seats, our NDA candidate will comfortably win," Sarma stated.

Administrator of Union Territory. If Punjab demands Chandigarh it is being labelled as separatist but on the other hand the centre runs away from its duty to maintain law and order there." Opposing the Congress-led Himachal government's decision to impose an entry tax, he said, "On one

Vote-Divider Or Kingmaker? The Owaisi Factor In Bengal And Assam Elections

Over the past few years, Asaduddin Owaisi's popularity has grown exponentially. His position on national security issues has drawn praise even from his critics.

New Delhi.(Agency) Months after the AIMIM won five seats in the Bihar Assembly election, its leader and Hyderabad MP, Asaduddin Owaisi, has expanded his eastern campaign to West Bengal and Assam, which have a significant Muslim population. In Bengal, it has tied up with former Trinamool Congress legislator Humayun Kabir's Aam Janata Unnayan Party. AIMIM is not fielding any candidate in Assam, but Owaisi has been campaigning for the Badruddin Ajmal-led AIUDF.



footprint beyond Hyderabad. For a long time, opposition parties such as Congress dismissed Owaisi as the "B team of BJP", who contested polls to divide the opposition's votes, eventually benefiting the BJP. Owaisi has always trashed such allegations and said the Constitution gives his party the right to contest polls anywhere in the country.

M Kharage Questions PM's Absence From All-Party Meet, Kiren Rijiju Replies

Rajya Sabha witnessed heated exchanges between Mallikarjun Kharge and Kiren Rijiju over Middle East crisis discussion.

New Delhi.(Agency) The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday witnessed sharp exchanges between Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who accused the opposition of indulging in politics at a time when the country should be united in the face of the Middle East conflict. Tempers flared up as Kharge questioned why the government was not holding a discussion on the Middle East crisis in Parliament and attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not being present at the all-party meeting on the issue.

Nitish Kumar to take oath as Rajya Sabha member on April 10: Sources

Nitish Kumar is set to take oath as Rajya Sabha member on April 10 and is expected to resign as Chief Minister shortly after, around April 13.

Patna.(Agency) Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is set to take the oath as a Rajya Sabha member on April 10, sources told India Today. According to sources, Kumar will travel from Patna to Delhi on April 9 and may remain in the capital for two to three days, during which he is expected to meet senior BJP leaders. Sources indicate that Kumar is likely to resign as Chief Minister soon after returning to Patna, setting the stage for the formation of a new government in Bihar. His return is expected on or after April 12. The JD(U) chief's decision to move to the Rajya Sabha has intensified speculation over the next Chief Minister, especially as it comes just months after he secured a fresh mandate in the Assembly elections.



suggest Kumar is unlikely to continue in office for that duration. A leadership transition is expected after the Kharmaas period ends on April 14, according to news agency PTI. The BJP, which has been part of Bihar's ruling coalition for nearly two decades without holding the top post, is said to be keen to stake claim this time.

Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is being seen as a frontrunner, while Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai is also in the reckoning. Party insiders say the final decision will be taken at a legislative party meeting but will effectively be made by the central leadership. On the other hand, JD(U) sources indicate the party is likely to negotiate a significant share in the new cabinet as part of any transition arrangement, with discussions also around a possible prominent role for Nitish Kumar's son, Nishant Kumar. Meanwhile, the Bihar Home Department has confirmed that Nitish Kumar will continue to receive 'Z Plus' security even after stepping down as Chief Minister. An order issued by the Special Branch states that his protection will remain in place upon assuming office as a Rajya Sabha member.

Rijiju hit back at Kharge, accusing him of failing to uphold the dignity of his post by making "irresponsible" statements and "abusing" the prime minister. He said none of the Leaders of Opposition (LoPs) attended the all-party meeting, adding that it was unfortunate that the opposition was "playing politics" over the issue. Kharge condemned the minister's remarks and demanded that he withdraw them. He also accused the ministers of being "dummy", alleging that they held no powers. "Should we attend to listen to your lecture? What authority do you have? You are all dummy ministers. You don't have power. I condemn such a statement," the Leader of Opposition said. Rijiju said the Leader of Opposition should talk responsibly while upholding the dignity of the position he holds. "He does not uphold the dignity of his position. He himself gives irresponsible statements. Their Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha also is like that..." the minister alleged. Earlier, after Chairman C P Radhakrishnan announced the start of the Question Hour, Rijiju urged the House to sit till late in the evening to take up the government agenda listed for the day. The Chairman said the House will skip lunch for the day and will sit till late in the evening to clear the government's legislative business.

News box

Man dies as tractor rams motorcycle in Gurgaon

GURGAON.(Agency)

A 46-year-old man died on Wednesday after a tractor-trolley allegedly rammed into the motorcycle he was travelling on near GD Goenka College in Sohna.

The deceased, Chanchal Kumar Yadav, was living as a tenant in Bajghera. Police said the accident occurred around 12.15am on April 1 when Chanchal was riding pillion on a motorcycle driven by his brother, Panchdev Yadav. They were travelling from Sohna towards the city when a tractor-trolley, allegedly being driven rashly and at high speed, hit their motorcycle from behind.

The impact threw both men off the bike. While Panchdev fell to one side, Chanchal was flung forward and suffered severe head injuries. The tractor-trolley overturned after the collision and the driver fled, leaving the vehicle behind. Passers-by took Chanchal to Govt Hospital Sohna, where doctors declared him dead.

Based on a complaint filed by Panchdev, a case was registered under sections 106 (causing death by negligence) and 281 (rash driving) of BNS at City Sohna police station. Police said efforts are underway to identify and arrest the driver.

MCG collects over 350cr in property tax, 56 crore in water bills

GURGAON.(Agency)

MCG collected more than Rs 350 crore in property tax and about Rs 56 crore as water bills during the 2025-26 financial year.

Officials said MCG offices saw heavy footfall from early morning on Tuesday as people arrived to pay pending property tax and water bills before the end of the financial year. Despite being a holiday, citizen facilitation centres at all municipal offices were kept open on Tuesday to enable residents to make payments. Officials from the tax branch remained present throughout the day to assist citizens with the process. The civic body also arranged separate counters for senior citizens, allowing elderly residents to pay their bills more conveniently. Mayor Raj Rani Malhotra said the corporation ensured all arrangements were in place on the last day, prioritising citizens' convenience.

MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya said the corporation offered both digital and offline payment options, which helped maximise revenue collection. He added that the record collection would strengthen the financial position of the civic body and accelerate development works in the city. From April 1, interest on unpaid property tax and surcharge on water bills will be levied with the start of the new financial year. MCG officials said that 18% annual interest will be imposed on the outstanding property tax after March 31.

For the 2026-27 FY, the MCG has set a target of Rs 325 crore for the revenue from property tax. It is an increase of 18% compared with the 2025-26 FY income projections from property tax. This year, MCG and MCM also introduced artificial intelligence, or AI, to boost property tax revenue. Using AI, residents with outstanding dues are being identified and approached, their queries resolved, and assistance provided in paying pending taxes, officials said.

Excess land payout: SIT raided houses of ex-Noida officials in Jan

NOIDA.(Agency)

A Supreme Court-appointed special investigation team (SIT), probing alleged excess payouts by Noida Authority for land compensation, conducted raids on the residences of the former officials in Jan and submitted its report to the state govt recently. Of the 12 former Noida Authority officials under investigation in the case, one has passed away, and the SIT has examined the other 11 officials, UP govt told Supreme Court on Wednesday.

ADG Meerut Bhanu Bhaskar, one of the three members of the SIT set up in Aug last year, said that the team interrogated former officials two months ago. "We conducted this exercise for about three weeks and interrogated the officials concerned. We cannot share the details of the interrogation as the matter is sub judice. We have submitted the report to the state govt, which moved it to the Supreme Court," he said.

On Jan 23, 2025, the top court set up an SIT to probe



allegations of "excess payments" and framed four key issues for investigation: whether compensation paid to landowners exceeded amounts mandated by court rulings; if so, which officials were responsible; whether there was any collusion between beneficiaries and Noida officials; and whether the Authority's overall functioning lacked transparency, fairness and commitment to public interest. In its report, the SIT noted that enhanced compensation was paid to landowners in 1,198 cases, including 1,167 where courts had directed it, while in 20 cases it was found to be exorbitant, with officers identified by the SIT in its report. It also said the bank accounts of officials, their family members and landowners must be examined, along with assets acquired during the relevant period. Records dating back over a decade need to be obtained and scrutinised, the SIT said. It also recommended forming a metropolitan corporation and appointing a chief vigilance officer, similar to the system followed in public sector undertakings. While considering the SIT's report, the Supreme Court bench on Aug 13 last year directed the constitution of a fresh SIT comprising three IPS officers to probe the alleged.

Encroachments, delay in utility shifting stall flood-check projects in Gurgaon

GURGAON.(Agency)

Waterlogging at Sector 10 road during heavy rain in Gurgaon.

Gurgaon: Every monsoon, large parts of the city struggle with severe waterlogging, overflowing sewers, and choked stormwater drains, exposing gaps in the city's drainage infrastructure.

MCG routinely undertakes desilting of drains and sewer lines ahead of the rainy season to prevent flooding. However, a review of several such projects has revealed significant delays and slow execution, with many works showing little progress months after being approved. According to data accessed by TOI, many "priority" projects — including drain construction and sewer and stormwater drains' desilting across areas such as Sector 10, Kanhai, Sushant Lok, and Sector 45 — have seen a sluggish pace of work despite tenders being awarded months ago. MCG has issued show-cause notices to some contractors and flagged encroachments

and utility conflicts as additional hurdles affecting project timelines. One such project is the construction of a 2.24 km box-type stormwater drain in Sector 10, aimed at improving stormwater discharge in the area. The project received administrative approval in Nov last year after clearance from the finance and contracts committee. However, the work has only recently moved beyond paperwork and remains at an early stage of execution, with progress recorded between 0% and 25%. During the review meeting held recently, the MCG commissioner, Pradeep Dahiya, expressed displeasure over the delay in allotting the tender, stating that the project could have started much earlier if administrative processes had moved faster. The project has a completion deadline of April 30, but progress remains minimal. In Kanhai village, desilting of 5.84 km of sewer lines across several stretches was awarded to a contractor on Aug 2, 2025, with a completion deadline of March-end this

year. The work has progressed slowly, prompting MCG to issue a show-cause notice to the contractor on March 12 and impose liquidated damages. Similarly, a contractor tasked with desilting 13.4 km of sewer lines in Sector 45, which was also awarded on Aug 2, 2025, has made only 25-50% progress against the March 31 deadline. A show-cause notice has been issued in this case as well. In Sushant Lok C Block, desilting of 11 km of sewer lines across C, D, and E blocks was allotted on Aug 28 last year with a deadline of Feb 28, which has already passed. The contractor was issued a show-cause notice on March 12 and has now been directed to complete the remaining work by the end of March. "I have directed officials to ensure that all desilting works are completed before the monsoon. Any failure to meet the deadline will invite strict action against both the contractors and the officials responsible," said the MCG commissioner. A similar pattern has been observed in Basai, where a sewer line

project covering 0.8 km remains in its preliminary stage despite being formally allotted on Jan 26 this year. Officials noted that while the contract has been awarded, on-ground activity remains minimal. The project's target completion date is Aug 27. Among the most striking observations in the report relates to the condition of sewer infrastructure in LIG Colony. Officials noted that cleaning operations there have been severely restricted because residents have built structures directly above the sewer line. Rooms, staircases, and boundary walls constructed over the alignment have blocked access to the underground network. While manholes have been cleared, the main sewer line itself cannot be cleaned due to these encroachments, leaving the system vulnerable to blockages. Officials suggested enforcement action to remove the structures so that the sewer line can be properly maintained. The deadline for addressing the issue has been set for April 16.

Gurgaon temperature drops to 17°C after a 2-day wet spell, more rain likely

Gurgaon.(Agency)

After two days of cloudy skies and intermittent rain, the city woke up to clear weather on Wednesday. The break from the rainfall is expected to be short-lived, with another wet spell likely later this week. On Wednesday night, temperatures dipped due to clear skies. At the Gurgaon KVK observatory, the minimum temperature dropped to 16.6 degrees Celsius from 17.9 degrees Celsius a day earlier. A similar trend was recorded at the NorthCap University monitoring station, where the minimum dropped from 19.4 degrees Celsius to 17.4 degrees Celsius. However, the daytime temperature was not recorded at the IMD observatories.

According to data from the district administration, the city recorded 5 mm of rainfall in the past 24 hours, while Sohna tehsil received slightly higher

precipitation at 6 mm. IMD said weather conditions are expected to remain dry and clear over the next 24 hours. However, this



is likely to be short-lived, with another western disturbance already forming. According to IMD, a fresh western disturbance, currently seen as a cyclonic circulation over east Iran and adjoining

regions, is moving towards northwest India. Additionally, an upper air cyclonic circulation persists over southeast Pakistan and adjoining Kutch.

An active western disturbance is likely to impact the western Himalayan region from April 2, triggering a fresh spell of rainfall across parts of Haryana, including Gurgaon. The IMD has issued an orange alert for Friday and a yellow alert for Saturday for Gurgaon. "Under its influence, the city is likely to witness scattered, fairly widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds. Wind speeds may reach 40-50 kmph, with gusts up to 60 kmph in some areas," IMD said. Meanwhile, maximum temperatures are expected to gradually rise by 2-4 degrees Celsius until Friday. However, a subsequent drop of 2-4 degrees Celsius is likely on Friday and Saturday as cloud cover.

Gurgaon court orders FIR in 23 lakh visa fraud case after police refusal

NOIDA.(Agency)

A local court has directed police to register an FIR and begin an investigation into claims of cheating, criminal breach of trust and conspiracy in an alleged Rs 23 lakh visa fraud case. Police had earlier refused to register the FIR, terming it a financial dispute. The order came in a complaint filed under Section 175(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) by Himmat, who alleged that the accused had promised him a Canadian visa and a job in exchange of Rs 23.5 lakh. Himmat claimed he transferred Rs 23.45 lakh to the accused's Punjab National Bank account and paid an additional Rs 5,000 in cash. The accused allegedly returned Rs 6 lakh in two instalments to Himmat under the pretext of confirmed employment. However, soon after this he stopped all communication. Manish Shandilya, counsel for complainant, said despite a written complaint being submitted to the police on Jan 26, 2025,



no FIR was registered. "The police opposed the plea stating the dispute pertained to investment in a liquor business in Rajasthan and not any immigration fraud," said Shandilya.

In response, Police said the complaint was filed at Rajendra Park police station in Gurgaon but the complainant did not furnish any documentary evidence to substantiate his allegations. Therefore, an FIR was not registered.

However, judicial magistrate Udit Mittal held that the allegations, taken at face

value, constituted cognisable offences and that disputed facts regarding whether the money was for overseas employment or a liquor partnership could only be examined through police investigation. "It is settled law that when information discloses commission of a cognisable offence, registration of an FIR is mandatory," said the court.

The court emphasised that at the Section 175(3) BNSS stage, it is not required to conduct a "mini-trial", and the existence of rival versions reinforced the need for a fair probe. Finding that the case involved substantial financial transactions, interstate elements, and required examination of bank records and communications, the court allowed the application and ordered immediate FIR registration based on the original complaint. The investigating officer has also been given liberty to join additional persons if their involvement emerges and to proceed on any other offences found during the probe.

Noida records highest stamp duty collections in a decade, but property registration slows

NOIDA.(Agency)

Stamp and registration department has collected Rs 4,498.7 crore in revenue in the 2025-26 financial year, its highest in a decade. The district clocked 87% of its Rs 5,180-crore target, even as property registrations dipped, officials said.

A total of 1.6 lakh properties were registered in the 2025-26 fiscal year (FY), down from 1.7 lakh in the previous fiscal. Of these, several registrations were recorded under concessional categories, with the number of transactions availing rebates up to 9,899 in the 2025-26 fiscal year from 8,976 in 2024-25. AIG-1 Arun Sharma attributed it to the string of rebates introduced by the state govt in the fiscal year. In July 2025, the state govt revised the Rs 10-lakh cap on properties eligible for the

rebate by allowing women purchasing a house or land worth up to Rs 1 crore to avail a 1% waiver on stamp duty. According to officials, one has to pay 6-7% of the total cost of a flat in stamp duty and an additional 1% as a processing fee for registration in UP. With the rebate, women could save up to Rs 1 lakh during property registration.

"UP govt also slashed stamp duty and registration fees on rental agreements (or lease deeds) by up to 90% in the 2025-26 financial year, introducing capped fees ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000 for annual rents up to Rs 10 lakh," the AIG said. In Jan 2026, the govt also allowed commercial and industrial properties to be transferred within families at a much lower cost. Instead of paying 5-7% of the property's value as stamp duty, families could

now pay a fixed Rs 5,000 for gift deeds, making it easier for business owners to pass on assets.

