

Black day for NDA, faced defeat for first time Priyanka after women's quota bill fails

On linking delimitation with the women's quota bill, Priyanka Gandhi questioned how the Opposition could allow a government, which she said has no regard for institutions, to alter the number of Lok Sabha MPs on such a large scale in the name of providing reservations to women in Parliament and state assemblies.

New Delhi.(Agency)

A day after the women's reservation bill failed the Lok Sabha test, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi on Saturday described the developments as a "big victory for democracy," asserting that the outcome reflected the strength of Opposition unity and dealt a blow to what she called the ruling side's "conspiracy" to stay in power. "What happened yesterday was a big victory for democracy," she said while addressing a press conference at the Congress headquarters in New Delhi, adding that it was also "a victory against attempts to weaken the federal structure." "It's a Black Day for them (centre) because they've felt a shock for the first time, which they deserved," she added. Priyanka said the impact of the outcome was visible on the faces of those in power, calling it "a victory for the Constitution and Opposition unity." She alleged that the government had orchestrated

events with a larger political motive. According to her, "a whole conspiracy was hatched to remain in power," and the sudden convening of the session was part of a plan to "somehow form a permanent



government." The Congress leader suggested that the ruling side had positioned itself to claim credit regardless of the outcome. "They believed that if the bill was passed, it would be a win, and even if it was not

passed, it would still be a win," she said, adding that they had hoped to emerge as champions of women.

"But that is not so easy," she added, arguing that the issue went beyond women's reservations and was instead about "their freedom to act arbitrarily."

On linking delimitation with the women's quota bill, Priyanka Gandhi questioned how the Opposition could allow a government, which she said has no regard for institutions, to alter the number of Lok Sabha MPs on such a large scale in the name of providing reservations to women in Parliament and state assemblies.

Calling the development a setback for the ruling alliance, she said, "This is a black day for them because they have been jolted."

She maintained that the Opposition was not against women's reservation, but questioned the intent behind the current approach. "This was not really about women's reservation; that is now clear," she said, adding that women in the country can't be fooled.

Party discipline as per high command norms: Dy CM DK Shivakumar

BENGALURU.(Agency)

Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC President DK Shivakumar on Friday said disciplinary actions within the Congress are taken strictly as per party norms and under the guidance of the central leadership. Speaking to reporters before leaving for New Delhi to attend the 'Bridge to Bengaluru' event on Friday, Shivakumar said they all function within the party's framework. He said that the Congress is committed to ensuring justice for all sections, including the SCs, STs, minorities, backward classes and farmers.

He expressed confidence that the party will return to power in 2028, stating that leaders, including Satish Jarkiholi, are working unitedly towards that goal.

Responding to the alleged factionalism within the Congress, Shivakumar said there is no difference between him and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. "We are together. We meet and discuss every day. Where is the question of groups? All 139 MLAs belong to both of us. It is the media that is trying to create divisions," he said.

"All MLAs are part of the Congress group. The party's interest and development are our priority and we are working unitedly," he added. Criticising the Centre over delimitation and women's reservation, he accused the BJP of taking hasty decisions for political gains without adequate consultation. "There is no need for such urgency. This is not a good move. They are doing it for political gain," he alleged.



Short news

Welcome ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon: India

New Delhi.(Agency)

INDIA ON Friday welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon and said it welcomes every step towards peace. A 10-day ceasefire announced by US President Donald Trump and agreed on by Lebanon and Israel appeared to be holding in Lebanon on Friday, even as talks are underway to extend a lasting truce between US and Iran — brokered by Pakistan.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We welcome the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon... India welcomes every step towards peace." On Pakistan's role in mediation between US and Iran, he said, "We are closely following all developments in the West Asian region." The spokesperson said India was participating in the meeting called by the UK and France, on the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer are hosting the meeting Friday to push forward plans to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Macron's office said the summit gathered about 50 nations and international organisations, including more than 30 heads of state and government.

In a post on X ahead of the meet, Macron said the mission to provide security for shipping through the strait.

Minister Kollu Ravindra warns against excise violations

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

As a key revenue-generating department, there should be no compromise on enforcement, transparency, and quality," asserted Excise Minister Kollu Ravindra while chairing a high-level review of the Prohibition and Excise Department.

Addressing officials, the Minister instructed Principal Secretary (Revenue-Excise) Mukesh Kumar Meena to closely monitor field operations and ensure strict compliance at all levels. He emphasised that any lapse in enforcement or delay in action would be viewed seriously. He also asked the Principal Secretary to establish a robust system for immediate response to negative media reports, ensuring facts are verified and rejoinders issued without delay.

The meeting was attended by Excise & Prohibition Director Ch Sridhar, senior department officials, and representatives of Andhra Pradesh State Beverages Corporation Limited.

Reviewing performance, the Minister appreciated the department for achieving Rs 29,042 crore revenue in 2025-26 despite financial setbacks. Officials informed that losses included Rs 436 crore due to price reduction of Rs 99 (180 ml) IMFL and Rs 972 crore from reduction in prices of popular brands, along with the absence of Rs 1,900 crore in application fees.

NDA slams 'anti-women' mindset while Opposition cheers quota bill defeat

New Delhi.(Agency)

The defeat marks a rare moment in recent years when Opposition parties managed to close ranks and block a key government proposal, even as the NDA accused them of sabotaging a landmark reform aimed at enhancing women's representation in politics.

India's sharp political divide was on full display on Friday as the women's reservation bill failed to pass in the Lok Sabha, triggering a fierce war of words between the ruling NDA and a united Opposition. With 298 votes in favour and 230 against, the bill fell short of the 352 votes required for a two-thirds majority needed to amend the Constitution.

The defeat marks a rare moment in recent years when Opposition parties managed to close ranks and block a key government proposal, even as the NDA accused them of sabotaging a landmark reform aimed at enhancing women's representation in politics.

NDA SLAMS OPPOSITION OVER



BETRAYAL

Following the bill's defeat, senior ministers from the BJP-led NDA launched a sharp attack on Opposition parties, accusing them of denying women their rightful representation.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah led the charge, blaming the Congress, Trinamool Congress (TMC), DMK and Samajwadi Party for defeating the bill. He warned that the Opposition would face political consequences in the future. "The Congress and its allies have done this not for the first time, but repeatedly. Their mindset is neither in the interest of women nor of the country," Shah wrote on X.

In a separate post, he criticised Opposition leaders for celebrating the outcome, calling it a betrayal of women who had waited decades for greater political participation.

"This celebration by the Opposition is an insult to every woman who has been waiting for her rights for decades," he said.

CM Bhagwant Singh Mann embarks on Netherlands visit to attract global investments, boost Punjab's industrial growth

The Sikh Times

CHANDIGARH, 18 April: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Saturday embarked on a visit to the Netherlands to strengthen bilateral partnerships and attract investments across key sectors including Food Processing, Logistics, Alloys and Steels, Pharmaceuticals and Information Technology, as part of the Punjab Government's sustained push to accelerate industrial growth and economic development. On this, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann stated, "This vision is simple and clear to make Punjab a preferred destination for global industry by offering stability in policy, speed in decision-making, and a governance system that respects the time and trust of investors." The visit assumes significance as the Netherlands is among the largest Foreign Direct Investors in India, with several Dutch companies already having a presence in Punjab. Notably, the Chief Minister had earlier

laid the foundation stone of the De Heus factory at Vividha Industrial Park, Rajpura in October 2023. Similarly, the Indo-Dutch



Centre of Excellence for Potato crop is already functioning successfully in the state, reflecting the growing collaboration between Punjab and the Netherlands. During the visit, the Chief Minister will pitch for strategic tie-ups in priority sectors to further boost industrial development. He will also showcase

Punjab as North India's preferred investment destination by highlighting its strategic location, seamless connectivity to NCR and major ports, strong industrial clusters, uninterrupted quality power supply, skilled workforce and a progressive policy ecosystem. The delegation led by the Chief Minister will present key governance and regulatory reforms introduced by the Punjab Government, including the FastTrack Punjab single-window system offering more than 173 G2B services, auto-deemed approvals, PAN-based business identifiers and amendments to the Punjab Right to Business Act enabling time-bound in-principle approvals. Through a series of roadshows, one-to-one business meetings and interactions with major global corporations and institutions, the delegation aims to position Punjab as a compelling investment destination for European countries and bring new investments to the state.

NDA slams Opposition over women's reservation Bill defeat; vows to take issue to women voters

Amit Shah said this was not the first time Congress and its allies had acted this way, alleging it harmed both women's interests and the nation.

New Delhi.(Agency)

When the NDA failed to secure passage of the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha, its leaders staged a protest within the Parliament premises against Opposition parties, including the Congress, for not supporting the Bill during voting. They accused the Opposition of being against women's reservation in legislative bodies. Following the Bill's failure, NDAMPs convened a meeting attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deliberate on their post-vote strategy.



According to sources, the alliance plans to continue raising the issue among women voters to highlight the Opposition's stance on women's reservation.

Sources further indicated that NDA leaders agreed to expose the Congress and other parties over what they described as an anti-women's reservation position. The BJP-led NDA reportedly fell short by 52 votes of the two-thirds majority required to pass the constitutional amendment.

Making an all-out attack on the Opposition, senior BJP leader and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh criticised the Congress for not supporting the Bill. In a post on X, Singh said, "Today marks an extremely unfortunate day in the history of Indian democracy. During the special session of Parliament, the NDA government introduced the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha, aimed at providing one-third reservation for women. By voting against this bill in the Lok Sabha today, the Congress-led INDIA.

When India's secret naval blockade forced Pakistan to surrender

The world may be feeling the pinch of Iran's blockade of Strait of Hormuz, the key oil supply lifeline, amid its war with the US. But Pakistan got a taste of it decades ago when India exerted a covert blockade during the 1971 war. Here's how it unfolded.

New Delhi.(Agency)

"In the 1960s, a misperception had gained ground among the political and military planners that the navy had only a marginal role to play in the armed conflicts India was forced into," former Navy chief SM Nanda wrote in his memoir 'The Man Who Bombed Karachi'. However, it was the same navy that emerged as a pivotal force in the 1971 India-Pakistan war, exerting a covert blockade to break the link between West and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The world may be feeling the pinch of Iran's naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, the key oil supply lifeline, but Pakistan got a taste of it decades ago.

In 1971, the sea quietly helped decide the war, even though much of the action happened on land. The Iran war too has spilt onto the sea, with Washington and Tehran jostling to take control of Hormuz, which accounts for the supply of a fifth of the world's oil needs. It will prove to be decisive whether the US or Iran gets the bragging rights. The template, however, was set in 1971 by India.

THE COVERT BLOCKADE IN BAY OF BENGAL

While the navy's bombing of the Karachi port and the Kemari oil refinery, which burned for days, is the stuff of folklore, the story that unfolded in the eastern theatre is lesser known. It might not have had the same spectacle or chutzpah, but it was no less decisive.

During the 1971 war, Pakistan's biggest weakness was its geography. Its major ports (Karachi, Gwadar, Port Qasim) lie on a relatively short coastline facing the Arabian Sea. This made it challenging for Islamabad to defend East Pakistan, which was cut off by over 1,600 km of the Indian landmass.

News box

Wife flies in from Mumbai to find husband dead in Gurgaon flat

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 33-year-old American Express executive was found dead by his wife on Friday morning inside his flat at Pyramid Paradise in Sector 76.

She flew in from Mumbai after he stopped answering her calls following a fight over the phone on Thursday evening. The deceased was originally from Kanpur, while his wife, 32, is from UP's Mirzapur.

Police said the couple married four months ago but lived in different cities because the woman is employed with a private firm in Mumbai. The couple frequently fought, primarily because Sonam was not able to relocate to Delhi NCR due to her job, putting a strain on their marriage. An officer said that on Thursday, the couple had another argument, after which the man stopped answering his phone. "The woman continued trying to reach him and eventually contacted her mother-in-law, expressing concern," the officer said. The deceased man's mother told her to try again in the morning, saying he might be asleep. The man's grandmother also passed away on Thursday night due to natural causes — though he remained unaware of this, as his phone went unanswered. The woman took an early morning flight to Gurgaon and reached the apartment at around 6.30am on Friday. She found the flat locked from the inside and received no response despite repeated calls and ringing the doorbell. She then contacted the building's maintenance staff, and the door was forced open — only to find that her husband had died by suicide.

Police were informed immediately, and forensic teams arrived at the scene. A team from Kherki Daula police station recorded statements from family members, and the body was sent for autopsy. During the inquiry, police said the deceased was under stress for the past few months and his family was aware of his condition. "No suicide note was found at the scene, and no signs of foul play emerged during the initial investigation," the officer added. An inquest proceeding was initiated under Section 194 of BNSS, the officer further said. Following the autopsy, the body was handed over to the family for last rites.

Missing papers put 2.5 lakh property deals on radar

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Around 2.5 lakh property transactions — valued at more than Rs 3 lakh crore — in the north-west region of India have come under the scanner of the Income Tax (I-T) department, officials said.

Most of these high-value deals originate from Gurgaon and Faridabad, where revenue offices either failed to report transactions or submitted records with incomplete or incorrect PAN details. Such deficient reporting makes the data unusable for tax verification, severely hampering the department's ability to track high-value transactions and enforce compliance.

Over the past year, the directorate of intelligence and criminal investigation (Chandigarh) conducted more than 40 surveys and spot verifications across revenue offices in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and UTs, including Chandigarh, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The surveys were also carried out at Wazirabad tehsil office in Gurgaon and Ballabhgarh tehsil in Faridabad.

The surveys focused primarily on sub-registrar offices, matching property transactions with I-T returns of buyers and sellers. In 2025, a survey at Wazirabad tehsil alone indicated annual tax evasion exceeding Rs 5,000 crore, with PAN details of buyers and sellers not entered during registrations. Across 93 tehsils in 22 districts, PAN details were found missing in several cases despite being mandatory for property deals above Rs 30 lakh.

The Rs 3 lakh crore figure represents the highest-ever such detection in any single region. Nationally, unreported or incorrectly reported transactions may exceed Rs 7.5 lakh crore, sources said. Before issuing notices, the department uses a 'Nudge' (Non-intrusive usage of data to guide and enable) approach — alerting taxpayers via email about mismatches and encouraging them to voluntarily revise returns. "Action follows only if they fail to respond or revise the tax returns," an I-T official said. While cooperative banks and financial institutions also showed some non-compliance, discrepancies were most pronounced in tehsil offices.

ED to probe assets of interstate conman held in Rs 2.5cr fraud

Gurgaon.(Agency)

After busting an interstate gang led by a conman who duped people for over two decades across cities — particularly targeting wealthy individuals, including those linked to Bollywood — police will now write to Enforcement Directorate (ED) to verify the earnings of the mastermind. The accused previously duped actor Aditya Pancholi and the personal assistant of Salim Khan, father of actor Salman Khan. He was arrested by local police for allegedly cheating an exporter of Rs 2.5 crore and around 50 tolas of gold using fake coins.

Identified as Solanki Prabhuhai Gulshanbhai, alias Kaplesh, the kingpin owns multiple properties and leads a lavish lifestyle. Police suspect these assets may have been acquired through proceeds of crime and will seek ED's assistance in the investigation. During the probe, police found that Solanki, along with four or five accomplices — including two women — was travelling to Mumbai in an Innova Crysta on Feb 13 when he spotted the victim fixing his Audi on the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway near Pachgaon Chowk. Sensing an opportunity, Solanki parked his vehicle at a distance.

The gang, on the lookout for potential targets, approached the victim dressed in rags, pretending they had unearthed a treasure — a few gold coins — during excavation and wanted to dispose of it quickly. One woman pretended to be Solanki's sister, while the other accomplices posed as his colleagues. To gain the victim's trust, the accused first handed over a few genuine coins, which were verified by the businessman. After repeated interactions, the gang struck a deal for a larger quantity, offering it at Rs 25–30 lakh per kilogram and luring the victim with the prospect of high profits.

The exporter bought the remaining coins — the bulk of which were fake. He was out of Rs 2.5 crore and gold by the time he realised what had happened. Solanki and three of his aides were arrested earlier this week. According to police, the exporter borrowed heavily from relatives and friends and

Opposition delegations press for release of workers jailed in Noida protests

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A CPM delegation led by general secretary MA Baby sat on a dharna outside Noida district magistrate Medha Roopam's house in Sector 27 on Friday, accusing the administration of being "undemocratic" in not allowing them to meet people arrested for the workers' protest earlier this week. They alleged some of those arrested were brutally beaten by police and claimed CITU Delhi state secretary PV Aniyam and president Virendra Gaur have been "missing" since they were picked up from outside the DM's office by police.

The delegation, which also included and politburo member R Arun Kumar, Rajya Sabha MPs AA Rahim, John Brittas and V Sivadasan, and party leaders Anurag Saxena and Pushpendra Tyagi, said they wanted to meet district magistrate Medha Roopam over the police action against workers who had protested earlier in the week. MA Baby said they were stopped at the Chilla border by police before they could proceed, so the

delegation sat down on the pavement without disrupting traffic. "We wanted to meet the DM because of atrocities committed against workers in this area. Our comrades have been arrested and put in jail. We wanted to discuss this with the DM," he said. After police told the delegation that the DM would meet them, the group was escorted to a police camp and kept waiting. Attempts to reach her office through an MP yielded successive redirections — first to the collectorate, then to the camp office. Neither the DM nor the commissioner appeared. "So we decided to sit outside and wait till she comes," Baby said. The delegation's demands included a probe into the alleged manhandling of women workers by male police personnel, the release of jailed workers, and acceptance of the workers' wage increase demands. Baby later noted that some of those arrested had been released, but said the sit-in would continue. The party also alleged that CITU Delhi state secretary PV Aniyam and president Virendra Gaur had



gone missing after being picked up by police from outside the DM's office around noon. A police senior official said that a few people had gathered at the collectorate without permission during a period when prohibitory orders were in force. "To enquire about them, some were detained. However, immediately after their identity was verified, they were released," the official said.

Another senior administrative official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the delegation had not taken a prior

appointment and that the DM was on rounds when they arrived. "Later she was at the collectorate office till 6pm, but no one came to meet her. Later people came to the Surajpur collectorate to meet her," the official said. Delegations from Samajwadi Party and Congress also descended on Noida to demand justice for the workers, but both were stopped by police before they could reach their intended destinations.

A 10-member SP delegation led by Leader of Opposition in the UP Legislative Assembly, Mata Prasad Pandey, was stopped on DND Flyway while attempting to meet protesting workers at a factory. "There was a lathicharge here. Injustice has been done against the workers. They were protesting because they were not getting their full wages. I drew the attention of the government to this matter, but the govt did nothing," Pandey said. He demanded that the labour commissioner and labour inspector investigate and resolve the workers' grievances.

Want zero-flood monsoon, Haryana ULB minister tells corporations to speed up work

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Urban local bodies minister Vipul Goel on Friday directed officials to expedite monsoon preparedness measures in Faridabad, Manesar and the city so that there are no accidents or loss of lives due to waterlogging and floods.

At a review meeting held in Gurgaon, the minister was told that 159 waterlogging-prone locations have been identified across the city and efforts are on to desilt drains and repair sewerage systems around them. Of the 159 spots, which include South City main market road, CRPF camp chowk, Maruti Kunj main gate and Subhash chowk police station, four fall under the "extremely critical" category, 39 are "critical", 56 "moderate" and 60 "minor", an official said.