Data shared by the department shows that at Rs 1,284.8 crore, 28% of the total revenue was collected by Greater Noida sub-registrar office, followed by Noida-1 (Rs 846.8 crore). The Dadri office, which caters to registries in Greater Noida West, collected Rs 841.9 crore. Despite a robust collection, year-on-year growth slipped below 1% as collections rose by Rs 41 crore from Rs 4,457 crore in 2024-25 FY, when 99% of the (Rs 4,480 crore) target was achieved. In 2024-25 FY, the department recorded 28% year-on-year growth compared to the previous year (2023-24) when the revenue collection was Rs 3,575 crore. The last time stamp and registration

department exceeded its revenue target was in 2015-16, when it collected Rs 2,006 crore against the Rs 1,875-crore (107%) target. Aadhaar card must for registering marriages UP has made biometric verification of Aadhaar mandatory for registration of marriages from April 1. Earlier, applicants were only required to submit photocopies of Aadhaar at the time of marriage registration. Officials said the absence of real-time verification left scope for misuse and impersonation. A revised set of rules for marriage registration, notified in June 2025, required applications to be filed only in the jurisdiction where the bride, groom or their parents reside. The rules also made it mandatory for at least one family member to be present as a witness during registration.

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Ex-wife's tattoo on dead person's chest helps Gurugram police identify his name

Gurugram: A person found dead on March 22 near the Power House Gate on MG Road was finally identified. His divorced wife's name as a tattoo on his chest helped

to find out his identity. The deceased was a resident of Darjeeling and worked in the catering business in Gurugram. According to police, on March 22, they recovered a man's body from MG Road and could not identify it. During investigation, they discovered the name "Nisha" tat-

toed on his chest in English. This tattoo proved to be an important lead. The police identified the accused as Umesh Khatri and informed his family after due identification. ASI

Om Prakash, the investigating officer said, "Umesh and his wife were divorced, and he lived alone in Gurugram. He occasionally visited Darjeeling, but after the divorce, he spent

most of his time in Gurugram. "He was found lying on his stomach and

it's likely that he fell and died of suffocation.

NAME CHANGE
I LATA legally mother of Army no - 2818334L, Rank - Sep, Name -Gore Dhiraj Ramdas, At - 258, Shivnagar, Vandeer Bhogji, Post-Vandeer Bhogji, Teh - Nandura Dist - Buldana, State-Maharashtra, Pin - 443101 have changed my name from LATA to LATABAI RAMDAS GORE for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 01/04/2026 before Notary Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I SHITABAI is legally mother of No. 15682594N Rank- HAV Name-GORADE PUNDLIK DATTATRAYA presently residing VILL-CHANDORI, POST- CHANDORI TEH-NIPRAH DIST-NASIK (MAHARASHTRA)- 422201 have changed my name from SHITABAI to SITABAI DATTU GORADE for all future purposes. Vide Affidavit dated 02/04/2026 Before Notary Public New Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I SUNANDA legally mother of Army no - 2810069L, Rank - SEP, Name - Chavan Sandeep Himmatrao, presently residing At - Nashik, Post-Nashik, Teh - Nashik, Dist - Nashik, State- Maharashtra, Pin - 422009 have changed my name from SUNANDA to CHAVAN SUNANDA HIMMATRAO for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 01/04/26 before Notary Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I SHANTIA legally mother of Army no - 2821559W Rank - Sep, Name - Madake Dipak Anna presently residing at - Bhalur, Post- Bhalur, Teh - Nandgaon, Dist - Nashik, State-Maharashtra, Pin - 423106 have changed my name from SHANTIA to SHANTABAI ANNA MADAKE for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 01/04/2026 before Notary Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, Mohammad Usman S/o Aish Mohammad R/o P-12/1, Gali no. 17, Brahampur, Seelampur, North East Delhi, Delhi - 110053 have changed my name to Mohd Usman for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE
I DILIP KATRE S/O DELANSINGH KATRE R/O C-501 PN APARTMENT, PLOT NO-11 SECTOR-4 DWARKA DELHI-110045 have changed my name to DILIP D KATRE Permanently for all Future purpose

NAME CHANGE
I KAMLAISH W/O ROSHAN LAL KAURIA R/O HNO 64 - STREET NO-1-43 GURU NANAK NAGAR PATIALA PUNJAB-147001 have changed my name to KAMLESH KUMARI Permanently for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE
I Gulista Parveen W/o Mohd. Usman R/O H.no. P- 12/1, Street no -17, Brahampur, Delhi, North East, Delhi - 110053 have changed my name to Gulista for all future purpose

NAME CHANGE
It is for general information that I, SUNIL S/O RAM BHAJAN R/O B1-618, J J Colony Madanpur Khadar, Sarita Vihar, South Delhi, Delhi-110076 declare that name of mine and my wife has been wrongly written as SUNIL KUMAR and KHUSHBOO in my minor daughter name SHANHIKA aged 10 years in her Birth Certificate No-MCDOLIR-0115-006617993. The actual name of mine and my wife are SUNIL and BEENA which may be amended accordingly.

Lost & Found
It is notified for the information that my Original Qualifying Examination Certificate of senior secondary examination in the year 1995 and Roll No. 0632968 issued by U.P Board has been actually lost. Name of the candidate Dhanendra Kumar S/O Kehar Singh Address:- Flat No-12561-A, Upper Ground Floor, Ram Nagar, Loni Road, Delhi-110032. Mobile: 9560416334.

NAME CHANGE
I hitherto known as DAISY D/O SANTOSH KUMAR SINHA W/O VISHAL WIRNAVE R/O Flat No.-302, Plot No.-90-93, Aeradina Apartment, Eastern Side, Solanki Road, Jain Colony Part-1, Uttam Nagar, West Delhi, Delhi-110059, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as DAISY SINHA.

NAME CHANGE
I hitherto known as MITHAJUD-DIN S/O IMAMUDDIN R/O B-368 Gali No-16 Near Shiv Mandir Subhash Mohalla North Ghonda Delhi Po- Bhijaj Pura Dist: North East Delhi-110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MOHAMMAD MINHAJ.

NAME CHANGE
I hitherto known as ANSH S/O RAM JI LAL, R/O 78, Fancy Silk Mill Quarter Civil Line, Khyber Pass, Civil Lines S.O, North Delhi, Delhi, 110054, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ANSHU.

Public Notice
I, ANJALI D/O SURESH KUMAR R/O MAKAN NO-491, HIGH SCHOOL KE PASS WARD NO-17, GHARAUNDA KARNAL, HARYANA 132114 UNDERTAKE THAT I ANJALI CHANGE MY GENDER AS MALE. I ANJALI HENCEFORTH BE KNOWN AS ANSH S/O SURESH KUMAR. THE ABOVE STATEMENT MADE BY ME IS TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF. IF ANY LEGAL ISSUE ARISES IN THIS REGARD AT ANY STAGE, I WILL BE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAME AND THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLICATION WILL NOT BE LIABLE AS FOR ANY CONSEQUENCES ARISING THEREFROM.

NAME CHANGE
I, RAMA DEVI Mother of No-3210947P Rank-NK Name-MUNENDRA CHAUDHRY residing at VILL-JAMALPUR SIYA, PO-AMROLI AL-GARH, UTTAR PRADESH-202122, have changed my name from RAMA DEVI to RAJWATI DEVI for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 02/04/2026 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, MOHAMMAD ABBAS S/O ILYAS residing H NO-12 WARD NO-1 DR MUSKHA VALI MASJIT KE PASS SALAHERI (155) PO FERROZEPUR NAMAQ MEWAT HR-122107, have changed my name to ABBAS for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE
I, MOHAMMAD ILYAS S/O MUSA residing H NO-12 WARD NO-1 DR MUSKHA VALI MASJIT KE PASS SALAHERI (155) PO FERROZEPUR NAMAQ MEWAT HR-122107, have changed my name to ILYAS for all future purpose.

NAME CHANGE
I, MOHAMMAD RANGA KANAKA PRASAD A Presently residing at 9-15, BESIDE D A V PUBLIC SCHOOL, GIRI PRASAD NAGAR, PENDORTHY, VISAKHAPATNAM, ANDHRA PRADESH-531173, have changed my father's name from SATYA NARAYANA A to AKULA SATYANARAYANA for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 02/04/2026 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, No-15734942F Rank-L/HAU Name-KOLI VINOD MADHUKAR residing at VILL-DASNUR, PO-DASNUR, TEHSIL-RAVER, DIST-JALGAON, MAHARASHTRA-425506, have changed my minor son's name from TANMAY to TANMAY VINOD KOLI for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 02/04/2026 Before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, No-15734942F Rank-L/HAU Name-KOLI VINOD MADHUKAR residing at VILL-DASNUR, PO-DASNUR, TEHSIL-RAVER, DIST-JALGAON, MAHARASHTRA-425506, have changed my minor son's name from SAI to SAI VINOD KOLI for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 02/04/2026 Before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
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NEWS BOX

Qatar suspends visa-on-arrival for Pak nationals amid Iran War

World (Agency)

Amid the deepening conflict in the Middle East, Qatar has temporarily suspended the visa-on-arrival policy for Pakistani nationals, a report by Khaleejtimes said, citing sources from the Embassy of Pakistan.

"Pakistani nationals intending to travel to Qatar are advised that the visa-on-arrival facility is currently not available due to prevailing situation," said the embassy. "All Pakistani travellers to Qatar are advised to obtain appropriate visas prior to travel to avoid inconvenience," it further added in a statement accessed by Khaleejtimes. The embassy further highlighted the need for all Pakistani citizens to ensure a visa before departing for Qatar. In another advisory, it also urged travellers to Qatar to verify all necessary details and visa requirements through official channels before finalising their travel plans.

While reiterating its commitment to assisting Pakistani nationals, the embassy emphasised the importance of consulting relevant Qatari authorities or authorised visa centres to ensure compliance with current entry regulations.

PAKISTAN OFFERED MEDIATION IN MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Amid the ongoing Iran war, Islamabad positioned itself as an intermediary, seeking to end the conflict.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said Islamabad was "ready and honoured" to facilitate "meaningful and conclusive talks" between the US and Iran, adding that it was willing to host negotiations for a comprehensive settlement, subject to the consent of both sides. The statement followed reports that Pakistan, along with Egypt and Turkiye, was engaged in backchannel efforts to broker peace. Sharif also spoke to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, expressing concern over the escalating hostilities and calling for de-escalation.

Everest trekkers 'poisoned' in \$20 million scam to trigger fake chopper rescues

World (Agency)

Mount Everest sherpas are accused of secretly poisoning tourists' food to trigger expensive helicopter rescues as part of a \$20 million insurance scam, according to a report by the Kathmandu Post. Nepal police have charged 32 individuals, including trekking company owners, helicopter operators and hospital executives, with organised crime and fraud related to the plot. Investigators said sherpas working with trekking agencies allegedly poisoned tourists by adding baking soda to their meals, causing severe gastrointestinal symptoms that mimicked altitude sickness or food poisoning. Once the visitors fell ill, they were reportedly pressured into agreeing to expensive emergency helicopter evacuations, with operators allegedly using forged medical and flight documents to charge international travel insurers, authorities in the Himalayan nation said. The illicit gains were reportedly shared among sherpas, helicopter companies, trekking agencies and hospitals where tourists received fake treatments.

The investigation began in January with the arrest of six executives from three major mountain rescue firms. According to the report, the groups fraudulently obtained at least \$19.69 million through these schemes. One company allegedly faked 171 of its 1,248 claimed rescues, resulting in over \$10 million in illegitimate payouts. A second company is accused of fabricating 75 of 471 claimed rescues, claiming \$8 million, while a third allegedly made 71 false claims worth more than \$1 million. Prosecutors are seeking total fines of \$11.3 million. A court spokesperson said the case is receiving high priority due to its high-profile nature.

This is not the first tourism scandal in Nepal, where the industry supports over one million jobs. Several major international insurers have recently stopped covering trekking tourists in Nepal because of rising fraud incidents.

NATO chief Mark Rutte to visit Washington next week

World (Agency)

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte will visit Washington next week for what a spokesperson for the military alliance called a "long-planned visit" that comes after President Donald Trump blasted European allies over differences on the Iran war.

"I can confirm that the Secretary General will be in DC next week for a long-planned visit," NATO spokesperson Allison Hart said. A White House official also confirmed the visit. Trump said he was considering pulling the US out of the Western military alliance due to the refusal of European members to send ships to unblock the Strait of Hormuz.

In remarks on Wednesday to allies gathered for an



Easter lunch at the White House, Trump criticised France and the United Kingdom, among other U.S. allies, as a "paper tiger." NATO, which includes European countries, the U.S. and Canada, was formed in 1949 with the aim of countering the risk of Soviet attack and has been the cornerstone of the West's security ever since. "We've had some very bad allies in NATO," Trump said. "Hopefully, we never going to need them. I don't think we will need them."

Artemis II astronauts bound for moon after rocketing away on NASA's first lunar voyage in decades

Carrying three Americans and one Canadian, the 32-story rocket rose from NASA's Kennedy Space Center where tens of thousands gathered to witness the dawn of this new era.

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (Agency)

Four astronauts embarked on a high-stakes flight around the moon Wednesday, humanity's first lunar voyage in more than half a century and the thrilling leadoff in NASA's push toward a landing in two years. Carrying three Americans and one Canadian, the 32-story rocket rose from NASA's Kennedy Space Center where tens of thousands gathered to witness the dawn of this new era. Crowds also jammed the

surrounding roads and beaches, reminiscent of the Apollo moonshots in the 1960s and '70s. It is NASA's biggest step yet toward establishing a permanent lunar presence. "On this historic mission, you take with you the heart of this Artemis team, the daring spirit of the American people and our partners across the globe, and the hopes and dreams of a new generation," launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson told the crew right before liftoff. "Good luck, Godspeed Artemis II. Let's go." Artemis II set sail from the same Florida launch site that sent Apollo's explorers to the moon so long ago. The handful still alive cheered this next generation's grand adventure as the Space Launch System rocket thundered into the early evening sky, a nearly full moon beckoning some 248,000 miles (400,000 kilometers) away. Five minutes into the flight, Commander Reid Wiseman saw the team's target: "We have a beautiful moonrise, we're headed right at it," he said from the capsule. On board with him are pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen. It was the most

diverse lunar crew ever with the first woman, person of color and non-U.S. citizen riding in NASA's new Orion capsule. "NASA is back in the business of



sending astronauts to the moon," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman told reporters following liftoff, calling the half-century hiatus a brief intermission.

Tensions high in the hours leading up to launch Tensions were high earlier in the day as hydrogen fuel started flowing into the rocket. Dangerous hydrogen leaks erupted during a countdown test earlier this year, forcing a lengthy flight delay.

To NASA's relief, no significant hydrogen leaks occurred. The launch team loaded

more than 700,000 gallons of fuel (2.6 million liters) into the 32-story Space Launch System rocket on the pad, a smooth operation that set the stage for the Artemis II crew to board. Then NASA had to overcome a flurry of last-minute technical issues — bad battery sensors and an inability to get commands through to the rocket's flight termination system. In both cases, the issues were quickly resolved, allowing the launch to proceed.

What's on tap for 10-day test flight?

The astronauts will stick close to home for the first 25 hours of their 10-day test flight, checking out the capsule in orbit around Earth before firing the main engine that will propel them to the moon.

They won't pause for a stopover or orbit the moon like Apollo 8's first lunar visitors did so famously on Christmas Eve 1968, reading from Genesis. But they stand to become the most distant humans ever when their capsule zooms past the moon and continues another 4,000 miles (6,400 kilometers) beyond, before making a U-turn and tearing straight home to a splashdown in the Pacific.

Israel reports three Iranian missile attacks within hours as Trump addresses US

JERUSALEM (Agency)

Israel's military said air defences responded to three waves of Iranian missile fire early Thursday, with media reporting several light injuries in the Tel Aviv area.

The third reported salvo came shortly after US President Donald Trump delivered an address to the American public about the Middle East war. After the first attack, police said officers were called to "several" impact sites in central Israel, with media reports putting the number at nine. Four people were lightly wounded, the reports said, citing medics. Israeli media attributed the damage across a relatively wide

area to the use of cluster munitions, which explode mid-air and scatter bomblets.



Iran and Israel have previously accused each other of using cluster bombs. Within just over three hours of the first

attack, the military announced it had again "identified missiles launched from Iran toward the territory of the State of Israel", triggering air raid sirens across much of northern and central Israel. The military's Home Front Command later said residents were "permitted to leave protected spaces in all areas of the country". There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage as a result of the second and third reported attacks. On Wednesday, as Jewish Israelis were preparing to celebrate the Passover holiday, emergency services said Iranian missile fire wounded 14 people, including an 11-year-old girl.