MCG said that of the city's 607 km drainage network, 408.59 km has been cleaned so far, with the remaining work in progress. The civic body has set a target of May 31

to complete desilting of drains. Out of 97 drain-related projects, 72 have been completed, an official said. To respond to flooding, 109 pumps and 63 suction



tankers are being arranged, he added.

The meeting also brought to the fore gaps in the rainwater harvesting infrastructure. Of 468 structures in the city, 309 are functional while 159 are under repair — an issue officials said directly impacts both waterlogging and groundwater recharge. Goel called for tighter coordination between departments

and continuous monitoring of vulnerable locations. "Better coordination between departments should be established and work should be completed in a time-bound manner. Special monitoring should be kept on sensitive areas so that no problem arises during rains," he said.

Preparations in neighbouring areas were also reviewed. In Manesar, cleaning of 23 major drains, spanning 54.5 km, has begun along with the maintenance of 42 rainwater harvesting structures. In Faridabad, desilting of 157 drains covering 196 km is under way, with more than 40 sensitive waterlogging points identified for focused monitoring. For this, the MCF has set a target to complete it by June 15. The minister also directed officials to accelerate the drive to remove stray cattle from roads and ensure the Gurgaon-Faridabad road is cleared of debris, signalling a broader push to plug civic gaps ahead of the monsoon.

Govt to start demolition drive in Gurgaon after HC stays S+4 policy, DLF-1 first

Gurgaon.(Agency)

After Punjab and Haryana high court stayed the stilt-plus-four-floor (S+4) policy, the govt has ordered a time-bound crackdown to clear illegal extensions of houses from right of way and act against misuse of stilt floors across licensed colonies, with the first phase of enforcement set to begin from DLF-1 on Saturday. District town planner (enforcement) Amit Madholia urged residents to remove encroachments voluntarily to avoid demolition. The order was issued by additional chief secretary (town and country planning) Anurag Aggarwal on April 16, directing agencies to clear right of way violations, with compliance reports to be filed by April 22.

The high court, hearing petitions including Sunil Singh vs State of Haryana, restrained implementation of the policy, citing concerns over infrastructure stress and widespread violations, prompting immediate action. While it didn't rule on

the policy's legality, HC made it clear that implementation cannot continue until the next hearing. On the ground, officials are presenting the drive as a strict, no-exceptions exercise. Madholia said the plan covers all licensed colonies and their internal roads, where encroachments have steadily reduced public space. "This is a court-driven action linked to a PIL. All encroachments within the right of way — from 9 metres to 24 metres — must be cleared in a time-bound manner before April 22," Madholia said.

He said eight dedicated teams have been formed and will begin simultaneous operations across colonies from Saturday, with DLF-1 as the first focus area. "We are appealing to residents to clear any encroachment in front of their homes on their own. Otherwise, enforcement teams will remove them without exception," he said. Officials said violations are widespread and often treated as routine.

These include boundary extensions, fencing, potted plants, guard rooms, diesel generator sets, kiosks, parking sheds, and commercial use of residential frontages. In some cases, parts of public road space have been rented out.

The govt has also identified misuse of stilt floors, meant for parking, as a major concern. Urban planners said the crackdown could reshape enforcement of residential layouts in Gurgaon, where rapid vertical growth under the S+4 framework has outpaced infrastructure capacity.

A senior official said the state is under clear judicial pressure to act. "This is not routine enforcement. The court has set the tone, and the administration is expected to deliver visible, time-bound results on the ground," the official said. Residents remain divided over the drive. "It is long overdue. Roads have remained choked for years because of illegal extensions.

After Noida protests, 203 labour contractors face blacklist: Withheld pay, overtimes, bonuses

NOIDA.(Agency)

The labour department has initiated proceedings against 203 contractors and outsourcing agencies who supply workforce to industries in the city for violations of Contract Labour Act, including withholding wages, bonuses and overtime pay.

Labour department officials said while contractors were ordered to disburse the total corpus of Rs 1.16 crore that was found to have been denied to workers, they would also face blacklisting and suspension of licences. Offences under Contract Labour Act are punishable by up to three months in prison. It wasn't clear if the labour department was also getting cases filed against the contractors.

"We found serious violations by contractors and agencies engaging workers at these factories. In some cases, workers were made to do overtime but were not paid the sum due. In others, salaries and bonuses were not cleared. These grievances triggered the protests that led to heavy damage," additional labour commissioner Rakesh Dwivedi said, adding notices were served to the contractors.

The findings are the result of a probe that began after the April 13 industrial workers' protest for higher wages that witnessed largescale vandalism. Sources



said 24 factories and industrial units suffered extensive damage during the unrest when protesters hurled stones and set vehicles on fire. The role of contractors whose workers were allegedly involved in the vandalism is also under investigation, the commissioner said.

Officials clarified that no deductions other than EPF and ESI are allowed from wages, and any additional adjustment is illegal. Principal employers, too, are accountable if contractors delay or

underpay wages under provisions of the Act. Engagement of contractual workers happens under legal provisions of Contract Labour Act and applies to any contractor who employs 20 or more personnel for a period of one year.

According to the Act, the private company that the contractor provides workers to becomes the 'principal employer'. The principal employer notifies the contractor's engagement and issues a form for registration of the contractor

Man killed in hit-and-run on Sohna Road

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 30-year-old person was killed in a hit-and-run accident on the elevated section of the Sohna highway early Wednesday.

Ravindra, a resident of Paharpur village in Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri district, was a bus driver at a private firm in the city. According to a complaint filed by his elder brother, Toofan Singh, Ravindra visited him at his village on Tuesday. The victim left Ravindra's house on his bike around 6pm to return to his workplace. Around 3am, the family got a call about the accident. Singh reached the Sadar police station and accompanied the police to the accident site. Police said they received information about the accident from an emergency response vehicle on night patrolling duty and rushed to the spot. By the time they arrived, Ravindra had succumbed to his injuries. The victim was taken to the govt hospital in Sector 10, where doctors declared him brought dead, and later shifted to the local mortuary. In his complaint, Singh alleged that an unidentified vehicle approached from behind at high speed and suddenly cut into Ravindra's lane without warning. The abrupt manoeuvre caused him to lose balance of his motorcycle, which then crashed into the road divider, leading to his death. A case has been registered under sections 106 (causing death by negligence), 281 (rash driving) of BNS against an unidentified driver. Police have initiated an investigation and are working to identify the unknown vehicle involved in the incident.

Toofan Singh told TOI that the victim is survived by his wife and a 10-year-old son. "My brother lived with his family in Sector 12. His son's school vacation was going on. Ravindra's wife and his son were her native village at the time of the accident. Police are yet to trace the driver," Singh said.

Authorities said efforts are underway to trace the accused driver, and CCTV footage from the area is being examined. The body of the victim was handed to the family post-autopsy.

with the state govt. A registration certificate to a contractor is issued by govt on submission of form V on the Nivesh Mitra portal, in which it gives details about nature of work, number.

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India develops indigenous handheld device to detect traumatic brain injuries

New Delhi: Traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are a significant public health challenge, particularly in emergency settings, rural areas, and underserved populations where advanced diagnostic tools like CT or MRI scans are inaccessible or delayed.

more than 8 million are misdiagnosed. In its annual report, ICMR has explained the efficiency of Cerebo over traditional methods, such as the Glasgow Coma Scale and imaging techniques, which require specialised infrastructure, trained personnel, and are cost-intensive.

Delhi Police Conducts Citywide "Eyes and Ears" Outreach Programme Ahead of Republic Day Celebrations

The Sikh Times

New Delhi: In the wake of the forthcoming Republic Day celebrations, Delhi Police today conducted an extensive outreach programme under its "Eyes and Ears" Scheme across all police stations in districts and metro & IGIA units.

enhance awareness about the "Eyes and Ears" Scheme of Delhi Police, which encourages public



participation in maintaining safety and security. Under this initiative, citizens are urged to remain vigilant and promptly share information related to suspicious activities, individuals, or potential criminal acts.

enlightening discussion session was jointly conducted by Sh. Ranjay

Sh. Kailash Bisht, ACP/Special Cell. The session was streamed live on the official YouTube channel of Delhi Police. To ensure maximum outreach, special arrangements were made at all police stations in districts and metro, IGIA units to

facilitate live viewing of the session. During the joint discussion, the role of eyes and ears stakeholders was appreciated as the first line of information. RWAs were sensitized to the importance of installing CCTV cameras, conducting tenant verification, and monitoring the entry of hawkers. MWAs were advised to enhance CCTV coverage, preserve footage, attend police briefings, and disseminate relevant information to members and stakeholders.

Department of Telecommunications guidelines while issuing new SIM cards. Second-hand car dealers were urged to ensure proper verification of buyers and timely transfer of vehicle ownership. Special emphasis was laid on the role of parking attendants and chemical sellers.

Police 'Eyes and Ears' Helpline 14547. Citizens were encouraged to use these helplines to promptly report suspicious movements, unattended articles, or any other doubtful activities. Participants attending the programme were provided with specially designed educational pamphlets. In addition, standees and posters highlighting the "Eyes and Ears" Scheme were prominently displayed at the venues.

No research behind overage vehicle ban, Commission for Air Quality Management

The Sikh Times

New Delhi: The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has admitted it has not conducted any research or study on pollution caused by diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years that form the basis of the overage vehicle ban in Delhi-NCR.

The decision came after the Delhi government cited "operational and infrastructural challenges" in implementing the measure from



July 1. EoL vehicles include diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years, irrespective of the state they are registered in. "The fight against pollution cannot be won in a day, it needs proper planning and action. Vehicle pollution is a big reason so is dust but a knee-jerk reaction won't help.

Maximum cities in NCR do not have proper public transport and even in Delhi it's not up to the mark. First, we need to improve public transport and need strong

action on dust, construction and industry pollution as well," Gupta said. According to official data, Delhi has 62 lakh such vehicles, including 41 lakh two-wheelers. Across the NCR, the number is around 44 lakh, mostly concentrated in Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Gautam Budh Nagar and Sonapat. The July order said the fuel ban in Delhi would be launched simultaneously in these five high-vehicle-density NCR districts from November 1, after installation of

Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras. The mechanism will be extended to the rest of the NCR districts from April 1 next year. The Delhi government told the CAQM that the ANPR system, meant to identify EoL vehicles by checking number

plates against the VAHAN database, was facing software glitches, problems with camera placement, malfunctioning sensors and incomplete integration with neighbouring states' vehicle databases. In the past, the Supreme Court and the NGT have pulled up author-

ities over poor progress in removing old and polluting vehicles from the NCR despite repeated directions. The Delhi government has also filed a review application in the apex court, seeking reconsideration of the 2018 ban on overage vehicles.

2 friends drug, kill teen, dump body in canal

New Delhi: A teenager was allegedly drugged and killed by two of his friends over his relationship with the cousin sister of one of the accused in Outer North district, the police said on Wednesday. The police said the deceased had been identified as Ankit (18), a resident of Sadar Bazar. He was missing from the Gulabi Bagh area since November 18. His body was found floating in the Munak Canal near Haiderpur water treatment plant on November 22. His hands and feet were tied with shoelaces and a handkerchief was wrapped around his face.

Loose hanging wires in Capital a big safety threat

New Delhi: Tangled clusters of loose wires hanging across market areas and congested lanes remain a common sight in the national capital, raising both safety and civic concerns among residents and shopkeepers. In East Delhi's Laxmi Nagar, narrow lanes are crisscrossed by what locals describe as a "nest" of cables, many of them leftover Wi-Fi connections.

Two arrested for supplying weapons in Gurugram murder

Gurugram: The police have arrested two men accused of supplying weapons used in the murder of property dealer Rohit Shaheen on Southern Peripheral Road (SPR) last year. A scooter allegedly used in the crime was also seized from their possession, police said on Thursday. The accused were arrested from the bus stand in Gangana village in Sonapat district and have been identified as Amit alias Meeta, 25, and Vashu, 23, both residents of Gangana village. According to the police, the two men supplied illegal firearms to the shooters involved in the killing on the instructions of Sunil alias Sardhana. During interrogation, the accused revealed that they had provided two illegal pistols to Vinod alias Pehalwan and Shakti, who allegedly shot Rohit Shaheen dead. Police said Amit alias Meeta has two criminal cases registered against him in Sonapat district for murder and assault. Vashu faces one case of attempted murder in Jind district and another case of assault in Sonapat district. "We are questioning the accused," a spokesperson for Gurugram police said. Rohit Shaheen, 39, a property dealer and resident of Kamruddin Nagar in Nihal Vihar, Delhi, was shot dead on August 4 last year on SPR Road in Gurugram. An FIR was registered at Kherki Daula police station following the incident. A senior police officer said that with these latest arrests, a total of 12 accused have been apprehended so far in the case. Those previously arrested include Shubham, Sudip, Gautam, Shakti,

Police demolish illegal shanties linked to criminal

Gurugram: Police, along with district authorities, on Thursday demolished two illegal shanties built on Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP) land in Gurugram as part of an ongoing crackdown on organised criminals, officials said. The shanties had been illegally constructed in the Sector 12 market area on government land measuring around 50 square yards. Police said the encroachment was carried out by Karan, a habitual criminal originally from Kasganj district in Uttar Pradesh. According to the police, Karan had unlawfully occupied the HSVP land and built two shanties from which he was deriving unethical and unfair benefits. A joint team of district authorities and police razed both structures during the operation. Police said Karan has been involved in criminal activities for a long time and faces several serious cases, including assault, spreading fear among the public, issuing death threats and possessing illegal weapons. He has also been jailed multiple times in the past. Officials said the action was part of a wider drive against criminals who use proceeds of crime to illegally occupy government land and establish unlawful structures.

Public Notice: I, Baljeet Singh S/o Gurcharan Singh R/o 12/32, Geeta Colony, East Delhi-110031 declare that name of mine, my wife and my minor daughter has been wrongly written as BALJEET SINGH CHUGH, GURPREET KAUR CHUGH in my minor daughter JASLEEN KAUR aged 16 years in her 10th class Educational Documents. The actual name of mine, my wife and my minor daughter are BALJEET SINGH, GURPREET KAUR and JASLEEN KAUR respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

Name Change: I, DEEPAK KUMAR VERMA S/O PARTAP SINGH resident of H.No.16, Tara Nagar Main Kakrola Road, Kakrola, South West Delhi, Delhi-110078 have changed the name of my minor daughter SHREYA ALIAS SHREYA VERMA aged 13 years, and she shall hereafter be known as SHREYA VERMA.

Name Change: I, SIDDHARTH RANA S/O BHAGWAN RANA residing at H NO-1074, SIRASPUR, DELHI-110042 have changed my name to SIDDHARTH RANA for all future purposes.

Name Change: I, Kapil Kumar Yadav S/o Dinesh Yadav R/o House No-523 P, Sector-14, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001, Have Changed My Name To Kapil Yadav For All Purpose.

Name Change: I, Pradeep Kumar S/o Prem Chand R/o D-754/A, Gali No.1, Ashok Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110093 have changed the name of my minor son from Arjun to Arjun Vaidwan.

Name Change: I, Anupama D/o Pradeep Kumar R/o D-754/A, Gali No.1, Ashok Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110093 have changed my name to Anupama Chaudhary.

Name Change: I, VINOD KUMAR S/O UDAY SINGH residing at FLAT NO-G-3/8, NEAR DDA WATER TANK, SECTOR-4, ROHINI, DELHI-110085 have changed my name to VINOD KUMAR KUSHWAHA for all future purposes.

Name Change: I, Manoj Ram S/o Ram Bilash Ram R/o Flat No-6, Tower-8, Harmela Street, IRIS, Vatika City, Sector-49, Gurgaon, Haryana-122018, Have Changed My Name To Manoj Kumar For All Purpose.

Name Change: I, Taran Preet Singh Kochhar S/o Manpreet Singh Kochhar R/o 10C/80 SFS Flats Green View Apartment Mayapuri Road Hari Nagar West Delhi-110064 Have Change My Given Name Taranpreet Singh and Surname Kochhar for all purpose.

Name Change: I, DEEPAK KUMAR VERMA S/O PARTAP SINGH resident of H.No.16, Tara Nagar Main Kakrola Road, Kakrola, South West Delhi, Delhi-110078 have changed the name of my minor daughter SHREYA ALIAS SHREYA VERMA aged 13 years, and she shall hereafter be known as SHREYA VERMA.

Name Change: I, hitherto known as SAMEERA SINGH D/O SUDHIR KUMAR SINGH residing at Flat No.E-1058, River Heights, Raj Nagar, Extension, Tower-15, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SAMEERA SINGH AMETHIA.

Name Change: I, Sushma D/O Shambu Prasad Dharama W/O Vinod Kumar R/O B-6 Police Colony Mandir Marg New Delhi 110001 Have changed my name to Sushma Badola for all future purposes.

Name Change: I, Swaran Kaur Sawhney W/o Prith Pal Singh R/o 10C/80 SFS Flats Green View Apartment Mayapuri Road Hari Nagar West Delhi-110064 Have Changed My Name to Swaran Kaur for all purpose.

Name Change: I, Jugal Kishor S/o Lila Dhar R/o H.No-196 S/F, Kh.No-619/21, Chatter Pur, South Delhi, Delhi-110074 have changed the name of my minor daughter namely Krishna Devi aged 16 years and she shall hereafter be known as Priya.

Name Change: I, hitherto known as Farman S/o Akeel Ahmed R/o B 272/27, Gali No 4, Subhash Mohalla North Ghonda, Garhi Mendu, Bhajan Pura, North East, Delhi-110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Farman Ahmed.

Name Change: I, hitherto known as Atif S/o Manzoor Khan R/o 1/99-C, 4/F, Gali No-5, Guru Harkrishan School Wali Gali, Kabil Nagar, Gokal Pur, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Atif Khan.

Name Change: I, hitherto known as Akash S/o Makant Singh Rawat R/o 2087/5, Gali No.20, Prem Nagar Patel Nagar, Patel Nagar S.O, Central Delhi, Delhi-110008 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Akash Rawat.

Name Change: I, hitherto known as Saran Kumar W/o Samarjeet Gupta R/o E-400-D, Block E, Ashok Nagar, Vasundhara Enclave, East Delhi, Delhi, Delhi-110096 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Saranam Sav.

Name Change: I, hitherto known as Laxman Yadav alias Bhavikshan Yadav S/O Bechan Yadav R/O Gram Debra, Post Bela, Thana, Babuberhi, Ward No-02, Bela, P. Bela, Dist Madhubani, Bihar-847224 Have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bhavikshana Yadav.

Name Change: I, SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY S/O LATE SH. LAXMAN CHAUDHARY Permanent R/o Parsauni Khirdhar, Sitamahi, Bihar-843325 and Presently Residing at Plot No. B-20, Second Floor, Dass Garden, Baprola Vihar, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110043, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SANJAY CHOUDHARY in my minor daughter namely SHIWANGI CHOUDHARY aged 17 years in her 10th class Marksheet. The actual name of mine is SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY, which may be amended accordingly.