UAE cracks down on Iranians, revokes visas, leaving families stranded amid war

WASHINGTON (Agency)

The United Arab Emirates has initiated a widespread crackdown on Iranians living in the country, cancelling visas and closing Iranian institutions in response to Tehran's ongoing drone and missile attacks. Several Iranian families in Dubai report that relatives who have lived in the UAE for decades have had their visas revoked unexpectedly, sometimes while travelling, preventing their return.

This week, the UAE announced a ban on Iranian passport holders entering or transiting the country. Earlier actions included the closure of the Iranian Hospital, an Iranian social club and several Iranian schools, complicating life for Iranian families. The measures impact a community of nearly half a million people who have long supported a mutually beneficial economic relationship between the UAE and Iran. The UAE serves as Iran's key connection to the global economy and acts as a financial hub for Iranian businesses seeking refuge from Western sanctions, according to analysts tracking Tehran's activities and the US Treasury. At Al Ustad Special Kebab, a longstanding Iranian restaurant in Dubai, owner Majed

Ansari expressed understanding of the UAE's tightened restrictions, citing concerns over safety. According to a Wall Street Journal report, he said that historical ties between Iran and Dubai are deep and unlikely to be easily broken by the current conflict. "They respect us and we respect them," said Ansari, whose father opened the eatery in 1978, just seven years after the UAE was formed as a state. The report also added that some residents expressed apprehension. A shopkeeper at Ali Bin Ali grocery store, which sells Iranian products just across the street, said that his family lives in Iran, but he fears leaving Dubai due to the risk of being unable to return amid rising tensions.

The conflict escalated after Iran launched thousands of drones and missiles at the UAE, targeting locations such as Dubai's Palm island, Burj al-Arab hotel and the airport. The UAE is reportedly preparing to assist in opening the Strait of Hormuz by force but maintains a defensive posture. A UAE official said the country's posture remains defensive. The report also mentions that the UAE is reportedly considering even tougher financial measures, including freezing Iranian assets in the country. "Every

pressure point on Iran is on the table," a source familiar with the UAE's evolving policy toward Iranian residents said this week. The official added that the country will reassess its openness to communities like Iranians in light of wartime attacks targeting its economy. Persian and Arab populations along the Strait of Hormuz have been intertwined for centuries. In the 1800s, parts of what is now Iran's coastline were controlled by a dynasty based in present-day UAE. Iranian migration to the UAE occurred in several waves: 19th-century merchants arrived in Dubai; in the 1920s, pious Muslims fled Iran as the shah secularised the nation, including banning the headscarf; and in the late 1970s, secular Iranians left to escape the Islamic Revolution. The report added that some early Iranian migrants gained Emirati citizenship when the UAE was founded in the early 1970s. The WSJ report mentioned Mira AlHusseini, an associate fellow at the University of Edinburgh's Alwaleed bin Talal Centre, a large portion of Emiratis trace their ancestry to southern Iran, reflecting longstanding historical ties between the communities.

7.4-magnitude earthquake off Indonesia kills one, tsunami warning lifted

JAKARTA (Agency)

A major 7.4-magnitude quake struck off the coast of eastern Indonesia on Thursday, killing at least one person, causing waves of up to 75 centimetres (2.5 feet) and triggering a tsunami warning that was subsequently lifted. The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the tremor hit at a shallow depth of 35 kilometres in the Molucca Sea between the Sulawesi and Maluku island groups in the early morning.

One person was killed when a building collapsed in the city of Manado in North Sulawesi province, a local search and rescue official told AFP. "The quake was felt strongly and around Manado... one person died and one person had a leg injury," George Leo Mercy Randang told AFP by telephone. The victim was "buried under the rubble" of a collapsed building, he said. The Hawaii-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) initially said hazardous tsunami waves were possible within 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) of the epicentre along the coasts of Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. Within half an hour of the quake, waves up to 75 centimetres were recorded in North Minahasa and 20 centimetres in Bitung, both in the north of Sulawesi island, according to Indonesia's BMKG geological agency. Thirty-centimetre waves were also logged in North Maluku province. The PTWC lifted its warning just over two hours after the tremor, saying the tsunami threat "has now passed."

Ternate resident Budi Nurgianto, 42, said he was inside his house when the tremor struck, sending people panicking outside. "The quake was felt strongly. I heard it first from the walls of the house that shook," he said. "When I went outside, there were many people outside. They were panicked. The quake was felt (for) quite long, more than a minute. I even saw some people leaving their house without having finished their shower." Aftershocks BMKG head Teuku Faisal Fathani told journalists in the capital Jakarta there were 11 aftershocks, the biggest with a magnitude of 5.5.

An AFP journalist in Manado on Sulawesi, about 300 kilometres west of Ternate by sea, said the shaking woke him and others in the city of around 450,000 people. I immediately woke up and left my house. People (were) immediately scrambling outside. There is a school and the pupils rushed outside," he said. The shaking persisted for "quite long" but he did not witness "significant damage", he added.

The PTWC had initially warned that tsunami waves of up to one metre were possible for parts of Indonesia, with smaller waves possible for the Philippines, Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, Guam and Palau.

Takeaways from Trump's address: No end date for Iran war, no direct criticism of NATO

WASHINGTON (Agency)

President Donald Trump sought on Wednesday to explain his rationale for the war against Iran at a pivotal moment at home and abroad, but he offered few new details as he amasses extraordinary executive authority to prosecute the military operation. The war is fast becoming a signature of his second-term agenda and the speech was a capstone to a remarkable day flexing presidential power.

Trump started the morning as the first sitting president to show up for a U.S. Supreme Court hearing, a stunning reach of the executive into the affairs of the judicial branch. He ended with his first primetime address from the White House about a war he launched on his own, bulldozing past Congress. On an early spring night when many Americans may have been looking upward as Artemis II astronauts lifted off for NASA's return to the moon, Trump gave a nod to that historic milestone. Then he quickly refocused attention back to him — and to the conflict with Iran that has killed more than a dozen U.S. service members and appears to have no easy exit in

sight. "America, as it has been for five years under my presidency is winning — and now winning bigger than ever before," Trump said. "We're going to finish the job and we're going to finish it very fast," he added. Trump tries to sell the American people on why the war is necessary.

The president said at the top of his address that he wanted to "discuss why Operation Epic Fury is necessary for the safety of America and the security of the free world," showing that part of the goal for Wednesday's speech was to take on the confusion that has persisted as he and his administration have shifted their reasons for launching the mission and its objectives. But Wednesday night, Trump did not offer any new explanations.

He maintained that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, calling such a prospect "an intolerable threat."

Though he and his administration insisted that the U.S. and Israel obliterated Iran's nuclear program in strikes last summer, he said Wednesday that Iran sought to rebuild its nuclear program after those strikes at a new different location. He did not offer



details but said it indicated Iran was not backing away from its nuclear ambitions. He also said Iran was building a vast arsenal of ballistic missiles that were a threat to America's homeland.

While he said Iran's ballistic missile capacity was greatly reduced, he didn't explain how the operation had headed off Iran's nuclear ambitions. He instead painted the threats from Iran generally as having been wiped away, though he didn't back up that

assertion, especially as multiple competing factions of power remain within Iran's theocracy.

Iran long has insisted its nuclear program was peaceful. It had, however, been enriching uranium up to 60% purity, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Before the war, U.S. intelligence agencies assessed that Iran had yet to begin a weapons program, but had "undertaken activities that better position it to produce a nuclear device, if it chooses to do so." Trump provides little information about next steps. Thousands of additional U.S. troops are heading to the Middle East. Gulf allies are urging Trump to finish the fight, arguing that Tehran hasn't been weakened enough.

And yet Trump himself has predicted the U.S. will be done "within maybe two weeks."

He said the "core strategic objectives are nearing completion" and did not signal any preparations for a ground invasion by American troops — to retrieve Iran's enriched uranium or secure the Strait of Hormuz, where a chokehold by Iran has sent energy prices soaring.

NEWS BOX

Nashik's 'walk of shame': How a viral policing trend is spreading across Maharashtra, and dividing opinion

Mumbai.(Agency)

The scene outside the Nashik Police Crime Branch office has become familiar. An accused is brought out, sometimes limping, sometimes held up by policemen on either side, and made to face the cameras. Then comes the line: "Nashik zilla kaydyacha balekilla (Nashik district, a fortress of law and order)."

It has happened scores of times in six months. And it is now happening elsewhere too. Outside the Mumbra police station in Thane, accused have been filmed in similar circumstances, flanked by cops, apologising on camera for making reels that glorify gangsterism. The slogan has changed to "Thane zilla kaydyacha balekilla (Thane district, a fortress of law and order)." In Akola, the local police have been uploading their own before-and-after reels in the same format.

Said a Mumbra officer: "While we would take action against those involved in such reels earlier, the way the video is shot and the balekilla reference is from Nashik police," he said. Maharashtra Inspector General (law and order) Manoj Kumar Sharma told The Indian Express that no instructions had been passed to create such videos and that such acts were not encouraged.

Nashik Commissioner Sandeep Karnik makes no secret of having started the trend. The slogan, he says, came from the accused themselves. In one of the first videos to go viral, a group of youths had declared Nashik a "fortress of crime." Police tracked them down and turned the phrase on its head. "This is where we got the slogan from. Henceforth, anyone arrested in such crimes was made to say Nashik zilla kaydyacha balekilla."

68 lakh accounts under Ladki Bahin closed after failing to complete e-KYC

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Maharashtra government has permanently closed 68 lakh out of the 2.43 crore bank accounts under the Majhi Ladki Bahin scheme after they failed to complete the mandatory e-KYC process.

While the deadline to complete the process was March 31, it has now been extended to April 30, which might result in increase in the number of closed accounts.

After the end of the e-KYC scrutiny, the state now has only 1.75 crore active accounts under the scheme. The e-KYC exercise was undertaken following complaints that male members were receiving benefits under the scheme or that some government employees had been registered as beneficiaries.

The process has received four extensions. The first was in November 2025, later December 2025, then till March 2026. Now, the deadline has been extended till April 30, 2026.

Launched ahead of the 2024 state Assembly elections, the Majhi Ladki Bahin scheme provides monthly financial assistance of Rs 1500 to eligible women. While the scheme has put significant pressure on state finances, it is widely seen as one of the key factors behind the massive electoral victory of the Mahayuti government.

Govt approves Shaktipeeth Expressway redesign, cost now 1 lakh cr

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Maharashtra government on Wednesday approved the revised alignment of the Nagpur-Goa Shaktipeeth Expressway, increasing the length by 54 km, and project cost to Rs 1 lakh crore.

The revised alignment introduces part of the highway in Satara, taking the expressways length up from 802.592 km to 856.765 km. This has made the total project cost Rs 1 lakh crore, up from the initial cost of around Rs 80,000 crore. Beginning at Wardha and ending in Sindhudurg, the revised alignment changes the portions of the Expressway in Nanded, Hingoli, Parbhani, Solapur, Sangli and Kolhapur, introducing 40 km of the highway in Satara in two villages, Gondawale and Shikhar Shingapur. With it, land acquisition of 8,760 hectares will be required.

The previous alignment had faced resistance from farmers along the route. Approved in February 2024, the initial notification for the land acquisition was canceled by October 2024, particularly for areas in Kolhapur district, where farmers had protested against the project, making it a major electoral issue during last Assembly polls.

As the expressway goes through fertile land giving high yields, used to cultivate sugarcane and other cash crops, farmers did not want to part with it. The parallel Nagpur-Ratnagiri National Highway being extended was also bought up, with the second expressway framed as unnecessary. Environmental concerns were also highlighted with the route going through the Western Ghats and Konkan region.

Land acquisition was paused, till February 2025, when the Mahayuti government was back in power in the state.

Hours before EC poll call, Rajkot launches women-only Pink Bus service, Congress sees red

The project was announced in 2026-27; launched in the presence of BJP leaders, including outgoing deputy Mayor; second city in Gujarat after Surat to run women-only buses

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

On Wednesday, Rajkot became the second city, after Surat, in Gujarat to run women-only public transport buses. The pilot project, with four "pink buses" on as many routes, was launched in the morning in the presence of senior BJP leaders. BJP MLAs Dr Darshita Shah (Rajkot West) and Ramesh Tilala (Rajkot South), outgoing Deputy Mayor Narendrishsinh Jadeja and outgoing BJP whip in RMC Manish Radiya flagged off the 'Pink Bus' pilot project.

Hours later, the state election commission announced the dates for the local body polls. With that, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into effect in Gujarat, where elections to most municipal corporations, municipalities, district panchayats and taluka panchayats are due. The timing of the launch on the very first day of the new financial year, and on a day the

elections were announced, as well as the participation of corporators whose terms have already ended, has raised eyebrows in



the largest municipal corporation in Saurashtra region.

When asked about the timing, Jadeja said, "The thinking behind this is to help women travel in buses for Rs 1,000. The decision was taken at the second last standing committee meeting. It is not related to the safety of

women."

Notably, in the last municipal election in 2021, the Congress won four of 72 seats in the 18 wards of Rajkot city. It's corporator Vashram Sagathiya of Ward-15, who defected to AAP and later returned to the Congress, told the Indian Express, "Just like what they did in Bihar when they deposited Rs 10,000 in the bank accounts of women just before the election, this Pink Bus was launched in Rajkot before the polls, but there is nobody to take action against them. The project was discussed in the budget, but the term of the 2026-27 Budget began today, on April 1, so this means that the cost to buy these buses and for other 'settings' were taken care of beforehand."

also tried to reach out to BJP's Jaymin Thakkar, the outgoing chairman of the Standing Committee of the RMC. He remained unavailable for comment.

Poll observers reach Vadodara; BJP leaders ready with report cards on 'best works'

Sources in the BJP said that the names of observers were confidential, in order to prevent aspiring candidates from attempting to reach out to the party leaders.

Vadodara.(Agency)

AS THE Gujarat State Election Commission (SEC) on Wednesday announced the schedule for the general elections to the urban local bodies, district and taluka panchayats to be held on April 26, poll observers arrived in Vadodara to gather a sense of the popularity and proficiency of aspiring candidates in the four zones. The venues, meanwhile, also witnessed long queues of BJP leaders armed with a report of their "best works".

While outgoing corporators of the party were earlier informed and asked to submit a "report card" of their activities and projects undertaken in the past five years, several aspirants have staked claim on seats in the 19 wards of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC).

Sources in the BJP said that the names of observers were confidential, in order to prevent aspiring candidates from attempting to reach out to the party leaders. "The stakes are

extremely high as the OBC reservation comes into effect. It virtually reduces the number of seats for the general category leaders and there is hectic lobbying in the back to see if



indispensable leaders, who may not stand a chance in their existing wards due to the reservation, can be accommodated elsewhere... In many cases, women seats may be given to immediate relatives of heavyweight

leaders, who may not make it," a senior party leader said.

On an average, 19 wards witnessed over 40 aspirants staking claim for the four seats - two of which are reserved in most of the wards for various categories. While ward 4 saw over 60 candidates apply for the tickets, the highest number was seen in ward 17 with close to 100 candidates submitting their profiles while another ward with SC and ST reservation saw over 80 candidates file nominations.

A senior leader said, "Some party leaders, who are aspiring for tickets and top posts in the city, have been appointed as observers themselves in other areas of the state. Such leaders have been calling their representatives to ensure that their files have been submitted appropriately... The reservation for the Mayor's post is for a candidate from the SC-ST category so the stakes are higher in seats where the reservations are decided."

NIA called in after blast outside BJP office in Chandigarh; manhunt on for 2 suspects

Chandigarh.(Agency)

A "crude" device was hurled at the Punjab BJP headquarters in Chandigarh on Wednesday evening, causing a blast, police said. No one was injured in the incident that took place at around 5pm, they said adding a multi-agency probe has been initiated while Chandigarh Police has launched a manhunt for two suspects.

A video emerged on social media purportedly showing a person throwing a grenade-like object, followed by the sound of a blast. The act was recorded by another person but their faces were not visible in the 10-second video. In a social media post, a Khalistani separatist linked to the banned Babbar Khalsa International claimed the responsibility of the attack.

Chandigarh SSP Kanwardeep Kaur said, "Prima facie, it appears that a small crude-type device was thrown. Forensic teams are collecting samples from the site to

determine the composition and origin of the explosive".

In a statement later, the police said that upon receiving information "regarding a blast outside the Punjab BJP office in Sector-37", senior officers reached the spot along with teams from the



Operations Cell, the National Investigation Agency, the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, bomb disposal squads, and sniffer dog units. "The area was cordoned off. No casualties have been reported in the incident. However, one car and one scooter parked nearby have been affected by impact. An FIR under Explosives

Act and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act has been registered and further investigation is ongoing," it said.