Name Change: I, NO-17007475L Rank-NK Name- JITENDRA GANGWAR S/O LATE NIRANJAN LAL GANGWAR R/O WARD NO-11, MOHALLA GYASPUR, NEAR BANGALI BABA MANDIR, BILASPUR, PILIBHIT, UTTAR PRADESH-262201 have changed my minor son's name from DAKSH GANGWAR to YASH GANGWAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 05/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

Name Change: I, NO-17007475L Rank-NK Name- JITENDRA GANGWAR S/O LATE NIRANJAN LAL GANGWAR R/O WARD NO-11, MOHALLA GYASPUR, NEAR BANGALI BABA MANDIR, BILASPUR, PILIBHIT, UTTAR PRADESH-262201 have changed my minor son's name from DAKSH GANGWAR to YASH GANGWAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 05/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

Name Change: I, ANITA BANSAL W/O PAWAN BANSAL residing at B-504, MAYURDHWAJ APARTMENT, I/P EXTN, EAST DELHI-110092 have change my name to ANITA RANI BANSAL for all future purpose.

Name Change: I, ANIL BALAKRISHNA PANICKER S/O ANGAKATTIL NARAYAN BALAKRISHNA PANICKER R/O A-6/334-A, Janta Flats, Paschim Vihar, Delhi-110063, have changed my name to Anil Bala Panicker permanently.

Name Change: I, ANIL BALAKRISHNA PANICKER S/O ANGAKATTIL NARAYAN BALAKRISHNA PANICKER R/O A-6/334-A, Janta Flats, Paschim Vihar, Delhi-110063, have changed my name to Anil Bala Panicker permanently.

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Name Change: I, hitherto known as ASHISH KUMAR RATHOR S/O PURAN LAL R/O C-48, RAJEEV NAGAR BEGUM PUR, NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110086, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RAZA AHMED.

Name Change: I, SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY S/O LATE SH. LAXMAN CHAUDHARY Permanent R/o Parsauni Khirdhar, Sitamahi, Bihar-843325 and Presently Residing at Plot No. B-20, Second Floor, Dass Garden, Baprola Vihar, Najafgarh, New Delhi-110043, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SANJAY CHOUDHARY in my minor daughter namely SHIWANGI CHOUDHARY aged 17 years in her 10th class Marksheet. The actual name of mine is SANJAY KUMAR CHOUDHARY, which may be amended accordingly.

Name Change: I, VINOD KUMAR S/O UDAY SINGH residing at FLAT NO-G-3/8, NEAR DDA WATER TANK, SECTOR-4, ROHINI, DELHI-110085 have changed my name to VINOD KUMAR KUSHWAHA for all future purpose.

Name Change: I, SANTOSH KUMAR S/O VISHVA NATH PRASAD residing at PLOT NO-58859, FLAT NO-B-2 STREET NO-5, HAVENS GARDEN MATIALA, DELHI-110059 have changed my name to SANTOSH KUMAR GUPTA for all future purposes.

Name Change: I, Anil Balakrishna Panicker S/o Angakattil Narayan Balakrishna Panicker R/O A-6/334-A, Janta Flats, Paschim Vihar, Delhi-110063, have changed my name to Anil Bala Panicker permanently.

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Name Change: I, SH AUTAR SINGH Father of Jc-413677X Rank-SUB MAJ Name-BHAGAT SINGH presently residing at VILL-BILTIYA SUKOLI TALLI P/O DHAUNTIYAL, DIST-PAURNA GARHWAL, UTTARAKHAND-246155 have changed my name from SH AUTAR SINGH to AVTAR SINGH for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 12/03/2024 before Notary Public, Delhi.

Name Change: I, NO-17007475L Rank-NK Name- JITENDRA GANGWAR S/O LATE NIRANJAN LAL GANGWAR R/O WARD NO-11, MOHALLA GYASPUR, NEAR BANGALI BABA MANDIR, BILASPUR, PILIBHIT, UTTAR PRADESH-262201 have changed my minor son's name from DAKSH GANGWAR to YASH GANGWAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit Dated 05/09/2023 before Notary Public, Delhi.

Name Change: I, VINOD KUMAR S/O UDAY SINGH residing at FLAT NO-G-3/8, NEAR DDA WATER TANK, SECTOR-4, ROHINI, DELHI-110085 have changed my name to VINOD KUMAR KUSHWAHA for all future purpose.

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E-AUCTION FOR AWARDING OF LICENSE OF LEASE SLR OF VARIOUS TRAINS. E-Auction catalogue for leasing of SLR of various trains over Alipurduar Division. Description: Parcel Space in SLR Coach (Single Compartment). Rate Unit: Per Trip Licensing Fee. Auction Catalogue No.: C-AP-PCL-LEASE. Table with columns: Seq No., Lot No./Category, Trips/Days. Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 11:00 hrs. on 24-04-2026; Auction Close Date/Time: 12:30 hrs. on 24-04-2026. Divisional Railway Manager (C), Alipurduar Jn. NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY "SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

NEWS BOX

Mythos "Serious Threat" To Banks, New Models May Be "Distressing": Barclays CEO

World. (Agency)

Anthropic's frontier AI model Mythos is a serious threat to the global banking system, and it is likely to be followed by similar, even more powerful cyberthreats, Barclays Chief Executive CS Venkatakrishnan said on Friday. The vast capabilities of Mythos to code at a high level have given it a potentially unprecedented ability to identify cybersecurity vulnerabilities and devise ways to exploit them, raising fears it could be exploited to destabilise banks. This has forced regulators and supervisors into a scramble, and selected organisations are now reviewing the model to gauge the actual cybersecurity risk. Mythos has raised alarm bells among regulators, who see it as a significant challenge to the banking sector and its legacy technology systems. "On Mythos, look, it's a serious issue," he told a meeting of the G30 consultancy group on the sidelines of the IMF's spring meeting.

"But here's the thing: there will be a Mythos 2 and a Mythos 3, and they'll come up with probably distressing frequency," he said. Such technological leaps will accelerate an arms race that forces lenders to innovate, and may be especially challenging for older and larger institutions potentially running legacy systems, Venkatakrishnan said. We have to understand its capabilities and we have to understand how to safeguard against it."

Boeing Sees Boost In Military Contracts Amid War In Middle East

World. (Agency)

The Middle East war has so far boosted Boeing's defense business and hasn't impacted deliveries to airline customers confronting high jet fuel prices, the company's CEO said Friday. Kelly Ortberg cited a recent agreement with the US military to triple production of PAC-3 seekers, which identify and strike hostile aircraft and weapons, as an example of increased demand due to the war.

"When you see a major step up in (operations) tempo for our defense products, that opens up the opportunity for more service, spare parts, maintenance actions," Ortberg said during the company's annual meeting. He described the jump in jet fuel prices as a priority for Boeing's airline customers. "At this point, I'd have to say we have not seen any impact on airplane deliveries from any of our customers," Ortberg said. "We'll have to watch this and continue to monitor it." Worries over scarce jet fuel became more acute earlier this week, with the International Energy Agency head saying Europe was about six weeks away from a shortage.

But Boeing's annual meeting started shortly after Iran announced it was reopening the Strait of Hormuz shipping channel, leading to a sharp pullback in oil prices. If crude oil deliveries are restored as expected, supply of jet fuel will improve. Boeing shares rose about four percent in mid-morning trading.

Meta To Lay Off Around 8,000 Employees By Next Month: Report

World. (Agency)

Meta intends to conduct a first wave of sweeping layoffs planned for this year on May 20, with more coming later, three sources familiar with the plans told Reuters. The Facebook and Instagram owner will lay off about 10% of its global workforce, or close to 8,000 employees, in that initial round, one of the sources said. The company is planning further layoffs in the second half of the year, the three sources said, although details of those cuts, including date and size, were not yet settled. Executives may adjust their plans as they observe developments in artificial intelligence capabilities, the sources added. Reuters reported last month that the company was planning to lay off 20% or more of its global workforce.

Meta declined to comment on the timing or scope of planned cuts. CEO Mark Zuckerberg is pumping hundreds of billions of dollars into AI as he seeks to dramatically reshape his company's inner workings around the technology, reflecting a broader pattern among major US companies this year, particularly in the tech sector. Amazon.com similarly has trimmed 30,000 corporate employees in recent months, representing nearly 10% of its white-collar workers, while in February the fintech company Block chopped nearly half of its staff.

In both of those cases, executives tied the cuts to efficiency gains from artificial intelligence.

Layoffs.fyi, a website tracking tech job cuts around the world, reported that 21,212 employees have lost their jobs so far this year. For all of 2024, the figure was 153,000. Meta's layoffs this year will be the social media giant's most significant since a restructuring in late 2022 and early 2023 that it dubbed the "year of efficiency," when it eliminated about 21,000 jobs. At that time, Meta's stock was in freefall and the company was struggling to correct for COVID-era growth assumptions that ultimately proved unsustainable. The company is in a more comfortable financial position this time, but executives envision a future of fewer management layers and greater efficiency brought about by AI-assisted workers.

Meta's shares are up 3.68% since the start of the year, although they are down from a record high achieved last summer. Last year, it generated more than \$200 billion of revenue and achieved a \$60 billion profit despite outsized spending on artificial intelligence.

Menlo Park, California-based Meta employed nearly 79,000 people as of December 31, according to its latest filing. In recent weeks, Meta has reorganized teams in its Reality Labs division and transferred engineers from throughout the company into a new "Applied AI" organization tasked with accelerating the development of AI agents that can write code and carry out complex tasks autonomously.

"US Will Start Dropping Bombs Again If No Deal Reached": Trump Warns Iran

Direct talks between the US and Iran last weekend were inconclusive, as the two nations could not agree about Iran's nuclear program and other points.

PARIS. (Agency)

Iran said it fully reopened the Strait of Hormuz to commercial vessels, but questions lingered Saturday about how much freedom ships actually had to transit the waterway as Tehran maintained its grip on the who got through and threatened to close it again if the US kept in place its blockade of Iranian ships and ports. Iran's Friday announcement about the opening of the crucial body of water, through which

20% of the world's oil is shipped, came as a 10-day truce between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon appeared to hold.