Inspector General of Police Pushpendra Kumar said CCTV footage from nearby areas is being scanned to identify the suspects.

"We are also examining the authenticity and source of the video that has been released on social media," he said. Meanwhile, claiming responsibility for the attack, Khalistani separatist Sukhjinder Singh Babbar linked it to the death of Ranjit Singh, a suspect in the killing of two policemen in Gurdaspur in February this year. Ranjit Singh was allegedly killed in a police encounter on February 25. Raising question on the security apparatus, BJP's state media cell head, Vineet Joshi, said party's working president Ashwani Sharma had been staying at the office for the past four days, and had left for Delhi early in the morning.

AAP Gujarat chief Isudan Gadhvi, 17 others arrested on charge of 'rioting' at police station

Mumbai.(Agency)

Gujarat Aam Aadmi Party president Isudan Gadhvi and 17 others were arrested on Wednesday evening on charges of rioting and obstruction of public servant among others, hours after they were detained at Jam Khambaliya police station in Devbhumi Dwarka district.

Gadhvi, who hails from Dwarka, had gone to the Jam Khambaliya police station on Wednesday morning with a group of party workers demanding that the police cancel what the party called "the wrong FIR" filed against an AAP worker in a loot case and book another person in the case.

Gadhvi and others were booked in an FIR filed based on a complaint by Police Sub-Inspector Uday Kantilal Jadav on behalf of the State. All 18 persons were subsequently placed under arrest, Devbhoomi Dwarka S P Jayrajsinh Vala said.

"Today, Gadhvi came to the police station with a group of workers and spoke about an FIR filed three days ago, where police are not the complainant. He alleged that the FIR wrongly named a person as accused, which itself is a false

Maharashtra launches rural health push to plug service gaps

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Maharashtra government on April 1 rolled out the 'Mazhe Gaav, Aarogya Sampann Gaav' (My Village, Health-Prosperous Village) campaign, a statewide initiative to bolster rural healthcare delivery and expand access to public health services.

The programme is being implemented by the Public Health Department under the guidance of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Pawar.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Prakash Abitkar said the campaign will prioritise awareness generation and last-mile delivery of government health services in rural areas.

Addressing a divisional-level training workshop at Smt. Kashibai Navale Medical College and Hospital, Abitkar emphasised preventive healthcare and optimal use of existing schemes. Officials from districts including Pune, Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Kolhapur, Satara and Sangli attended the session.

Highlighting ongoing initiatives, Abitkar said funds are being channelled through the Mahatma Phule Jan Aarogya Yojana, now extended to all primary health centres, with services such as ECG and dialysis being offered free of cost.

He also flagged the HPV vaccination drive aimed at preventing cervical cancer, urging officials to counter misinformation and step up public outreach.

"Not a single citizen should be left out of the health department's schemes. This campaign must evolve into a people's movement for a healthier future," Abitkar said, assuring full institutional support.

At the local level, Pune Zilla Parishad President Veerdhwal Baba Jagdale pointed to improvements in primary health centre services and called for the revival of Patient Welfare Committees.

allegation. Gadhvi along with others barged into the police station, sought to see the register and argued with police. He was also booked for obstruction of public servants in performing their duties," Vala said.

Reacting to this development on social media site X, Arvind Kejriwal, the national convener of AAP, wrote, "In Gujarat, people are suffering from thirty years of BJP's misrule of corruption, tyranny and oppression.

So far the public had no choice. People are now looking at the AAP as a strong alternative."

Kejriwal further wrote, "Now BJP has hatched a conspiracy. Put as many leaders and office bearers of AAP in jail as possible in Gujarat. So far more than 160 activists have been arrested.

According to sources, around 10,000 AAP functionaries will be arrested... The FIR stated that while the PSI was out patrolling, he received a call that Isudan Gadhvi and 30-35 others had barged into the police station and demanded that an FIR be filed on an application submitted the previous day.

Punjab diverts smartphones meant for Anganwadi workers to drug census enumerators

Punjab diverts Anganwadi smartphones to survey enumerators for drug and caste census, delaying distribution to frontline workers under Poshan Abhiyan.

Chandigarh.(Agency)

The Punjab government Wednesday decided to hand over the smartphones, procured for anganwadi workers, to the enumerators of drug and caste-based socioeconomic survey, it has been learnt.

The government had recently confirmed that it has procured 28,515 Samsung 5G smartphones for Rs 57 crore under a scheme funded by the Government of India. Sources in the Punjab government said that these phones were sent to at least five districts on Monday to be distributed among anganwadi workers. But later it was decided to pass these on to the enumerators.

"We need these phones for the 28,000 enumerators. They are doing an important task. After they are done with the census, these will go to Anganwadi workers," said a functionary of AAP. The department of Social Security, Women and Child

Development, which had started distributing these phones to Anganwadi centres, has decided to pass these on to the rural development and panchayats department, the nodal department for drug census. Women and child welfare Minister Dr Baljeet Kaur was not available for comments even after repeated attempts.

An AAP spokesperson said, "The government is trying to ensure best utilisation of resources by ensuring convergence of resources. So, the same phones can be used for both the activities". Punjab President of the Anganwadi Worker Helper Union, Barinderjit Kaur Chhina told The Indian Express that the minister told her on Monday that they would be given the phones. "They told us the phones have been procured. The state government is in the process of handing these over. Now, it is different story. I have

learnt that these are being give to drug census enumerators. This is unfair. I will speak to the functionaries in the morning". Chhina said they would not accept used



smartphones at any cost as they have learnt these are being given to BLOs assigned drug census duty. On February 7, the government had put under suspension IAS

officers KK Yadav and Jaspreet Singh, who were Administrative Secretary Industries and Commerce, Investment Promotion, and MD Infotech respectively at that time. Delay in procurement of these phones was cited to be the reason. The procurement was initiated under the Department of Social Security, with Punjab Infotech handling the tender, where irregularities and significant delays occurred. The suspension came for the officials associated with Punjab Infotech. The procurement, aimed at empowering anganwadi workers under the Poshan Abhiyan, a central government sponsored scheme, is funded by the Centre. It is to monitor the implementation of its scheme through an app for which anganwadi workers needed to fill data from the field.

Replacing peace dividend with global war tax

Mars, the powerful Roman god of war, is ascendant. Globally, defence spending has reached \$2.7 trillion in 2024, a 9.4 percent annual increase, and, on present trends, will reach \$6.6 trillion by 2035.

The rise of militarism is disconcerting. First, it represents a substantial diversion of economic resources marking a shift from the post-Cold War peace dividend to a war tax. Since 2022, global military spending has risen from 2.2 percent to 2.5 percent of global GDP and from 6.6 percent to 7.1 percent of government budgets.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, cuts in defence spending boosted economic growth. The US defence budget halved from 3.1 percent of the GDP between 1989 and 1999. Europe's defence spending declined to around 2 percent of GDP, in part due to their now-problematic dependence on US protection. Across the European Union, this freed up money for private investment and social programmes, which increased from 36.6 percent in 1995 to 41.4 percent before the pandemic. Europe's peace dividend may be as much as €4.2 trillion over a 30-year period. The reversal must be financed by unpopular reductions in existing spending or higher borrowing, which is difficult for highly-indebted countries like Japan, some European states and the UK.

Second, defence spending may not generate economic activity. Beyond the initial expenditure, there are minimal multiplier effects as most goods have limited consumption or investment value. It is spent on items that become obsolete if unused or destroyed if deployed in combat. There is a diversion of resources and talent. In the longer term, any stimulatory effects of increased military spending are outweighed by higher inflation, budget deficits and higher taxes. If a State does not have the required indigenous industries, then defence spending mainly benefits foreigners, primarily major armament exporters like the US, Russia, China, France and Germany. Then there are human and material costs of wars. Third, the effectiveness of defence spending is uncertain. Given that the required capabilities are a function of the adversary, the type of conflict and its duration, it is unclear what target fixed percentage of GDP is appropriate or sufficient. As the Ukraine war illustrates, no matter how high the state of preparedness, actual conflict requires diverse armaments and a scale of output that is difficult to achieve.

The money is frequently eaten up by salaries, pensions and administration costs. More than one-third and one-half of US and European defence spending goes on personnel.

Advanced weapon systems, the now favoured strategy, are often duds. The Golden Dome missile defence system, forecast to cost anywhere between \$252 billion and \$3.6 trillion, may not work like its failed precursor, the Star Wars shield. Weapons systems that take years to develop and deliver may become redundant due to changes in the type of conflict or advances in counter-measures. Development of cheap drone warfare, which took pundits by surprise, has made some technologies obsolete.

Anti-ship hypersonic missiles make expensive carrier fleets vulnerable. Defence products rarely meet their specifications due to long development processes, changing requirements, complex or novel technologies, design issues, delays, massive cost overruns, and worker and supply shortages. Military production is constrained by complex supply chains. American and European attempts to increase their defence capabilities are likely to be hampered by their reliance on potential adversaries for critical materials such as rare earths and other elements including semiconductors. High-tech weaponry requires frequent expensive maintenance and extensive redundancy.

Modern warfare exposes India's defence shortcomings

The future battlefield is defined by hypersonic missiles, swarm drones, electronic warfare and artificial intelligence.

INDIA'S security environment has never been more demanding. To the west, Pakistan, now armed with fifth-generation Chinese aircraft, cyber support and satellite intelligence, continues its policy of a thousand cuts. During Operation Sindoor, China provided Pakistan with real-time ground intelligence. Pakistan has also concluded a defence pact with Saudi Arabia and maintains strong ties both with the US and Russia. To the north, Indian and Chinese troops remain deployed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). China occupies parts of Indian territory in Ladakh and covets the Karakoram Pass for a direct link with the Shaksgam valley above the Siachen Glacier. Opposite Arunachal Pradesh — which China continues to claim and is also giving Chinese names to Indian villages and towns — Beijing has constructed a large number of villages along the LAC.

Meanwhile, Nepal is increasingly coming under Chinese influence. China is building a railway line to Kathmandu as part of the Belt and Road Initiative and has pressured Nepal to claim Kalapani and parts of Uttarakhand in order to control the Lipulekh Pass — which overlooks the Chinese road in Tibet — despite the long-recognised border running along the Kali Ganga. The neighbourhood picture is equally troubling. The Agnipath scheme has led to Nepalese Gorkhas no longer joining the Indian Army; they may soon be absorbed into the Chinese military. Bhutan is leaning towards China. So too are Bangladesh and Myanmar, both of which have long received Chinese military equipment. In Sri Lanka and the Maldives, China has established a firm foothold.

China has built a significant presence in the Indian Ocean through what is widely described as a 'String of Pearls' — a network of commercial and military ports designed to secure energy routes and expand Beijing's geopolitical influence. These include Kyaukphyu in Myanmar, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Gwadar in Pakistan and Djibouti at the Horn of Africa. China now commands the largest navy in the world. A country's strategic environment has a direct bearing on its security requirements; India is today surrounded by hostile or compromised neighbours. India's defence allocation for FY2025-26 stands at approximately Rs 7.85 lakh crore. While capital expenditure has grown and 75% of acquisition funds are now reserved for domestic procurement, the structural weight of pensions — at nearly 22% of the total — continues to constrain modernisation. It is worth noting that age and physical fitness eligibility thresholds for serving personnel have also risen; a corresponding increase in the retirement age for soldiers to 42/45, and for junior commissioned officers and officers by two years, would reduce the pension burden while retaining experienced



manpower. The Agnipath scheme, conceived as a solution to the rising pension burden, has instead damaged unit cohesion and regimental spirit. As many as 50% of the Agniveers who feel they cannot make it to the 25% to be retained lose all interest, while in the remaining 50%, there is cut-throat competition to be retained. India's efforts at indigenisation under the 'Make-in-India' initiative have made limited progress. The country still imports close to 75% of its defence equipment. The engine for its 4.5-generation fighter aircraft is imported. Even small arms continue to be sourced from Russia. This is particularly alarming given that China is already developing sixth-generation fighter aircraft. Make-in-India cannot succeed unless significantly better talent is inducted into research and development and substantially greater funds are allocated to it. Several private companies have taken up government defence contracts without any genuine R&D capability — some are merely importing equipment from abroad and assembling it in India. This is not indigenisation; it is relabelling. The lessons of recent conflicts demand urgent attention. Operation Sindoor, the Russia-Ukraine war and the evolving Israel-Iran confrontation share a common lesson: warfare has been transformed. The future battlefield is defined by hypersonic missiles, swarm drones,

electronic warfare and artificial intelligence. Instead of preparing for this kind of future, India risks equipping itself for the last war — seeking amphibious light tanks rather than elite precision-guided drones and hypersonic missiles. Fighter aircraft and main battle tanks face existential threats from missiles and drones; their primacy on the modern battlefield is being fundamentally challenged.

India's defence budget, while growing in absolute terms, remains structurally inadequate. The country's strategic environment has never been more complex, nor the cost of complacency more consequential.

A credible, enduring military strategy demands three simultaneous commitments: first, a sustained increase in defence allocation to at least 3% of the GDP; second, a genuine investment in indigenous R&D — not assembly lines but design capability, with the DRDO funding doubled and deep linkages built between research institutions, private innovators and the armed forces; and third, a strategic diplomacy that arrests the drift of Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and the Maldives into China's orbit before it hardens into permanent encirclement. Incremental allocations, short-tenure soldiers and imported weapons assembled under an Indian label are not a defence policy — they are a deferred catastrophe.

Vanishing paddy: Grain diversion raises serious concerns

At the heart of the problem lies the custom milling system, where government agencies entrust private millers with procured grain.

THE discovery of missing paddy worth nearly Rs 17 crore from rice mills in Kurukshetra is not merely an instance of theft; it is a troubling indicator of systemic failure in the procurement and milling chain. That a discrepancy of more than 63,000 quintals has been detected points to more than negligence. It suggests a breakdown where records can be manipulated and verification mechanisms fail to detect glaring irregularities in time. At the heart of the problem lies the custom milling system, where government agencies entrust private millers with procured grain. This model, while efficient on paper, is vulnerable in practice. Weak monitoring, delayed audits and over-reliance on manual record-keeping create fertile ground for diversion. The fact that earlier inspections reportedly found the stocks intact deepens suspicion of collusion or compromised oversight. Equally worrying is the delayed administrative response. FIRs were registered



only after pressure from farmer groups. It raises questions about institutional accountability. If such large-scale

larger problem.

discrepancies can remain undetected — or ignored — it undermines confidence not just in enforcement agencies but also in the broader procurement framework. The implications extend far beyond one district. Paddy meant for the Public Distribution System is not just a commodity; it is a pillar of food security. Its diversion represents both fiscal loss and a direct threat to welfare delivery. In a region central to India's MSP operations, such lapses expose vulnerabilities that could be far more widespread. What is needed is not piecemeal action but systemic reform that includes real-time digital tracking, independent audits and strict accountability for both millers and officials. Without structural correction, the Kurukshetra episode may well prove to be only the visible edge of a much

Caste bias persists after conversion

Supreme Court verdict seems to reaffirm a sociologically flawed understanding of caste

WHAT happens when a person at the lower end of the caste hierarchy decides to join a religious order other than Hinduism? In an effort to answer this question, sociologist IP Desai undertook a study of Dalit converts to Christianity in rural Gujarat in the early 1970s. Not surprisingly, he found that although the new converts had access to a place of worship — the church — it did not change their position in the rural society. Those belonging to the Hindu "upper castes" did not care a hoot about these people. It did not matter to them as long as the "untouchables" continued to do the jobs they were assigned as per the normative order of caste. More importantly, even though the untouchables may have nominally been Hindus — say, for the purpose of reporting during a Census — those belonging to the rural upper castes never saw them as co-religionists. The "untouchables" were, anyway, not allowed to enter Hindu temples or be part of Hindu congregations in villages. Caste is not an attribute or identity that an individual or a group can choose on the basis of what they perceive to be good for them. It is a relationship embedded within hierarchy, a power structure founded on the principle or ideology of exclusion. It shapes everyday social, economic and political life across the subcontinent. From agrarian landscapes to urban settlements and democratic political/electoral processes, it continues to matter even in modern times. Though its forms and intensity vary across regions, its core attribute — the practice of untouchability, the culture of humiliation and hierarchy — seems to persist.