US President Donald Trump, meanwhile, said the American blockade "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with the US, including on its nuclear programme. Asked by a reporter Friday night what he will do if there's no deal when the ceasefire expires next week, Trump said, "I don't know. ... But maybe I won't extend it, so you'll have a blockade and unfortunately we'll have to start dropping bombs again." But he also told reporters accompanying him aboard Air Force One to Washington that a deal is "going to happen," and flatly rejected the idea of restrictions or tolls by Iran on the Strait of Hormuz. Trump had earlier celebrated the Iranian announcement, posting on social media that the strait was "fully open and ready for full passage." But

minutes later, he issued another post saying the US Navy's blockade would continue "UNTIL SUCH TIME AS OUR TRANSACTION WITH IRAN IS 100%

level of control over the channel. It was not clear if vessels would have to pay tolls.

Iranian officials said the blockade was a violation of last week's ceasefire agreement between Iran and the US. The strait "will not remain open" if the blockade continues, Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, posted on X early Saturday.

A data firm, Kpler, said movement through the strait remained confined to corridors requiring Iran's approval. Trump imposed the blockade as part of his effort to force Iran to open the strait and accept a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire to end almost seven weeks of war that has raged between Israel, the US and Iran. The president's decision to continue the blockade despite Iran's announcement appeared aimed at sustaining pressure on Tehran as the fate of the two-week ceasefire reached last week remained uncertain.



COMPLETE."

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi posted on X that ships would use routes designated by the Islamic Republic in coordination with Iranian authorities, suggesting Iran planned to retain some

"We Came In Fast And Hot": Artemis Astronauts On Re-Entry At 48,021 Kmph

World. (Agency)

The astronauts who flew around the moon and back in NASA's landmark Artemis II mission said their re-entry into Earth's atmosphere was smooth, but the mission's commander described some charring on the Orion capsule's critical heat shield.

The four Artemis II astronauts splashed down in the Pacific Ocean last Friday, capping a nearly 10-day test flight in which they reached the farthest distance in space any humans have gone before as their gumdrop-shaped Orion capsule sailed around the moon's far side. Speeding back into Earth's atmosphere at roughly 32 times the speed of sound, the finale of the high-stakes mission was a crucial test of the Lockheed Martin-built Orion capsule before NASA plans to use it again for another pre-lunar landing

flight in Earth's orbit next year. "We came in fast, and we came in hot," Artemis II mission commander Reid



Wiseman told reporters in the crew's first press conference since returning to Earth. In the months following the flight, NASA engineers will comb through hoards of data illustrating how well the Orion vehicle performed. They are likely to pay close attention to the capsule's heat shield, a critical

barrier that protects the crew from temperatures of up to 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit (2,760 degrees Celsius) during the descent from space.

In the 2022 Artemis I uncrewed mission, Orion's heat shield sustained far more damage than NASA had expected, showing small cracks and some layers charred off by its re-entry, leading to an intense two-year investigation. NASA did not upgrade the heat shield, but it changed the angle and trajectory in which the Artemis II crew entered Earth's atmosphere to reduce heat. Wiseman said he and mission pilot Victor Glover "maybe saw two moments of a touch of char loss" during re-entry. When they examined the capsule on the naval ship that recovered them from the ocean,

Indian among second group of migrants deported from US and taken in by Costa Rica

SAN JOSE. (Agency)

Costa Rica on Friday received a second group of migrants deported from the United States as part of an agreement to help the Trump administration's latest policy of deporting immigrants to "third countries." Under a bilateral agreement signed in March by Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves and U.S. Special Envoy Kristi Noem, Costa Rica has agreed to accept up to 25 third-country nationals expelled from the U.S. each week. The first group of 25 deportees, which arrived at San Jose's Juan Santamaria International Airport on Saturday, was assisted by Costa Rican migration police in coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). A second group of third country deportees from the United States arrived in Costa Rica on Friday. The group of 30 deportees includes eight Costa Ricans, eight Brazilians, three Romanians, two Chinese nationals, three from Uzbekistan, two from Azerbaijan, one

from Ireland, one from India, one from Vietnam, and one from Belarus. Like the group that arrived Saturday, these



people will be offered the opportunity to participate in the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) program administered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to return to their countries of origin, or to apply for legal residency in Costa Rica under humanitarian categories through the standard process. The Central American nation is one of a growing number of countries across Africa and

the Americas that have signed contentious, often secretive agreements with the U.S. to accept deportees from other countries as U.S. President Donald Trump pressures governments to help him advance his agenda. In many cases, migrants who previously hoped to seek asylum in the U.S. are left in a legal "black hole" in foreign countries where they don't speak the language. Countries who have agreed to receive third-party migrants include South Sudan, Honduras, Rwanda, Guyana and several Caribbean islands like Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis. The first group sent to Costa Rica included migrants from Albania, Kenya, Morocco, China, India and Cameroon, in addition to eight people from Guatemala and four Honduran nationals. The deportees were first taken to a hotel to receive assistance. During the first seven days in Costa Rica, they have the option of enrolling in a voluntary return program.

New German Search Engine Helps People Check Nazi Links In Family

YANGON. (Agency)

A new online tool from Germany is helping people learn more about their family history in a simple and direct way. The search engine allows users to check whether their ancestors were members of the Nazi Party, bringing hidden pasts into the open, reported BBC. The platform lets people search through millions of Nazi Party membership cards, known as the "NSDAP-Mitgliederkartei". It has already helped many users uncover surprising details about their families. One such user is Christian Rainer from Austria, who said he found his grandfather's name within seconds. He said that he found out that his grandfather became a member of the Nazi Party around April 21, 1938, just a few days after the Anschluss, when Adolf Hitler annexed Austria to Germany, reported BBC. Rainer further said that his grandfather applied to become a member of the NSDAP (Nazi) Party just five days after it became legal in Austria. He added that he had always known his grandfather was close to the Nazis, but he was surprised that it only took him five days to join them. Rainer never met his grandfather, who died shortly before he was born in 1961. He said the search engine was important not only for what it revealed about his grandfather, but also because it helped clear other members of his family.

He said he was happy he did not find anyone else from his family, especially not his father, and added that he had never suspected him of being a Nazi.

About The Search Engine According to BBC, the search tool was created by the German newspaper Die Zeit in cooperation with archives in Germany and the United States. According to the organisation, the response has been overwhelming.

Judith Busch, spokesperson for Die Zeit, said that the tool has been accessed millions of times and shared thousands of times since its launch at the beginning of April. Users have also shared emotional reactions. One user wrote that they had already found two close relatives, which destroys the myth that no one in their family was involved, and added that having their perspective changed at the age of 71 is a bitter shock. Historical records show that around 10.2 million Germans became members of the Nazi Party between 1925 and 1945. The membership cards, originally stored at Nazi headquarters in Munich, were almost destroyed during the final days of World War Two. However, they were saved by Hanns Huber, a paper mill director, who later handed them over to the Americans. These records later played an important role in the de-Nazification process in post-war Germany. For decades, they were kept at the Berlin Document Center before being transferred in 1994 to the German Federal Archives, with copies sent to the US National Archives in Washington DC.

French Widow, 85, Returns Home After Being Detained In US Amid Family Fight

The woman entered US to begin a new life with a retired US soldier she had met decades ago. But after her husband's death, Ross' stepson intervened to have her taken into immigration custody amid a dispute over estate

CAIRO. (Agency)

The 85-year-old widow of an American military veteran held in federal immigration detention returned home to France on Friday, according to the French government and her family.

Marie-Therese Ross entered the US last June to begin a new life with a retired US soldier she had met decades ago when he was stationed in France, court records show. But after her husband's death, Ross' stepson - a US federal employee - allegedly intervened to have her taken into immigration custody earlier this month amid a dispute over the estate, an Alabama judge found. "She returned to France this morning. This is a satisfaction for us," French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told reporters during a visit to the southern city of Montpellier on Friday. Barrot said US Immigration and Customs Enforcement methods are "not in line" with French standards and are "not acceptable to us." Federal immigration agents detained Ross in

Alabama on April 1 after she overstayed her 90-day visa, according to the US Department of Homeland Security. She was then held at a detention facility in Louisiana as French officials expressed concern about her well-being. Ross' son, Herve Goix, told The Associated Press that she had been in the process of applying for a green card when she was taken into custody. She's very tired, she's not very good, but it's difficult for her," Goix said. "We are very, very happy, but we are tired." Ross was not given the medication she needed while being held in the Louisiana detention facility, according to her attorney Kim Willingham. "She does not feel she or other inmates are being treated well within the facility," Willingham told the AP. "She did everything she was supposed to do with regard to obtaining her green card."

Ross gave up her pension and moved to Alabama last year to marry William B Ross, a retired US soldier she had met

when he was stationed in France in the 1960s, Calhoun County court records



show. But after William B Ross died in January, his two sons became embroiled in a dispute with their stepmother over the modest estate, including the home in Anniston, Alabama, where she resided. The sons rerouted mail from the residence, leading their stepmother to miss an immigration-related appointment,

Calhoun County Probate Judge Shirley A. Millwood noted in a court order earlier this month. Millwood accused one son of using his position as a federal employee to prompt the detention of his stepmother days before a hearing over the estate. Marie-Therese Ross was taken into custody in her nightgown and unable to bring her phone, passport and other identification with her, records show.

The stepson denied involvement in his stepmother's arrest in court, but Millwood said evidence indicated he knew in advance of the arrest and received a text message confirming it shortly afterward. His brother then arrived at the home to change the locks two hours after federal immigration agents removed their stepmother. In an April 10 ruling, Millwood ordered the stepsons to allow Ross to retrieve her clothes, phone, documents and other possessions from her late husband's home.