This has been found to be true even in regions or villages where Hinduism is not the dominant religion. The position of "untouchables" in a Muslim-dominated village of eastern Uttar Pradesh or in Tamil Nadu is not likely to be any different from that in a neighbouring Hindu-dominated village. Practices of caste-based exclusion and untouchability have been reported even from Buddhist villages of Sri Lanka and Sindh villages of Pakistan. Though untouchability had been prevalent

for centuries, it acquired a new salience during the colonial period. The British introduced a process of enumeration, the Census. To undertake such an exercise, they needed to classify the innumerable jatis into manageable categories. For this purpose, they invoked the Varna hierarchy. They also introduced new

categories, such as Backward Classes, clubbing all untouchable castes. They made special provisions for the welfare and representation of these people in the emerging political system.

However, for the colonial rulers, caste was primarily a Hindu religious practice. Even when they found evidence to the contrary, such as during the Census of Punjab, they did not revise their theories on the Indian caste system. These "theories", derived from Western orientalist writings on India, were nearly all based on a select reading of Brahmanical texts.

While inserting special provisions for the protection and representation of the "untouchable" castes in the Constitution, members of the Constituent Assembly accepted the colonial view of caste. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950 unambiguously mentions that "no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste."

he Sikh members of the Constituent Assembly had to vigorously pursue the inclusion of "Ramdasi, Kabirpanthi, Mazhabi and Sikligar castes into the Punjab list of SCs, whether they profess the Hindu or the Sikh religion." Likewise, the Mahar converts to Buddhism were added to the Maharashtra SC list in 1990.

While Sikh and Buddhist "untouchable" castes were added to the SC category, the same has not been the case with Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam. Unlike Sikhism and Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are marked as "foreign" religions. This distinction, too, draws on the British colonial classification of the

religions of the subcontinent into "Indic" and "non-Indic" faith systems.

In a judgment delivered on March 24, a two-member Bench of the Supreme Court reaffirmed this position. This was in response to a review petition by a Madiga Dalit Christian, who had alleged that an "upper caste" Hindu of Andhra Pradesh assaulted him; he pleaded that his case be considered under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Rejecting the plea, the Court said the provision could not be invoked because "the theological foundation of Christianity does not recognise or incorporate the institution of caste". Interestingly, the judgment goes on to suggest that a person belonging to a jati listed among the SCs can claim the benefits conferred under the constitutional provision, provided the person renounces Christianity, "reconverts to the original religion" and is able to produce evidence of being accepted back into the community. While this may indeed be legally valid, it reiterates a rather static and sociologically flawed understanding of caste, as also of the Hindu religion.

A lot has changed over the past seven-and-a-half decades in social life in terms of caste, as also in the self-imagination of Hinduism. Even those among the ex-untouchable castes who continue to identify themselves as Hindus rarely subscribe to the theological dictum of Manusmriti. Nor do the non-Dalit Hindus always see the so-called theological foundations of the caste system as a matter of their faith or an entitlement. However, what is particularly notable is that the judgment also has a message for those who have converted from Hinduism and hope to continue availing the benefits of being a Scheduled Caste, even as they endure oppression under the caste system. Even more importantly, this may serve as a reminder to them at a time when the country is getting ready for the Census.

Father and two children killed in road accident in Muzaffarnagar

Muzaffarnagar.(Agency)

A tragic road accident in the Titawi police station area of Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh claimed the lives of a father and his two young children after a speeding school bus ramed into their motorcycle on Wednesday morning.

The incident occurred near a bridge before Haidernagar village. According to police and local sources, Papan (40), son of Prakash, was travelling on a motorcycle with his wife Pooja and their two children—five-year-old Abhi and eight-year-old Radhika. The family was on their way to a temple in Baghra to offer prayers.

Eyewitnesses reported that a speeding school bus lost control and collided with the bike, throwing all four family members onto the road. Papan and the two children died on the spot, while Pooja sustained critical injuries and was rushed to a nearby hospital, where her condition remains serious.

At the time of the accident, schoolchildren were present inside the bus. After the collision, the driver allegedly drove the bus into a nearby field in an apparent attempt to flee but was caught by local residents and handed over to the police.

Villagers gathered at the scene shortly after the accident, expressing anger over the incident. Police arrived promptly, took custody of the bodies, and sent them for post-mortem examination.

Authorities stated that the bus driver is being interrogated, and an investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the accident.

Bhopal: Murder accused arrested after short encounter

Bhopal.(Agency)

Police in Bhopal on Wednesday arrested an absconding murder accused after a short encounter in the forest area of Kerwa in the Ratibad region on the outskirts of the state capital. The accused Asif alias Bam is a history sheeter and was absconding for the past three days after he allegedly killed a tea shop owner Vijay Mewada by stabbing him in the stomach late night Sunday in the Ashoka Garden area.

The police got a tip off today that Asif is hiding in the jungle at Kerwa area.

A police team reached the spot in the afternoon and surrounded him. According to Ratibad police station in-charge Anurag Lal, Asif fired at the police team in a bid to escape. The police fired in self-defence and a bullet hit Asif in the leg. He fell to the ground and the police arrested him. Asif was taken to the Hamidia hospital and admitted there for treatment.

Two more murder co-accused, Imran and Farmaan were arrested on Monday. Meanwhile, Hindu organisations had been staging protests continuously demanding the arrest and stringent action against Asif Bam.

On Wednesday afternoon too, a huge rally was organised towards the CM House in Bhopal, but police prevented the protesters from moving towards the destined point.

The timing of Asif's short-encounter coincided with the rally taken out by the Hindu organisations.

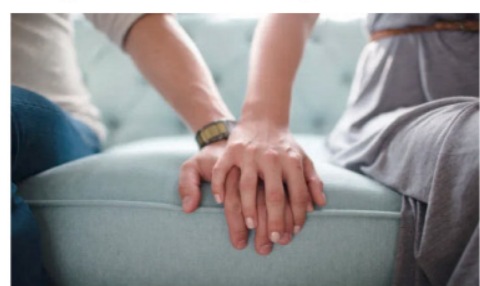
Bengaluru: Man alleges wife coerced him into intimate acts with friend, accuses her of harassment

Bengaluru.(Agency)

A shocking complaint lodged by a man against his wife has come to light in Bengaluru. In the complaint, the 37-year-old man alleged that his wife harassed her and forcibly evicted him from his wife. The complainant, a resident of Nagarbhavi, also accused her of sexual misconduct and cheating on him. He also complained that his in-laws constantly interfered in his marital life, which led to discord between him and his wife.

What the FIR said

The FIR said that the complainant married the 31-year-old woman at a private venue in



Bengaluru. The couple then moved into a villa in Jakkuru. The man accused his mother-in-law, Asha, of restricting his access to the house. He alleged that she coerced him to leave her daughter so she could find a more suitable partner. The complainant claimed that his father-in-law sent people to his house to threaten him.

The man also alleged that his wife scoffed at his financial status, while telling him that he couldn't support her lifestyle. The complainant said his wife spent time with 'rich' friends and partied and drank with them frequently. He also levelled allegations of sexual harassment and mental cruelty against his wife.

Northeast Frontier Railway Registers Strong Freight Performance in FY 2025-26

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 02nd April: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has also recorded a commendable performance in freight operations during the last financial year, underscoring its vital role in supporting economic growth in the northeastern region. Leveraging improved infrastructure, better terminal management and close coordination with stakeholders, NFR ensured efficient and timely transportation of key commodities such as food grains, fertilizers, coal, cement and petroleum products. The zone focused on enhancing loading efficiency and turnaround time, resulting in higher freight throughput and improved asset utilization. Special emphasis was laid on customer-centric initiatives, including streamlined booking processes, real-time tracking and development of freight terminals, which helped attract new traffic streams and strengthen existing partnerships with industries. NFR achieved a total freight loading of 11.4 million tonnes (MT) in FY 2025-26, registering a 6% growth over FY 2024-25. This consistent growth highlights the zone's sustained focus on improving logistics efficiency and enhancing freight

capacity. Among commodities, Petroleum Oil and Lubricants (POL) recorded its best increases, contributing to the overall growth in freight traffic. Freight handling



ever performance, with 1,488 rakes loaded during the year. Other key commodities such as cement, stone chips, dolomite and bamboo chips also registered notable

operations also showed significant improvement, with total unloading of freight rakes increasing by 688 rakes—from 12,346 rakes in FY 2024-25 to 13,034 rakes in FY

2025-26. This growth underscores improved terminal productivity and better coordination across divisions. Additionally, unloading performance across major commodities recorded encouraging gains. Automobile traffic grew by 22%, while cement unloading increased by 18%. Stone chips, food grains (FCI) and fertilizer segments also posted positive growth trends. At the terminal level, several stations demonstrated strong performance in unloading activities. Baihata emerged as the top performer with a 24% increase, followed by Changsari and STAR terminal, each registering an 18% growth. Terminals like Azara and Jirania also showed steady improvement, further strengthening the zone's logistics network. The overall performance of NFR during FY 2025-26 highlights its continued commitment to operational excellence, infrastructure development and customer-focused initiatives. With sustained momentum across key freight segments and terminals, NFR remains focused on further enhancing its freight capabilities to support economic growth in the Northeast region and further boost freight performance in the coming years.

Watch: Hydraa reclaims playground worth Rs 100 crore in Hyderabad's old city

The actions taken by hydraa include demolition of five under-construction G+3 buildings, removal of two single-room structures.

Hyderabad.(Agency)

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Monitoring Agency (Hydraa) carried out a major demolition drive in Shastripuram colony, Mailardevpally in Rangareddy district on Wednesday, April 1, allegedly to protect public assets.

The drive targeted a 188-acre HUDA approved layout and demolished illegal constructions on the land, reports said. The agency reclaimed 6,500 yards of land designated for a public playground, which is allegedly worth Rs 100 crore.

The actions taken by hydraa include demolition of five under-construction G+3 buildings, removal of two single-room structures built by encroachers but spared two existing buildings where families were already residing. Encroachers had reportedly illegally occupied the land over the last three

years, selling plots via notarized documents. The GHMC had issued notices and demolition orders in 2024 but unauthorized



construction continued in defiance of the law.

Major crackdown by hydraa: Besides this, the agency has been active in cracking down against encroachments on

lakes, parks, drains and government lands across the city on Tuesday.

The agency removed encroachments including 8.24 acres of Nagireddy lake in Manchirevula village, Gandipet mandal, Rangareddy district. The lake was being swallowed by real-estate interests, who put up massive tin-sheet barricades around the lake, officials said. A 20 foot tin-sheet wall was placed around the encroached space by the real estate firm. On the other side too, the lake was encroached to the extent of three acres by another realtor, while more than an acre of land was occupied by a political leader after which it was plotted and sold to others, a press note read. Similar actions were taken against

encroachers in Bowrampet in Dundigal-Gandimaisamma mandal of Medchal-Malkajgiri district, Aushapur village in Ghatkesar mandal.

Forgot your charger or book before boarding? Now get it in minutes via Blinkit at Mumbai airport

This means passengers can now order from a selection of over 2,500 items, including phone chargers, books, gifts, and much more, directly through the app while inside the airport on the Blinkit app.

Mumbai.(Agency)

At Mumbai airport, the anxiety of realising, "Oh no, I forgot my charger or book!" is finally coming to an end. The quick-commerce platform Blinkit launched its services at Mumbai's Terminal 2 (Domestic Departures) of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Wednesday, promising to deliver all the last-minute needs of flyers.

Passengers can now order from a selection of over 2,500 items, including phone chargers, books, gifts, and much more, directly through the Blinkit app while inside the airport. Orders will be delivered right within the terminal itself.

"Today we are launching Blinkit inside the Mumbai Airport! Specifically Terminal 2 (Domestic departures) of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport," CEO Albinder Shindsa announced on X. Walker Team to deliver orders

Launched in partnership with Adani Airports, this initiative features a dedicated "Walker Team" deployed by the company within the airport premises to deliver orders directly to



passengers. "Through our partnership with Adani Airports, travellers can now order from a selection of 2500+ products like phone chargers, books, gifts and more on the Blinkit app. Orders will be delivered within the terminal by our dedicated team of walkers," he added.

This is the first airport in the world to have a service of this kind. "We are excited to deliver all the last-minute needs of our customers," the CEO said.

What about security?

The Blinkit CEO's post drew mixed reactions on social media, with some raising doubts about the credibility of the announcement. "I hope this is not a prank on April fool's day," a user wrote. "Now everyone has the permission to just forget 1 or 2 things while packing," another said on X.

However, not everyone is pleased. Some believe this could hit the business models of existing retail outlets within the airport, as items that were previously sold there at premium prices will now be easily available via the app. "This seems like an April Fool's prank as it will almost kill the revenue model of shops at Airport. A major win for public, but too good to be true. I will consider it as April Fool's Day," a user wrote.

Uttarakhand Weather: Rain and snowfall expected in hilly districts like Uttarkashi & Pithoragarh; heat & humidity trouble plains

Uttarakhand's weather is showing two extremes today. While rain and snowfall are expected in hilly districts like Uttarkashi and Pithoragarh, the plains including Dehradun are facing heat and humidity. The Meteorological Department says this pattern will continue until April 7, keeping conditions unpredictable.

Dehradun.(Agency)

According to the Meteorological Centre, light rain and snowfall are expected in several hilly districts today, while the plains are struggling with rising heat and humidity.

Districts such as Uttarkashi, Rudrapur, Chamoli, Bageshwar, and Pithoragarh are likely to receive light rain and thundershowers. Areas above 3,500 meters may even witness snowfall. This has kept the atmosphere cool in the higher regions, giving residents and tourists some relief from the heat.

The weather in these districts is pleasant during the day, but the drop in temperature at night is making conditions chilly. These fluctuations are increasing the

risk of seasonal illnesses like colds and fevers.

Dry Weather in Other Districts

While the hills are enjoying rain and snow, other districts of Uttarakhand are expected to remain dry. The Meteorological Department has predicted that this pattern will continue until April 7, with light to moderate rain in Dehradun on April 3 and similar conditions in the hills until next week.

Heat and Humidity in the Plains

In contrast, the plains including Dehradun, Haridwar, and Udham Singh Nagar are facing scorching heat. The bright sun has made

daytime conditions uncomfortable, while occasional cloud cover has increased



humidity. People are sweating and finding it difficult to step outside during the afternoon. Residents say that while a breeze sometimes brings temporary relief, the humidity remains

persistent. The combination of heat and moisture is making daily life challenging, especially for those working outdoors.

Temperature Fluctuations Predicted

According to the Meteorological Department, maximum temperatures in the plains remained normal over the past 24 hours, while those in the hills were below normal or normal. In the coming days, maximum temperatures in many parts of the state are expected to

rise by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius. After this brief rise, temperatures are likely to drop again by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius over the next two to three days. These fluctuations

will keep the weather unstable, forcing people to adapt to changing conditions.

Public Response

People in the plains are waiting for rain to bring relief from the heat and humidity. Meanwhile, those in the hills are enjoying the cool weather but are also cautious about the sudden cold at night. Tourists visiting the higher regions are advised to carry warm clothing and follow safety guidelines. With rain and snowfall cooling the hills and heat troubling the plains, residents are experiencing two extremes. The Meteorological Department's forecast until April 7 suggests that this dual pattern will continue, keeping the state's weather unpredictable.

AAP MLA's sarpanch brother-in-law booked for setting belongings of Dalit families on fire

Amritsar.(Agency)

The Punjab Police Wednesday said that they booked the sarpanch of Veinpuri, a village in Tarn Taran, for allegedly setting on fire belonging of two Dalit families. Sarpanch Baldev Singh Gora is the brother-in-law of Aam Aadmi Party's Khadoor Sahib MLA Manjinder Singh Lalpura.

As per the a complaint lodged with the police, Gora allegedly reached the house of the two Dalit families over some issue and set their belongings on fire by pouring petrol. Upon receiving information about the incident, SP (Headquarters) Sukhmanninder Singh, SDM Sanjeev Sharma, and other officials reached the spot. The Goindwal Sahib police has recorded statements of the victim families and registered a case against six individuals, including Gora.

According to FIR, one Dalbir Kaur said that she lives in the village with her son Lovepreet Singh. Late in the evening, while she was alone at home, Sarpanch Gora, Sukhwinder Singh Sukha, Gurbans Singh Ganji, Jobanjeet Singh, Alu, and three-four unidentified persons, carrying weapons, entered her house. According to the complainant, Gora inquired about her son, who was not at home. On his orders, his associates forcibly entered the rooms, set fire to her belonging by sprinkling petrol they had brought in bottles, and fled. Her relatives arrived after hearing the commotion, and extinguished the fire.

Dalbir Kaur added that she learned they had also entered and set fire to the belongings of Sukhdev Singh alias Sonu, son of Shingara Singh, in the village. She explained that a minor dispute had taken place a few days ago between her son Lovepreet Singh and Gora.

SP Sukhmanninder Singh, who along with DSP Atul Soni, and SHO Prabhjeet Singh, arrived at the scene, said that a case has been registered against the sarpanch, his five associates, and 2-3 unidentified persons under the relevant sections of SC/ST Act and Arms Act. Former MLA from Khadoor Sahib constituency, Ramnajeet Singh Sikki, met the victims. SDM, Khadoor Sahib, Sanjeev Kumar Sharma reviewed the situation at the village and spoke with the victim families. He said the administration stands with them and is committed to ensuring justice.

SC hauls Mamata govt over the coals after SIR officers held hostage for 9 hours



Seven judicial officers, including three women, involved in the SIR process in poll-bound West Bengal were held hostage by a group of protesters over the deletion of names from the electoral rolls.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Seven judicial officers involved in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process in poll-bound West Bengal were allegedly gheraoed for around nine hours in Malda district, with the Supreme Court expressing concern over the incident and directing the deployment of central forces for their safety. Calling Bengal the "most polarised state", the Supreme Court called the incident pre-planned and motivated while directing the Election Commission to entrust the probe to either the NIA or CBI. A massive protest erupted outside the Kaliachak II Block Development Office (BDO) on Wednesday over the deletion of

names from the electoral rolls during the SIR. The protesters first sought a meeting with the judicial officers. However, their request was denied. Around 4 pm, they gheraoed the BDO office, taking the seven judicial officers, including three women, hostage. A five-year-old child of one of the officers was also inside.

HOW WERE THE SIR OFFICERS TAKEN HOSTAGE?

The Election Commission's SIR exercise has become a major flashpoint in the run-up to the Bengal assembly polls. The final voters' list after the SIR process saw over 63 lakh deletions. Another 60 lakh voters were placed "under adjudication". These judicial

officers were involved in reviewing these cases "under adjudication" to decide whether the voters should be retained or deleted from the rolls. This was on directions of the Supreme Court.

Bengal goes to the polls in two phases on April 23 and April 29. Results will be declared on May 4.

The judicial officers were only rescued after nine hours, at around 1 am, by a police team. The protesters also hurled stones at the police van while the officers were being evacuated.

Visuals on social media showed a car's shattered window glass and angry



protesters chasing the police vehicles as the officers were being escorted to safety. However, the protests escalated and spread to nearby areas as well. A group of protesters

also blocked NH 12 with bamboo and furniture. People were also seen burning tyres. Another video showed people cooking on stoves on the street for the protesters, suggesting that they were ready for the long haul.

BJP Bengal president and Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar blamed the Mamata Banerjee-led government for letting the situation get out of hand. He alleged that the judicial officers faced continuous threats and intimidation during the siege. Majumdar, who is steering the BJP in the elections, claimed the agitators also planned to assault the officers.

Girl Killed By Mother, Stick Inserted Inside Private Parts To 'Cure' Brother

A woman in Jharkhand murdered her 12-year-old daughter with the help of her lover after a 'tantrik' (an occultist) advised her to offer a "sacrifice" as a "cure" for her son's illness.

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a chilling case of black magic in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh, a 35-year-old woman has "sacrificed" her teen daughter to "cure" her son, who suffers from some mental and physical sickness. The woman, Reshmi Devi, murdered her 12-year-old daughter with the help of her lover, Bhim Ram, after a 'tantrik' (an occultist), Shanti Devi, advised her to offer a "sacrifice" as a "cure" for her only son's illness and family problems, Hazaribagh Superintendent of Police Anjani Anjan told reporters on Wednesday. Reshmi, who often visited Shanti, was told that since a goddess was believed to possess her daughter, sacrificing her would be the "most auspicious" way to treat her son. She also told the mother that they needed to sacrifice a "virgin girl" to cure the son. Reshmi agreed, and the girl was sacrificed on March 24, the night of Ashtami, the eighth day of the major Hindu festival Navratri, which celebrates Goddess Durga's victory over evil.

While Reshmi held her legs, Bhim Ram strangled her. The 55-year-old 'tantrik' then inserted a wooden stick inside the girl's private parts, and Bhim Ram struck her head to get the blood for the ritual, Anjani Anjan said.

After killing the girl, they buried her body in a garden. The police began investigation when the girl's body was found the next morning.

During the probe, the three tried to mislead the investigators by claiming rape, which was not proved in the postmortem and forensic report, Anjan said. All three have now been arrested. Reshmi Devi and Bhim Ram, 40, were having an affair for about 10 years, Anjan said. Her husband works in Maharashtra and didn't usually visit home, he said. Bhim Ram, 40, also faces allegations of murdering his sister-in-law and another individual, the police officer said.

Delhi Court Dismisses Defamation Case Against Nirmala Sitharaman

New Delhi.(Agency)

A Delhi court on Wednesday dismissed a criminal defamation complaint filed by Lipika Mitra, wife of former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Somnath Bharti, against Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Paras Dalal of the Rouse Avenue Court declined to proceed with the complaint, holding that no grounds were made out to take cognisance of the allegations.

"I do not see anything in this matter to proceed further and I am denying cognisance," the judge said while rejecting the plea.

The complaint, filed by Mitra, had alleged that Sitharaman made defamatory, false and malicious statements concerning her marital life with Bharti during a press conference held on May 17, 2024, in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections. Mitra had contended that the remarks were widely broadcast on television and digital platforms with the intent to tarnish her husband's public image and adversely impact his electoral prospects as an INDIA Bloc candidate from the New Delhi parliamentary constituency. According to the plea, the alleged statements caused Bharti immense mental anguish and inflicted reputational damage not only within India but also internationally, given his status as an IIT Delhi alumnus with a wide global network. Seeking legal recourse, Mitra had urged the court to summon Sitharaman for trial and to restrain her from making or circulating similar statements in the future, along with directions for removal of the purportedly defamatory content from various platforms.

The complainant alleged commission of offences under Sections 356(1) and 356(2) of the BNS, 2023, for allegedly making and publishing defamatory, derogatory, and libelous remarks in print and electronic media against her. However, after considering the material placed on record, the court held that the case did not meet the threshold required for taking cognisance of the alleged offences and dismissed the complaint.

India was minutes away from hitting Pak from sea during Op Sindoor: Navy chief

Speaking at a naval investiture ceremony, Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi said that the Indian forces had reached an advanced stage of readiness during Operation Sindoor before the pause in kinetic actions.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Chief of Navy Staff, Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, on Wednesday said that the Indian Navy was "minutes away" from hitting Pakistan from the sea during Operation Sindoor which took place last year in response to the deadly Pahalgam terror attack which killed 26 people, mostly tourists. Speaking at a naval investiture ceremony in Mumbai, Tripathi said that the Navy decided to halt the maritime strike after Pakistan requested the Indian military to stop the days-long kinetic actions. "It is not a hidden fact any more that we were just minutes away from striking Pakistan from the sea, when they requested a stoppage of kinetic

actions," Admiral Tripathi said on the Navy's role in the operation. Admiral Tripathi also said that the Indian forces had reached an advanced stage of readiness during Operation Sindoor



before the pause in kinetic actions. The remarks came as he presented Yudh Seva Medals to two senior naval

officers for their roles in Operation Sindoor.

According to the Navy chief, the force's actions during the operation strengthened public confidence in its capabilities. He also pointed to a 17-hour overnight embarkation with the Prime Minister along the western seaboard as a showcase of India's maritime strength and operational depth.

"Besides Operation Sindoor and the relentless operational tempo through the year, we were also very proud to showcase the breadth and depth of our operational capabilities to the Prime Minister during a historic 17-hour overnight embarkation with the Indian Navy on the western seaboard," said Admiral Tripathi.

Gautam Adani Visits Ram Temple In Ayodhya With family, Offers Prayers

Gautam Adani was accompanied by his wife, Priti Adani and son Karan Adani.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani on Thursday visited the magnificent Ram Temple in Ayodhya, along with his family. The prominent industrialist, delighted to visit the birthplace of Lord Ram after the temple's inauguration in 2024, offered prayers to Ram Lalla and sought blessings.

Adani's visit to the Ram Mandir coincides with the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations -- the day marking the birth of Lord Hanuman.

Gautam Adani was accompanied by his wife, Priti Adani and son Karan Adani. The Adani family participated in the holy rituals at the temple and offered prayers.

Speaking to the media about Ram Lalla 'darshan', Gautam Adani said, "My family and I had the opportunity to visit

the magnificent Shri Ram Mandir. It is a deeply emotional and proud moment for us. This temple is not just a centre of faith, but also a symbol of India's culture, unity, and self-confidence."



keeping our culture alive. Through the Adani Foundation, efforts are being made to preserve and promote this cultural heritage.

ED raids at I-PAC premises across 3 cities in Bengal coal smuggling case

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday carried out fresh raids at multiple premises linked to political consultancy firm Indian Political Action Committee, or I-PAC, in connection with the West Bengal coal smuggling case.

Raids were underway across Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Delhi as part of the agency's ongoing investigation into the alleged scam.

Officials said several locations associated with I-PAC were being searched simultaneously. The premises of Rishi Raj Singh, one of I-PAC's directors, in Bengaluru also came under the ED's scanner during the operation.

The searches are part of the central agency's continued crackdown in the coal smuggling case, which has seen multiple rounds of raids and arrests in recent years.

I-PAC has been closely involved in shaping election strategies for the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress for the upcoming Bengal Assembly elections.

Earlier in January, the Enforcement Directorate had carried out searches at I-PAC's Kolkata



office and at the premises of its other director, Pratik Jain, as part of the same money laundering probe linked to the alleged multi-crore coal scam. The raids had triggered a major political flashpoint after Mamata Banerjee and several Trinamool leaders stormed into the I-PAC Salt Lake office while the searches were in progress. The ED had claimed that Banerjee removed key evidence, including documents and electronic devices, from the site.

Banerjee, however, rejected the allegations and accused the central agency of exceeding its mandate. The ED later approached the High Court and then the Supreme Court seeking directions for an independent inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), arguing that a neutral central agency is required in view of the alleged interference by the state government.

The central probe agency has claimed that nearly Rs 10 crore in alleged proceeds of crime were funnelled to I-PAC via hawala routes, with the firm receiving payments from the Trinamool Congress for its role in the 2022 Goa Assembly elections.

Malda incident was calculated, motivated: 5 key Supreme Court remarks on Bengal

The Supreme Court criticised the West Bengal government for failing to protect judicial officers during a nine-hour gherao in Malda and described the incident as a calculated attempt to disrupt the electoral process.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Thursday came down heavily on the West Bengal government over the nine-hour gherao of judicial officers in Malda, calling it a "pre-planned, calculative and motivated" attempt to derail the electoral process and demoralise officials.

Seven judicial officers, including three women officials engaged in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, were held inside the Block Development Officer's office as protesters objected to voter deletions. The court also ordered the deployment of central armed forces to ensure their

safety.

Here are five key quotes from the Supreme Court:

"This incident is a brazen attempt not only to browbeat judicial officers but also challenges authority of this Court. It was not routine incident but appears to be calculated, motivated move to demoralise the judicial officers and stop the ongoing process of adjudicating of objections in left out cases," the court said in the order.

"This reflects an abdication of duty by the West Bengal government, and its officers must explain why, despite being informed, they failed to ensure the safe



evacuation of the judicial officers," the court said, with the Chief Justice adding, "till 11 pm your Collector was not there. I had to issue very harsh verbal orders at night." "We will not allow anyone to take the law

into their own hands to create psychological fear among judicial officers performing a solemn duty," the bench said, warning that such actions could amount to criminal contempt. It also criticised what it termed a "criminal failure" of the state administration.

"Unfortunately in your state each one speaks political language and this is the most polarised state. You are forcing us to make observations. Do you think we are not aware of who are the miscreants? I was monitoring everything till 2 am. Very very unfortunate," the Chief Justice told the West Bengal Advocate General.

NEWS BOX

What's gone wrong with Varun Chakravarthy? KKR head coach explains spinner's slump

New Delhi. (Agency)

Varun Chakravarthy's dip in form has started to raise questions within Kolkata Knight Riders' campaign, but head coach Abhishek Nayar has made it clear that the franchise continues to back their mystery spinner. Despite a run of underwhelming performances, Nayar remains confident that Chakravarthy will find his rhythm again.

The struggles have been visible across formats, with opposition teams increasingly taking him on during crucial phases. However, speaking at the pre-match press conference ahead of KKR's clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad, Nayar insisted that the spinner is mentally in a strong space and well-equipped to navigate this phase. Over the years, he's gone through a lot of adversity. As a franchise, as a support staff, we back him. I don't think there's any issue. But yes, teams



are playing him well. It doesn't mean he can't come back. It just means it's another challenge in his life, like he's had before," Nayar said. "We are trying and we are hoping, and in every way backing him. I hope the fans of the world do too. Whether it's this game or in the future, it's inevitable that he will bounce back like he has in the past. I honestly believe mentally he's in a very good space — actually in a better space than he's been in previous years," he added.

Chakravarthy's recent outings, however, reflect the challenges he is currently facing. After a difficult start to the IPL against Mumbai Indians, where Rohit Sharma and Ryan Rickelton took him apart for 0 for 48, the pressure around his role has only grown. Even in the subsequent game against Sunrisers Hyderabad, he was tested in the middle overs as batters looked to disrupt his control early. **WHAT HAS GONE WRONG WITH VARUN CHAKRAVARTHY?**

A closer look at Chakravarthy's recent numbers highlights the dip. During the T20 World Cup, he went at an economy rate of 9.24, even though he finished with 14 wickets, joint-highest alongside Jasprit Bumrah.

'The thing with plans is they never unfold perfectly': Kane Williamson on modern T20s

MUMBAI. (Agency)

They say a good coach changes a game, while a great coach changes lives. So when Tom Moody, former Australian cricketer turned super coach, and New Zealand batting great Kane Williamson, both associated with the Lucknow Super Giants, agree to sit down together and talk cricket, it's not only a perfect peek into the world of modern T20 strategising but a masterclass in coaching philosophy. Both were here in Lucknow as Times Sport Guest Editors. Both seemed delighted to share their ideas. We simply sat in rapt attention as they spoke. Excerpts from the conversation...

In franchise coaching, where you have a two-month window, how do you go about shaping a broader vision for the unit?

Moody (global director of cricket, LSG): It's realistically a three-year window after a mega auction. We have a philosophy where we're wanting to make sure we're caring for players beyond the two months, whether that is physical or mental skill development, nutrition, strength or conditioning.

So you give them homework?



Moody: No. We give them opportunities to develop. Some players embrace it. Some take their time. Most cricketers are brought up focusing purely on the special development of one skill, whether it is playing the cover drive better or bowling the outswinger better. There's more components to the game and we look to develop those. So now the outswinger bowler has an inswinger, slower ball, bouncer, yorker. Plus you've got a good understanding of your best strength and conditioning program, how to look after yourself from a dietary perspective. There's many things that make an elite athlete. Skills are a small part. Kane, you recently retired from T20s. How has the transition been? Do great batters necessarily make good coaches? Williamson (strategic advisor, LSG): I don't think they always do but I'm excited at the opportunity. I still get the opportunity to be a part of the IPL. Players are here for a prime two-month window but how do you get your players to perform on that big stage.

IPL 2026 Play Of The Day: Eureka! Badani's Stubbs call over Miller stuns LSG

IPL 2026: The LSG vs DC game was decided outside the field as Hemang Badani had his eureka moment of sending Tristan Stubbs in ahead of David Miller. The move stunned LSG as DC romped to the win in the end with Stubbs guiding Rizvi and allowing him to play his natural game.

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Lucknow Super Giants vs Delhi Capitals match at the Ekana Stadium on Wednesday had several memorable moments. In an age of high-scoring thrillers where fans chew their nails till the last moment, the LSG vs DC clash on April 1 was blessed with the old-school charm of a low-scoring affair. The Many mini moments came together to complete the game, several of them standing

out as contenders for the Play of the Day. To give you some examples, the run-out of Rishabh Pant is one we can start with, followed by how Lungi Ngidi channelled his inner DJ Bravo to bamboozle Nicholas Pooran. It is always nice to see T Natarajan back on the field, and his spell deserves a special mention. When it came to the second innings, Mohammed Shami and Mohsin Khan's spells, along with Prince Yadav's double-wicket over, gave LSG hope of a win. Bowlers dominated, zipping it off the pitch, while the batters were forced to grind it out. So, which one stood out? If you are new to this, at India Today, we go beyond the match report. In this story - the IPL Play of the Day - we identify and analyse the exact moment, the phase of play that won a team their game. Despite Prince Yadav's double wicket over at the start of the match, DC pulled off a masterstroke with Sameer Rizvi. When everyone expected Ashutosh Sharma to come in, they sent Rizvi in, someone who they have shown a lot of faith in the last two

seasons. A 70 from him in his own backyard was enough to get DC over the line. But these are moments 'on' the field. At times, matches are won by ones 'off' it as well. And on Wednesday night, it was all about that one moment, a call taken off the field by Delhi

bowled and the rest just followed suit right after the dismissal of KL Rahul. It seemed like the red soil pitch suddenly looked like it had a demon inside, who had enough of seeing batters make a lot of runs. DC kept losing wickets in a flurry. Nitish Rana, Pathum Nissanka failed to make an impact on their DC debuts, prompting Axar Patel to come in. He was cleaned up by Prince and the score was 26 for four in 4.3 overs. At this time, DC had the option of sending in either David Miller or Tristan Stubbs. If you remember, it was Miller who changed the game for South Africa not so long ago in their Super 8 game against India in Ahmedabad. That day the Proteas were in trouble and needed a lot of help and Miller stepped up.