Short news

'I must repay those kind neighbours': Air India crash victim's husband faces deportation from UK

Vadodara.(Agency)

On April 9, nearly nine months after the crash of the Air India AI-171 Boeing Dreamliner flight from Ahmedabad to London's Gatwick killed his wife and only child, 28-year-old Mohammadmiya Sethwala received an email from the Home Office in the United Kingdom—rejecting his application for visa to stay on in the UK.

The authorities granted him 'immigration bail' until April 22 to allow him to exit the country and return to India.

Yet to cope with the grief of losing his wife Sadiqa and his toddler Fatima, Sethwala, a native of Vadodara, is hoping to get relief from a local court in the UK, where his solicitor is preparing to move an application to vacate the bail order.

Sethwala says that the relief, if granted, will allow him to apply afresh for a new visa. Sethwala says he had moved to the UK in 2022 on a dependent visa with his wife Sadiqa, who had arrived in the UK to pursue a course in International Business Management.

In April 2025, barely two months before his fate turned upside down on June 12, Sadiqa and Sethwala had moved to Rugby town in England, where Sadiqa had landed a job and was looking forward to receiving her work permit within three months of probation.

Man arrested for 'death threat' to Bihar CM



Ahmedabad.(Agency)

A truck driver from Banka district of Bihar, working in Gujarat, was arrested on Friday for allegedly issuing a death threat to Samrat Choudhary, a day before he took oath as Chief Minister of his home state.

The Ahmedabad Rural Police arrested Shekhar Krishna Yadav, 32, a native of Kharoda village of Belhar block of Banka district, Bihar, while he was ferrying goods from Ahmedabad to Mehsana.

Yadav, a resident of Sanand taluka in Ahmedabad, was handed over to the Bihar Police. Police said Yadav allegedly called a "close aide" of Choudhary on phone on April 14 hours after the BJP leader, who was Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, was announced as the new chief minister following the resignation of Nitish Kumar as CM. Yadav allegedly threatened to shoot the new CM and challenged officials to save him if they could.

Following the threat call, an FIR was filed at Sangrampur police station in Munger, Bihar. While the Bihar Police tracked Yadav's phone to Ahmedabad, local police said that he used to switch off his phone, making it difficult to track his location. The Sanand Police then used Call Data Records to trace his location, leading to his arrest.

Religious structures built 'illegally' on govt land demolished in Sambhal

Lucknow.(Agency)

The Sambhal district administration on Friday carried out a major drive demolishing alleged encroachments by religious structures such as eidgah, imambara, mosque and madrasas on public land in two villages.

According to the government, the action was taken following CM Yogi Adityanath's directive to remove illegal constructions from reserved-category Gram Sabha making the land free from encroachment. The administration conducted the operation in presence of heavy police force to maintain law and order.

In village Bicholi of Sambhal tehsil, the government stated illegal constructions of an imambara and an eidgah allegedly on land reserved for manure pits and grazing. The tehsildar court carried out the legal process and had issued an eviction order on January 31, the administration stated.

As no appeal was filed against the order, the administration reached the site today and removed the constructions demolishing the structures. Similarly, in village Mubarakpur Band, the administration claimed, an inquiry was conducted following complaints of encroachment on Gram Sabha land.

Constructions of a mosque and madrasa were found in the inquiry and the administration gave the concerned an opportunity to remove the structures themselves. But, the administration further claimed the caretaker and others cited lack of resources and sought administrative assistance.

Subsequently, the illegal constructions were removed on Friday in the presence of officials. A total of 1.1 hectares of land in Bicholi and Mubarakpur Band was freed from encroachment, the administration informed the government.

Lawrence Bishnoi gang 'targeting' Punjabi immigrants in California: US report

A report published by CalMatters highlights how criminal networks linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang exploit the Indian diaspora's connections to Punjab, Haryana, New Delhi, and Rajasthan.

Mumbai.(Agency)

Indian criminal networks, allegedly led by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, are systematically extorting and intimidating Punjabi immigrants in California's Central Valley through cross-border threats of violence, according to a ground investigation by journalist Gagandeep Singh published by nonprofit news organisation CalMatters on April 15. The report, which appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle the following day, draws on interviews with victims, US and Indian law enforcement officials, court records and community leaders to expose a largely under-reported campaign of fear. It also highlights how the gangs allegedly exploit the diaspora's deep family and business connections to Punjab, Haryana, New Delhi, and Rajasthan.

California is home to more than 2,50,000 Sikhs, the largest concentration in the United States. Indian police sources told CalMatters that typical targets are "real estate developers, liquor contractors, transporters, and local

businessmen" who possess assets that make them vulnerable. A spokesperson for a Haryana organised crime task force said the large Indian diaspora in California offers "a



degree of anonymity and social cover".

The extortion playbook is described as methodical. Operatives, allegedly directing operations from Indian prisons using smuggled cellphones and encrypted apps such as WhatsApp and Signal, begin with

relatively modest demands, typically between \$4,000 and \$7,000, calibrated to discourage immediate police reports.

San Joaquin County Sheriff Patrick Withrow told CalMatters: "Most of them have an international type of link to them, where it stretches back to India because the threats are being made to family members and businesses back there." He added: "They usually start with amounts between \$4,000 and \$7,000, they figure that that's a range that somebody might pay and still not contact the police." His department has handled roughly two such cases per month in recent years. Victims who pay once frequently face renewed demands months later, Withrow said. One high-profile incident involved an international kabaddi tournament in Stockton last fall organised by Harsimran Singh, president of the American Kabaddi Federation. Athletes began withdrawing after allegedly receiving direct threats from gangsters incarcerated in India.

Comments calling Army personnel 'disloyal' to their girlfriends, wives land Himachal influencer in trouble; police to move court

Himachal Pradesh Police to seek permission from the court to initiate criminal defamation proceedings against a social media influencer.

Shimla.(Agency)

The Himachal Pradesh Police Saturday decided to seek permission from a local court in Rajgarh under Sirmour district for initiating criminal defamation proceedings against a social media influencer for her alleged defamatory comments against Indian Army personnel.

The influencer, identified as Ishita Pundeer, who hails from the Nauradhar area in Sirmour, purportedly termed Army personnel disloyal towards their girlfriends and wives but only loyal towards the motherland and the country on her Facebook page on April 14. Although Pundeer tendered an apology on social media on April 16 after facing social media backlash, the police said two complaints have been filed against her — one by the Sainik



Welfare Association, Rajgarh, and another by a local Congress leader at a police station in Rajgarh. Superintendent of Police (Sirmour) Nishchint Singh Negi told The Indian Express,

"We will procure the permission to initiate criminal defamation proceedings against the woman influencer from the local court at Rajgarh on April 20... We have lodged a Daily Diary Report (DDR) on the basis of complaints (against her). Once the court grants that permission, the influencer will be formally asked to appear, so her statement can be recorded as part of the investigation or legal process." Pundeer, who has around 10 lakh followers on Instagram and over 3,500 contacts on Facebook, can be heard stating in the purported video, "Army men are definitely loyal to their nation, but they are not loyal to their girlfriends or... their wives. I have heard of many such tales, and girls will definitely agree with me, as 90 per cent of them are not loyal. I'm not talking about all of them."

Marathi mandatory in all Maharashtra schools; inspections, fines up to Rs1 lakh for violations

The directive, under the Maharashtra Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Marathi Language in All Schools Act, 2020, applies to all institutions irrespective of board, medium or management.

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Maharashtra school education department on Friday issued a fresh Government Resolution (GR) to enforce compulsory teaching of Marathi across all schools in the state, warning of penalties up to Rs 1 lakh and possible withdrawal of recognition for repeated violations.

The directive, under the Maharashtra Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Marathi Language in All Schools Act, 2020, applies to all institutions irrespective of board, medium or management. It also mandates the appointment of qualified Marathi teachers in every school.

As part of a multi-tier enforcement mechanism, divisional Deputy Directors of Education have been designated as competent authorities to ensure compliance. Schools will be

inspected within two months of the start of the new academic year. Institutions found flouting the norm will be issued notices and given 15 days to respond, failing which fines may be imposed and immediate implementation ordered.



The GR also outlines an appeal process, allowing school managements to challenge penalties before the Director of Education within 30 days. Persistent non-compliance may lead to hearings before the Commissioner of Education and eventual cancellation of

recognition. However, activists have criticised the move as delayed, pointing to poor implementation despite multiple GRs since the law came into force on April 1, 2020. They also flagged the absence of

a clear database identifying compliant and non-compliant schools.

Sushil Shejule, coordinator of the Marathi School Management Association, who has long been demanding strict implementation of the 2020 Act, said, "Multiple GRs have been issued in this regard over the past six years, but implementation remains incomplete. Despite our repeated demands, the authorities have failed to compile a clear list of schools complying with or in violation of the mandate. This latest GR issued ahead of the new academic year is yet another eyewash."

'1,467 members' voting eligibility under question,' Bombay HC reserves verdict on Asiatic Society polls

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Bombay High Court on Friday concluded hearing and reserved its verdict on pleas challenging March 13 order of Charity Commissioner that deferred elections for the managing committee of the Asiatic Society in south Mumbai, and ordered preparation of a fresh list of eligible voters.

In doing so, the Court said that while it would order conducting of elections, it was inclined to accept state's submission that nearly 1,467 new members who were enrolled after October 3, 2025 despite the scrutiny committee's term had expired, cannot be made eligible for voting for the elections.

Established in 1804, the Asiatic Society is among India's oldest institutions advancing research and scholarship in areas such as history, archaeology, linguistics, and literature. A single-judge



bench led by Justice Farhan P Dubash was hearing batch of pleas, including one filed by former Congress Rajya Sabha member and senior journalist Kumar Ketkar and others.