Ideally during this time, you feel like going with the experienced man and Miller seemed to be the safe bet. This is when the cameras caught Badani. It looked like he was taking a stroll near the pavilion lost in his thoughts. His team was crumbling and they needed some inspiration.



coach Hemang Badani.

BADANI MAKES A DASH TO MEET MILLER

So, it seemed like LSG were making a lot of inroads into the Delhi batting lineup with their use of pacers. The way that Shami

Harry Brook, Jacob Bethell escape with warning after Wellington nightclub incident

New Delhi. (Agency)

England white-ball skipper Harry Brook and star batter Jacob Bethell have been issued warnings following an investigation into their conduct during England's tour of New Zealand last year. The incident, involving an altercation with a nightclub bouncer in Wellington, has now been formally addressed by the authorities.

The episode dates back to October, on the eve of an ODI, when Brook was struck during a confrontation outside a nightclub. While he initially claimed to be alone, he later admitted he had misrepresented the situation to protect teammates. The matter was investigated by the Cricket Regulator, which has now concluded its findings. "As a consequence of those investigations, the Regulator has issued a caution notice to Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell in relation to their conduct during that night," a Cricket Regulator statement read. "No further action is to be taken by the Regulator in relation to Josh

Tongue," the Cricket Regulator said. The incident had drawn attention not just for the altercation itself but also for the delayed



clarity around it. Brook was later fined and handed a final warning, with details emerging only after England's Ashes campaign in Australia, which they lost 4-1. The controversy also came amid broader scrutiny of England's off-field behaviour during that tour, including reports of

excessive drinking during a mid-series break. Brook, 27, later issued a public apology, admitting that fans had "every right to be annoyed" with his actions.

WHAT WAS ENGLAND'S WELLINGTON

The incident took place during a night out in Wellington, where Brook, Bethell and Josh Tongue were present ahead of a one-day international. Brook was involved in a confrontation with a nightclub bouncer and was struck during the exchange. In the immediate aftermath, he stated that he had been alone, but later clarified that other teammates had been present and that he had chosen not to reveal that initially.

The Cricket Regulator found that both Brook and Bethell had breached professional conduct regulations, leading to caution notices being issued. No action was taken against England pacer Josh Tongue, who was not part of the ODI squad at the time but had been training with the team.

Tuchel says Foden not guaranteed a place in England's World Cup squad

LONDON. (Agency)

England coach Thomas Tuchel has confirmed that Phil Foden is not a sure thing to make the World Cup squad. The Manchester City player started both of England's friendly games in the final camp before Tuchel selects his squad for this summer's tournament. England lost to Japan 1-0 on Tuesday at Wembley Stadium, after last Friday's 1-1 draw with Uruguay.

The 25-year-old Foden played as a number 10 against Uruguay before being used as a "false nine" against Japan.

Tuchel said Foden was "excellent in camp" but "he struggles to show it on the pitch." The German coach added: "Well, it's not a guarantee that he will come."

Cole Palmer also failed to impress on Tuesday. With Morgan Rogers and Jude Bellingham other options as attacking midfielders, Palmer and Foden face anxious waits to see if they make the plane for the tournament.



The new unplayable: Lungi Ngidi's slower ball nears Bumrah yorker status

IPL 2026, LSG vs DC: On a night built for raw pace in Lucknow, Lungi Ngidi's slower ball stole the show by outfoxing Nicholas Pooran with a devilish late dip. Much like a Jasprit Bumrah yorker, it is becoming a piece of unplayable inevitability.

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

It was meant to be a battle of pace in Lucknow on Wednesday. Mohammed Shami, Mohsin Khan and Prince Yadav led the charge for Lucknow Super Giants. They still had

Mayank Yadav, the 150-plus wunderkind, and Naman Tiwari, a 20-year-old who can touch 145 kph, on the bench.

Delhi Capitals were not short on speed either. Lungi Ngidi, Mukesh Kumar and T Natarajan formed their core, while J&K sensation and Ranji Trophy winner Auqib Nabi waited in the wings. The red-soil pitch at the Ekana Stadium was the perfect stage. The ball moved in the air and off the seam, making batting a grind. It would only get tougher in the second innings when LSG unleashed raw pace.

LSG vs DC, IPL 2026: HIGHLIGHTS | SCORECARD

But that is not what we are here for. We are here for a slower ball. A Lungi Ngidi slower ball, one that is beginning to carry the same inevitability as Jasprit Bumrah's. Ngidi, like Bumrah, wears a smile that wins you over. His slower ball does the opposite. It deceives. It embarrasses.



THE SLOWER ONE TO POORAN

On Wednesday, Nicholas Pooran, one of the finest T20 batters in the game, was at the striker's end. Ngidi was into his second over, having conceded 10 in his first. Axar Patel brought him back despite T Natarajan striking in the previous over, removing Ayush Badoni.

There was a clear plan: Ngidi to Pooran.

LSG were 57 for 3 at the end of the eighth over, having already lost Rishabh Pant, sent up to

open, Aiden Markram and Badoni. If Pooran stayed for five overs, the early momentum would slip. Axar knew it.

So Ngidi came back.

He was hit for six by Mitchell Marsh off the third ball. He did not react. Marsh took a single the next ball.

Pooran was on strike.

The slower ball came. It almost felt like it never did. Ngidi's arm came through at full pace. His fingers worked from behind the ball. The speed gun registered 112.3 kph, more than 25 kph slower than his stock delivery. Pooran appeared to have read the change of pace. He was waiting for it. But as the ball travelled, it hit an invisible wall. It dipped sharply at the last moment. Pooran's weight went forward too early, his bat was stuck in front, and he was left tangled as the ball slipped through the gap between bat and pad to shatter the stumps.



Choudhary revealed that Mayank is fully fit and the decision to play him rests with the captain and the team management.

"He is fit. The Rest is team management and the captain and how they are planning to use him," said Mukul. Mayank last played for LSG in the IPL in May 2025.

MUKUL ON PANT'S ADVICE

Mukul has been slotted in to be LSG's finisher this season and despite a slow start, he said that he has the backing of the team management and captain Rishabh Pant. The hard-hitting batter said that Pant told him to back himself fully and not take too much pressure and play his natural game. "Yes, when we had pre-season camp in Chennai, he spoke. He said don't take too much pressure, we will back you fully. Play your natural game. According to situation, you keep adding things. Even after that also, he says same thing — no need to take pressure, just do what you think, play your game," said Mukul.

Markets sink as Sensex drops 1,300 points after Trump's speech on Iran war

MORBI.(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices tanked on Thursday as investor sentiment dampened over President Donald Trump's fresh speech on Iran war, mentioning the US will hit Iran hard in the coming weeks. "We're going to hit them extremely hard. Over the next two to three weeks, we're going to bring them back to the Stone Age, where they belong," Trump said. He added that Iranian oil infrastructure remains a possible target, saying the US "could hit their oil" if needed. At the same time, the US President said diplomatic channels remain open, noting that discussions are ongoing as Washington weighs its next steps.

The S&P BSE Sensex tumbled 1,401.01 points to 71,733.32, while the NSE Nifty50 tanked 439.55 points to 22,239.85 as of 9:27 am.

Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said that with President Trump's declaration 'we are going to hit Iran extremely hard in the next two to three weeks', market sentiments have again turned negative.

"Brent crude spiked around 5% to \$105 and the US 10-year bond yield again firmed up to 4.36 percent negatively impacting gold and silver prices, though marginally," he added. After the opening bell, HCL Technologies Ltd was the only stock in the green among the early movers, rising 0.08%.

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd saw the sharpest fall, dropping 4.52%. Indigo Ltd declined 3.93%, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd was down 3.52%, NTPC Ltd slipped 3.19%, and Eternal Ltd fell 3.13%, showing broad-based weakness in early trade. Meanwhile, FPIs continued selling heavily with a sell figure of Rs 8331 crores on April 1st. The high crude price, the widening trade deficit, the fear of declining remittances and sustained FPI selling are acting cumulatively to put high pressure on the rupee which continues to decline despite RBI's decisions on restrictions on dollar futures deals," said Vijayakumar.

Rupee rebounds from record low; gains 1.6 pc to 93.19 against US dollar

New Delhi.(Agency)

The rupee recovered 151 paise from its record low level to trade at 93.19 against the US dollar in early deals on Thursday, backed by the Reserve Bank's move to restrict banks' net open position in the onshore forward delivery market.

The domestic unit, however, faced pressure due to unabated withdrawal of foreign capital, strengthening dollar and rising crude oil prices amid volatile geopolitical situation, forex analysts said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 94.62 and rose sharply to 93.19 against the US dollar in early deals, registering a gain of 151 paise or 1.6 per cent from its previous close. The local currency breached the 95 level on Monday before closing at 94.70 versus the greenback. It had settled at a historic low of 94.84 against dollar on Friday, prompting the RBI to intervene. Through its circular dated March 27, 2026, RBI capped the net open position on the Indian rupee for banks at USD 100 million, mandating compliance by April 10. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.32 per cent higher at 99.77. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading at USD 106.06 per barrel, up 4.84 per cent, in futures trade.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex tumbled 1,312.91 points or 1.80 per cent to 71,821.41 in early trade, while the Nifty slumped 410.45 points or 1.81 per cent to 22,383.40. Foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 8,331.15 crore on a net basis on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"The high crude price, the widening trade deficit, the fear of declining remittances and sustained FPI selling are acting cumulatively to put high pressure on the rupee," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited.

Auto cos cite cost pressure amid strong dispatches

New Delhi.(Agency)

Major car makers have reported doubledigit growth in wholesale dispatches in March. While the conflict in West Asia has not dampened consumer demand in India, it has increased the cost pressure, companies said. Dispatches in last financial year (2025-26) also remained healthy. Several auto makers, including Tata Motors, JSW MG, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi have already announced price hikes from April 1, citing higher input and logistics costs, with increases ranging between 0.5% and 2%. Maruti Suzuki is also seeking to raise prices. Industry estimates (provided by Tata Motors and Maruti Suzuki) showed total passenger vehicle dispatches rose to about 47 lakh units in FY26 from 43.3 lakh in FY25, showing a growth of 8.2%. Maruti Suzuki reported domestic sales of 18.2 lakh units in 2025-26. M&M recorded strong growth to sell 6.6 lakh units in FY26 to overtake Tata Motors and Hyundai, which sold 6.3 lakh units and 5.8 lakh units respectively. Despite strong demand, companies flagged rising costs due to the uncertain geopolitical situation. "Cost pressures are the only headwind we are facing and we need to take a call on how much cost we need to pass on to the customer... right now we are absorbing the cost, but we cannot keep on absorbing it," Partho Banerjee, head of marketing and sales, told TOI. Industry executives said longer shipping routes and component costs are adding to pressure, though there was no change in production plans. Gaurav Vangaal, associate director at S&P Global Mobility, said March volumes were boosted by year-end targets and festive demand but warned of cost pressures ahead. "Rising input costs, a weaker rupee and supply chain disruptions are set to weigh on demand in the months ahead," he said.

India's retail boom is hiding a Rs 2,000 crore problem

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's organised retail sector may be growing fast, but beneath the surface, a costly operational gap is quietly eating into profits. According to a report by ClickPost, a logistics intelligence platform that tracks delivery and supply chain data, inefficiencies in internal logistics are creating what it calls an "invisible tax" of over Rs 2,000 crore every year. The findings are based on data from 48 omnichannel brands using its platform, covering more than 15,000 stores and 7.2 million shipments between January 2025 and January 2026. REAL BOTTLENECK INSIDE THE NETWORK

Retailers have become highly efficient at delivering products to customers. But moving inventory within their own networks is still slow and messy.

This includes shifting unsold goods between stores and warehouses. Delays, manual processes and poor coordination mean inventory takes longer to move, locking up working capital.

The problem becomes obvious during peak

sales. In one case, a 150-store fashion brand saw the time taken to return unsold inventory jump from 0.2 days to 13 days during end-of-season sales.

In January alone, the brand handled Rs 6 crore worth of returns, or 72% of its seasonal movement. Delays tied up Rs 2.6 crore in working capital. Even after the peak, timelines stayed high at six days, showing this is not just a seasonal issue.

PEAK SEASON CHAOS IS COSTING CRORES

The pressure builds sharply during end-of-season sales, when volumes surge.

The report estimates that around Rs 200 crore was stuck during one sale period due to delays in internal pickups, even though warehouses and logistics partners were ready. Over a year, this rises to more than Rs 2,000 crore across the sector. A big reason is that most brands still rely on manual systems. About 85% use emails and spreadsheets to manage internal logistics, making the process up to five times slower than automated systems.

For large retail chains, this can mean delays

of up to two weeks and losses of Rs 40-50 lakh per sale cycle. Over time, that can cross Rs 1 crore, excluding lost sales.

The gap is also clear in performance.



Manual systems manage only 30-40% successful pickups on the first attempt, compared to over 90% for automated systems.

SHRINKING CYCLES, RISING COMPLEXITY

The problem is getting worse as retail itself changes. Fashion cycles have shrunk from about 90 days to just 15-20 days. That leaves very little room for delays. By the time inventory reaches warehouses, it

may already be outdated.

At the same time, sale periods now see volumes jump three to four times, putting extra strain on already weak systems.

Retail networks have also become more complex, often involving eight or more points such as stores, warehouses and hubs, making coordination harder without automation. These gaps are showing up in daily operations. Invoice errors happen in 10-15% of cases, leading to about 1,500 disputes every month. Teams spend nearly 65 hours a day fixing these issues.

More importantly, delays in moving inventory lead to 8-12% of potential sales being lost during peak periods.

ARs 2,000 CRORE PROBLEM

The report suggests the next big advantage in retail will not come from faster delivery to customers, but from faster movement of inventory within networks. Brands still relying on manual systems are losing between Rs 5 crore and Rs 15 crore every year due to inefficiencies. Across the sector, that adds up to a Rs 2,000 crore hit annually.

Airtel crosses 650 million users, becomes second largest telecom operator globally

New Delhi.(Agency)

Bharti Airtel has announced that it crossed 650 million users. It puts the company right up there as the second-largest telecom operator in the world by mobile users, based on GSMA Intelligence. Most people won't think about that when they open Instagram or make a call. Airtel is just there, doing its job. But once you step back and look at where these users are coming from, especially Africa, the scale starts to feel a bit unreal.

Airtel crosses 650 million users globally

Airtel now operates across India and Africa, and both markets are adding users steadily. Gopal Vittal, the company's Executive Vice Chairman, said, "Achieving the milestone of 650 million customers to be the second largest operator globally is a great responsibility for us to serve our customers better every day." He also said, "This is why we invest in state-of-the-art technologies to not only provide connectivity but to also deliver a safe network." India is still doing most of the

heavy lifting. India alone has over 368 million Airtel users. The company was quick with 5G rollout and is now pushing broadband and TV bundles. In cities, you can actually see the shift.



More homes moving to fiber, fewer relying only on mobile data. Airtel says it connects over 13 million homes with broadband and another 15 million through Digital TV. That feels believable if you look around.

There is also a network level AI spam filter running quietly. It works, sometimes. Not perfectly, but better than before.

Africa is not just an add-on. Airtel Africa has over 179 million users

across 14 countries. That's a big chunk of the business, not a side story. Its mobile money service has crossed 52 million users. In many places, a phone is the bank. You send money, pay bills, everything from the same device. Stretching beyond telecom, Airtel is building more than just network services now. It is moving into enterprise tools like cloud, cybersecurity, IoT, and managed services. It is also working with Eutelsat OneWeb and SpaceX to deliver satellite internet. The idea is simple. Reach areas where towers don't.

There is also a move into financial services through an NBFC setup. The company wants to use its data to offer loans directly through its app.

Vittal said, "Our purpose is clear: as we deepen and expand our presence, we will strive to raise the bar on innovation, reliability, and experience so that every customer interaction is an opportunity to earn trust and deliver value connection."

Stock markets decline 2% in early trade amid rising West Asia tensions, surge in crude prices

SYDNEY.(Agency)

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined 2 per cent in early trade on Thursday amid rising geopolitical tensions following US President Donald Trump's warning of intensified military actions against Iran, driving crude oil prices higher. Unabated foreign fund outflows also added to the weakness in domestic equities. The 30-share BSE Sensex plummeted by 1,433.72 points, or 1.96 per cent, to 71,700.60. The 50-share NSE Nifty dived 445.70 points, or 1.97 per cent, to 22,233.70 in the morning trade. All the 30-Sensex firms were trading lower, with Sun Pharmaceuticals, IndiGo, Adani Ports, Eternal, Larsen & Toubro, Asian Paints, NTPC, State Bank of India, Trent, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, and PowerGrid emerging as the major laggards. "With President Trump's declaration 'we are going to hit Iran extremely hard in the next two to

three weeks,' market sentiments have again turned negative. Brent crude spiked around 5 per cent to USD 105,



and the US 10-year bond yield again firmed up to 4.36 per cent, negatively impacting gold and silver prices, though marginally," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 8,331.15 crore on

Wednesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, bought stocks worth Rs 7,171.80 crore. "The high crude price, the widening trade deficit, the fear of declining remittances and sustained FPI selling are acting cumulatively to put high pressure on the rupee, which continues to decline despite RBI's decisions on restrictions on dollar futures deals," Vijayakumar added. Broader Asian markets were trading lower, with South Korea's Kospi benchmark falling by 4.31 per cent, Japan's Nikkei 225 index declining 2.24 per cent, Hong Kong's Hang Seng plummeting 1.04 per cent, and Shanghai's SSE Composite index slipping 0.53 per cent. Meanwhile, the US market ended significantly higher on Wednesday. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 4.44 per cent higher to USD 105.65 per barrel.

Government waives customs duty on key petrochemical imports amid West Asia war

What petrochemical products have zero customs duty in India?
How is the West Asia conflict affecting India's economy?
What measures did PM Modi announce to protect consumers?

New Delhi.(Agency)

The government has waived customs duty on a wide range of petrochemical inputs, stepping in to protect domestic manufacturing from supply disruptions triggered by the escalating conflict in West Asia. The Finance Ministry has reduced duty to nil on 40 petrochemical products, with the exemption coming into effect from April 2 and remaining in force till June 30, 2026. The notification signals a time-bound but urgent intervention as global energy-linked supply chains come under stress. The decision comes at a time when tensions in West Asia, which sits at the heart of global crude and petrochemical flows, are driving volatility



in feedstock availability and pricing. Since most petrochemicals are derived from crude, any disruption in oil markets quickly pushes up input costs for manufacturing industries. The duty waiver covers both basic feedstocks and advanced polymers that form the backbone of industrial production. Key inputs such as methanol, monoethylene glycol, phenol, acetic acid and purified

terephthalic acid are included, along with widely used polymers like polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene and PVC. The list also includes higher-end materials such as epoxy resins, polycarbonates, PET chips and polyurethanes, highlighting the scale of the intervention. By eliminating customs duty, the government is lowering the landed cost of these imports at a time when global prices

remain elevated. This is expected to ease the burden on domestic manufacturers who are facing rising costs and uncertain supply conditions due to geopolitical tensions. The impact will be felt across sectors that rely heavily on petrochemical inputs, including plastics, packaging, textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and automobiles.

Any sustained increase in feedstock prices typically feeds into broader inflation, making this intervention significant beyond just industry. There is also a macroeconomic angle to the move. While India has so far avoided sharp retail fuel price spikes seen in some global markets, second-round effects from petrochemicals remain a key inflation risk. The duty cut reflects a pre-emptive effort to contain cost pressures before they spread through supply chains. The time-bound nature of the exemption suggests policymakers are treating the current disruption as a near-term shock, but the breadth of the relief indicates concern over the intensity of global volatility. If tensions in West Asia persist, further policy steps could follow.

Further policy steps could follow.



Priyanka Chopra

Remembers Her Late Father As She Seeks Blessings At Golden Temple, Shares Photos

Priyanka Chopra recently took a spiritual trip as she visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The actor shared a series of photos from her visit on social media, while also remembering her late father, Dr. Ashok Chopra, in an emotional note. The actress also performed seva at the Gurudwara.

Taking to her Instagram stories, Priyanka Chopra shared glimpses of her visit and wrote, "Thinking of you dad, Thank you Shiromani gurudwara parbandhak committee. And sri darbar sahib management committee for such a blessed visit." Recently, in a viral video, PeeCee is seen performing seva at Sri Darbar Sahib, Golden Temple, where she is spotted cleaning utensils alongside other women. Dressed in a baby pink Indian outfit with her dupatta covering her head, the actress keeps it simple and traditional. The clip was shared by a social media user on X (formerly Twitter).

Meanwhile, the reason for her visit to Amritsar is still unclear. However, she is set to make her comeback to Indian films with SS Rajamouli's Varanasi, where she will be seen alongside Mahesh Babu and Prithviraj Sukumaran. Touted as one of the most awaited films of 2027, the project has already generated significant buzz. Her visit to the city has netizens speculating that she may be there for the film's shoot.

Recently, during the premiere of The Bluff, the actress heaped praise on SS Rajamouli. While speaking to the media, she called Varanasi her "career-defining" movie. She was heard saying, "The filmmaker's name is SS Rajamouli sir, and he is one of the best that we have in India. His movie is going to be really career-defining for me, I think and I am very excited about it." Varanasi will hit theatres on April 7, 2027.



'I'm Not Pregnant': Poonam Pandey Says Viral Baby Bump Post Was April Fool's Prank, Reveals Reason In New Clip



On March 31, Poonam Pandey set social media abuzz after sharing pictures of herself flaunting a baby bump. While she announced her first pregnancy, the post left netizens wondering if it was a publicity stunt. Now, she shared yet another post revealing that it was an April Fool's prank. On April 1st, Poonam posted a video on her Instagram handle and confirmed that it was a prank. Referring to the current tensions in the Middle East, she asked everyone to chill and not stress in life.

Poonam Pandey is NOT pregnant

A while ago, Poonam Pandey shared a video addressing her baby bump pictures. In the clip, she clarified that her intention was simply to entertain people, especially amid the stress surrounding the ongoing war. She said, "Guys, thank you so much for your lovely wishes. Lekin mein pregnant nahi hu. Guys aaj April Fool day hai, prank tha yaar. Waise hi war chal raha hai, puri duniya waise hi stress me hai, maine socha mein tumlog ko thodha sa entertain karti hu. Mein tehari Poonam Pandey, mera haq banta hai aapko shock karne ka. Itna seriously mat lo yaar life ko, thodha chill maaro. Hai na!" She then started singing the April Fool song in the end.

Soon after she shared the video, netizens were quick to react to it. Several users commented that they already knew it was a prank. One user wrote, "Pata tha mujhe."

Another user wrote, "Apun ne toh kal ich likh dala thha "Nice prosthetic" beedu!!!" One of the comments also read, "Ye accha nahi kiya aap ne." Back in 2024, Poonam faked her death to create awareness around cervical cancer. However, she was massively trolled for stooping so low for publicity. Her team claimed she died from cervical cancer via her official Instagram account on February 1, 2024. On February 2, 2024, Poonam said it was a publicity stunt, done for a "good cause" aimed at raising awareness about the disease, which stirred significant controversy.

Anil Kapoor Sweats It Out In The Gym At 69, Motivates Fans With Powerful Message On Consistency



Bollywood star Anil Kapoor shared a glimpse of his intense workout routine on Wednesday, further emphasising the importance of consistency as the key to success. Taking to his social media account, the actor dropped a video of himself working out in the gym, performing high-intensity exercises with complete focus.

The video clip captures him pushing his limits and reflecting on his disciplined fitness regime. He captioned the post as, 'Show up. Put in the work. Repeat.' In the video, Anil also delivered a powerful monologue on consistency.

He said, 'One of the most powerful forces in life is consistency, being able to do something, in moderation, over and over and over again. That's how you start big movements, that's how you get big results, that's how you build a body, that's how you build a business. Consistency is small wins every single day.'

The video further highlights the actor's belief that steady effort and repetition are crucial to achieving long-term success in any personal or professional domain. Known for his remarkable fitness even at the age of 69, Anil Kapoor continues to inspire fans with his disciplined and monitored lifestyle. The actor follows a strict fitness routine along with a balanced and clean diet.

On the professional front, Anil made his Bollywood debut with the film 'Woh Saat Din' in 1983 and has been a part of the industry for over four decades.

Over the years, he has delivered several memorable performances in movies such as 'Mr. India', 'Tezaab', 'Ram Lakhan', 'Beta', 'Virasat', 'Nayak' and many more.

On the personal front, Anil Kapoor is currently elated and beaming with joy as he has embraced grandfatherhood for the second time. His daughter, Sonam Kapoor, welcomed her second baby boy with husband Anand Ahuja on March 29.

Rupali Ganguly

Condemns Jaipur Content Creator For Painting Elephant, Urges PM Modi To Take Action

Rupali Ganguly, who has been quite vocal about animal welfare, has slammed a Jaipur content creator for painting an elephant for the sake of a photoshoot. A supporter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India, Rupali Ganguly, who joined the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2024, has written to the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi ji, urging him to end elephant rides.

Ganguly, in her long letter, mourned the demise of the elephant that was featured in the photoshoot and has reportedly passed away. In the note, Rupali wrote, "As someone who shares your respect for wildlife and as a supporter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals India (PETA India), I write with deep sadness about Chanchal, the captive elephant in Rajasthan who was painted bright pink and used as a prop for a photoshoot and who is reported to have died, and about other elephants still used for rides. This incident has upset people across India and beyond, reflecting how strongly the public now feels against elephant exploitation." Speaking of how elephants are used for rides at places like Amer Fort and, when not in use, are kept chained and often controlled using weapons, Rupali added, "I have learned that the owner quoted in

reports, Saddik Khan, is the same individual associated with Malti, an elephant who was beaten twice and ultimately rescued following efforts by PETA India. While the photoshoot has horrified the public, elephants used for rides at places like Amer Fort endure an even harsher daily reality: they are kept chained when not in use and often controlled through weapons. Frustrated, they have been known to attack humans or each other."



She further continued and urged that, just like Indonesia, India should end all elephant rides and resort to "robotic elephants, decorated electric vehicles, and other non-animal alternatives" to "protect our national heritage animal from use in cruel spectacles." To note, according to PETA India, elephants kept in proximity to humans often experience stress, which can make their behaviour erratic, leading to frequent incidents during rides and performances. In a move to prioritise the safety and well-being of both animals and people, the Kerala Tourism Department has introduced.



Baking, robotics, musical art among top vocational courses for Students This year

These days, art classes are not just about teaching kids how to sketch and paint. A significant part of students' curriculum and overall success also relies on it. Art as a subject is applicable to students who are into interior designing, architecture, and even medicine and business studies. Artist Jaywanti Prabhutendolkar, who conducts classes focussing on different forms of art,

says, "Students from top business schools in the country attend these sessions because they need to master the art of visualisation. We also have a special course — musical art. Here, we give students a topic and as one of them sings, the others match their brush strokes to its beats."

Bake up, kids

Kids love stuffing themselves with cookies and goodies. Why not teach them how to make their own cakes and eat them, too? Many parents are enrolling their wards for cooking camps that last anywhere between two and five days. Ketaki Bhosale, who conducts one such class, says, "Inspired by TV shows, parents want their kids to learn their way around the kitchen. In these five days, we teach them how to make a lot of lip-smacking items — from mousse and shakes and juices to jelly dessert in a jar, pasta and mac 'n' cheese." In addition, many schools also make it compulsory for students to cook as a part of their curriculum. Some advanced courses also include cake baking with torting, fillings, fondant covering, painting on fondant and sugar flowers.



With summer vacations on, parents are enrolling their kids for a variety of classes. And offbeat vocational activities seems to have caught the fancy of many students. Here's a look at what's hot this season...

Taking a step closer to nature

Many city youngsters are now looking at interesting job options like travel writing, leading trek groups, horticulture and organic farming among others. As a result, nature camps that train youngsters and help them broaden their perspectives are hot properties. For instance, a five-day course takes students to tribal areas near the city, like Dahanu and Aswali, where they are actively involved in adventure sports and get a chance to interact with nature. While they learn about ethnic form of arts, like warli painting, they also get educated about sustainable living and understand the importance of conserving nature.

Volunteering

Volunteering at an early age helps kids become empathic. Involving themselves with NGOs — those that work towards taking care of elders and orphans or shelter strays — is a great way to spend their time. Children not only learn to care for others, but also become selfless and tolerant.

Hobby robotics

Student-oriented, this gives kids a feeler of what it is like to make their own robots. The classes provide basic training in robotics. Professor

Kurush Dalal, who supervises one such workshop, says, "We essentially want to train students from Marathi and other vernacular medium schools and open up new arenas. It helps them consider these options post Class X. Most students as well as parents think robotics is difficult and too high-handed before joining the class. After attending a few sessions, they develop a keen interest in it."

Of musical art and visual expression



Visiting a newborn? Keep these golden rules in mind



mom, who has probably gone without food and sleep for hours to take care of the child. Avoid squealing, clapping or indulging in any action that might wake the baby up.

Bring gifts that are useful

It's not in good taste to visit someone's place empty handed. But at the same time, don't waste money on a bunch of flowers. Buy things that are useful — wet wipes, powder or diapers for the child, steaming coffee, a meal or cupcakes for the mom.

Offer to help

A new mother's hands will be full with taking care of the baby. So, ask if you can be useful in some way. You can offer to tidy up the home, do few dishes in the sink, make them a meal or fold baby clothes. Trust us, the mother will be eternally grateful to you.

Don't be judgmental

You may not be in tandem with the way the mother is holding her child or the dad is changing the nappy, but don't scrutinise them based on your likes and dislikes. Don't dole out details of possible infections the baby might catch or try to scare them saying how hiccups can be dangerous. If you still want to talk memories from the past, share the nicer ones.

Remember...

Don't insist for a picture with the baby; parents might not be keen on getting the child photographed as yet. Put your phones on silent mode. Avoid using strong perfumes; new mothers can be prone to nausea. Don't insist on taking the baby in your arms if the mother is not comfortable. Don't bring your child along, for he/she might not be mature enough to know how to behave. Don't stay for longer than necessary; your hosts have more important things to do than entertaining you. Compliment; they need to hear pleasant things.

visit.

Talk softly

Lower your voice when you speak; you don't want to disturb a sleeping baby or an irritable

Nothing beats the excitement of meeting a newborn. Be it your bestie's child or your relative's, the thrill of seeing a just born baby, in all its pink glory, can get anyone excited. However, when you are paying a visit to their home, there are certain etiquette that you need to follow.

Call before you arrive

Find out beforehand when the right time to drop in would be. The new parents might be planning on catching forty winks or paying a visit to the doctor's. Their home might look like a hurricane hit it, thanks to the baby's bedclothes and play things. So, it's always better to check if they are in a position to entertain guests. This one call will save you and your host a lot of trouble.

Give hygiene importance

As soon as you arrive, wash your hands and legs and dab with a sanitiser. This way, parents will not worry about you passing on some infection while lifting the child. More importantly, if you are unwell, don't



Tips to raise a Happy kid



With people and internet constantly feeding you with information on various parenting styles, deciding how to raise your child can put you in a tizzy. Here's how to raise a happy baby regardless of the parenting style you choose

You need not define your parenting style

You do not have to follow a particular parenting style to bring up your child well. Discuss with your partner and come to an agreement on how you wish to raise your child. Raising a child is a challenging task and cannot be down just by following a guidebook. You and partner need to support each other in your parenting style instead of opposing each other at every stage.

Take advice carefully

You will find many people who will give you lot of advice on the dos' and don'ts of raising a child. But since you are the one who's given birth to your child, you also have the right to decide which advice you need to take seriously and what to ignore. No one can force you to follow certain rules, not even the doctor or your mother. Yes, they may also be able to offer you good tips because they are experienced and you may also follow those tips but only when you feel you should. Freely ask them questions if you are not

clear about something. Parenting is hard work and sometimes you may require a helping hand.

Trust your motherly instincts

Trust your instincts and do what you feel is right for you and your baby. Even if you're not 100 per cent sure of your decision, give yourself the benefit of the doubt. As long as you are doing what is best for your child, you are doing the right thing.

Love and care is what matters

Give your baby unconditional love and care and at the same time inculcate good habits in him/her. Spend quality time with your child as this is what you will treasure all your life. Even if you are a working mom, try and make maximum time for your child. Remember, your baby is your first priority and needs your due care and attention.