These challenged the Charity Commissioner Amogh Kaloti's March 13 order, which flagged "serious questions" regarding the managing committee's

operations and pointed to reports of missing rare books from the Asiatic Library. Elections for 19 seats were set to be between panels headed by Ketkar and former BJP Rajya Sabha member Vinay Sahasrabudde.

On Thursday, April 16, Justice Dubash, who had earlier stayed implementation of the impugned order, had indicated that he will pass a "practical" order for an entirely fresh election process along with fresh nominations and voter scrutiny, if the parties agree on the terms. On Friday, Advocate General (AG) Milind Sathe representing the Charity Commissioner submitted that after the tenure of scrutiny committee that recommends memberships to managing committee had come to an end on September 27, last year. Sathe said that despite this, even after earlier election programme was announced on October 3, that year, the Scrutiny

Committee approved total of 1,467 applications for membership between October 16, 2025 and March, 2026 and the same was as per invalid and illegal procedure. AG Sathe said that sub-committee constituted by the Charity Commissioner cannot scrutinise eligibility of over 1400 persons enrolled beyond cut-off date and the panel can prepare and publish voters' list as of October 3, 2025 and polls can be conducted thereafter.

However, senior advocate Atul Damle for the petitioners submitted that once the Charity Commissioner had scrapped the earlier election procedure, there was no question of freezing the voters' list as on October 3, 2025.

Justice Dubash then questioned petitioners as to why should the list of voters be permitted to extend if the nominations of people contesting elections remained frozen despite election date was extended.

Accused from Agra held in firing outside Rohit Shetty's residence

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Mumbai Crime Branch, in a joint operation with the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF), has arrested an Agra-based man in connection with the firing outside filmmaker Rohit Shetty's residence in Juhu.

The accused, Pradeep Kumar Ramsingh Jathav alias Gath, is the 15th person to be arrested in the case. Police said he was nabbed near Chhadami Math on the Agra-Etawah Road after nearly two months of pursuit, aided by technical surveillance and intelligence inputs. He has been booked for his alleged role in the conspiracy.

During interrogation, police said, Jathav told investigators that he had been following posts linked to the Shubham Lonkar gang on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram and was influenced by them. He allegedly took part in the planning and execution of the firing along with other associates.

Last month, police had arrested another key accused from Agra, Golu Pandit alias Pradeep Sharma, identified as a member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and the head of its 'Agra module'. He was apprehended near his village when he had returned to meet a family member. Investigators said Pandit facilitated contact between the main shooter Deepak Sharma and alleged conspirators Shubham Lonkar and Arzoo Bishnoi, and played a crucial role in the plot.

So far, the Crime Branch has arrested 15 accused from Agra, Pune and Haryana. According to officials, the attack was meticulously planned. Sharma and an associate conducted multiple recce visits outside Shetty's residence before the incident on February 1.

PCB puts shed demolition at cemetery on hold

Pune.(Agency)

The Pune Cantonment Board (PCB) on Friday had to put in abeyance its decision to demolish a shed used to conduct church services at the Christian Cemetery, Dhobi Ghat, on Shankar Sheth Road. PCB CEO Vidyadhar Pawar told The Indian Express that when the board's demolition team went to the spot to demolish the "unauthorised structure", they found a large crowd gathered there. "We decided to temporarily stay the demolition considering it could upset law and order," he said.

The board had also sought police bandobast for the demolition. According to Robin Mahadkar, Pastor of Shiloh Church of Christ, Pune, "They are in lawful possession of the property for three decades and have been carrying out activities in good faith for the welfare of the community."

According to Lucas Kedari, president, Regional Christian Society of Pune, "Prayers and spiritual gatherings, social service and community support activities, de-addiction awareness and counselling programmes are being conducted."

An application has been submitted by Pastor Mahadkar to PCB that these activities were being conducted for the benefit of society, especially for needy and vulnerable people. They have appealed that the proposed demolition will adversely affect these ongoing social and humanitarian activities and urged PCB to give an opportunity to complete legal formalities. In the application, they have urged the PCB to reconsider and revise the demolition order issued for the church boundary points/structures and grant a stay on any demolition activity until the documents are verified and a joint survey is conducted.

Women's credit access: To ensure borrowing means building

A new report, titled From Borrowers to Builders, presents numbers that, at first glance, should be cause for celebration. The study by TransUnion Cibil, Niti Aayog and MicroSave says Indian women now hold a formal credit portfolio worth 776 lakh crore—a 4.8-fold increase since 2017, outpacing the 2.9-fold growth recorded for borrowers overall. Credit penetration among women has risen from 19 percent in 2017 to 36 percent to 2025. Women with active business loans have grown at a 31 percent compound annual rate over the past three years, nearly double the pace of overall commercial credit.

However, once you move past the numbers, a more complicated picture emerges—one that raises a question the report points toward but does not quite answer: credit for what, exactly? And on whose terms? Consider the composition of first loans. As women enter the formal credit sector, their borrowings are not for business investment or education. Comprising gold loans, consumer durables and personal loans, such first-time formal credit finances consumption. While not undesirable in themselves, these are the products financial systems find easiest to sell to women—low-ticket, collateral-backed and tied to household expenditure rather than enterprise ambition. The report notes housing finance is one secured category where women show rising participation. However, much of this is as co-applicants, riding on a husband's or father's application to access stamp duty concessions. Is that financial inclusion or financial adjacency? The report also highlights the microfinance segment's attempts at inclusion. For two decades, joint-liability group lending to women from low-income households has been held up as the gold standard of inclusive finance. It has genuinely lifted millions. However, faced with over-indebtedness and rising non-performing assets, lenders have turned to existing borrowers rather than expanding the base. The share of first-time women borrowers in microfinance originations has slipped from 28 percent in 2022 to 24 percent in 2025. Expanding financial inclusion requires widening the system, not merely deepening it. The report's most valuable—yet most unsettling—section is its field research among rural women nano-entrepreneurs in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh running tiny businesses, owning smartphones and with 60-70 percent accepting digital payments. By standard metrics, the recorded 161 women entrepreneurs are digitally included. However, the researchers find that digital access is not the same as digital agency. Transactions are often assisted by family members. Decisions over credit, pricing and procurement are frequently not the woman's own.

In Kerala, 38 percent of women entrepreneurs reported 'time poverty'—the double burden of running a business while managing a household—as the principal barrier to sustained digital engagement.

This points to a structural problem no amount of UPI adoption can fix on its own. India's formal economy has historically been built around a model of the economically visible citizen—someone with a salary slip, a tax record or a provident fund account. Women running nano-enterprises out of their homes, trading in cash and embedded in informal networks have never fit that model. Digital finance has helped, but the report is candid that women's digital footprints are often thin, inconsistent and interrupted. Three things actually need to change. First, lenders and policymakers must stop treating access as the finish line. Nearly two-thirds of credit-eligible Indian women still have no formal loan. Of those who do, nearly half have held only a single product in their lifetimes. The report recommends tracking graduation rates, multi-product holding and enterprise growth rather than raw disbursement volumes. While these initiatives may make the numbers suddenly look unimpressive and politically undesirable, these are what need to be measured.

Women's Reservation shouldn't be linked to distraction of delimitation

If the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam were to be linked to population counts, it would give women's reservation up to 48-49% which is their demographic share, not 33%

In all the din of rising debate on women's reservation in the run up to the Special Session of Parliament that begins today (April 16-18), one core point is being clouded over. Women's reservation is not linked to the Census and delimitation. If it was linked to population counts, it would give women's reservation up to 48-49%, which is their demographic share. Since the 2023 Act reserves 33% instead, it can be implemented at any time. The government's attempt to tie women's reservation to an increase in seats and fresh delimitation in the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, is therefore wrong. More worrying still, the Bill erases the link between seats' expansion and the Census, suggesting that a new Delimitation Commission be told to draw boundaries for 815 electoral constituencies. How can a decision on the number of total Lok Sabha seats be taken without a population count? Even more pertinently, how can 815 constituencies be drawn without a population count?

The government's answer is to use the 2011 Census since the ongoing Census's results will only be available in 2028-2030, too late for delimitation before the 2029 elections. But the Constitutional changes proposed in the Bill leave it entirely to any party in office to decide the strength and composition of the legislature. That is very dangerous. Since the government delayed beginning the Census until 2026, we are being told that it is better to simply accept an arbitrary figure decided upon by the ruling party, with no basis in data and therefore no claim to fair representation. But to cover up one mistake with another that has grave consequences for voters is unacceptable. This Special Session should not be used to distract attention from women's reservation with talk of increasing seats and delimitation. Unlike women's reservation, expansion and delimitation are linked to population counts. Any increase of seats and fresh delimitation should only be undertaken after the ongoing Census' results are published. What this Special Session can do is restore the focus on women's reservation. It should amend the 2023 Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam to delete all references to

the Census and delimitation, since, as we have said above, it can be done on the current strength of the legislatures too, if parliamentarians agree on doing it before the 2029 general election. Secondly, any increase in the number of women's seats depends on overall increases: that is, it will be done automatically after any future seat expansions. Any proposal to replace the 2026 Census with the 2011 Census is thus infructuous. The next glaring gap in the 2023 Act is the failure to specify that the 33% reserved women's seats will be allocated to states in proportion to each state's existing seat share.



Maintaining a balance between equal elector weight and fair states' representation is essential to the federal nature of the Indian Union. The principle of ensuring that states that have invested in human development, especially women's welfare, education and financial independence are protected rather than penalized led to the freezes on Lok Sabha expansion in 1976 and 2001. The proposed Constitutional Amendment Bill omits any protection for the demographically and economically well-performing states; there is no clause that even freezes the current states' seat shares at the same proportion. That clause is missing in the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam too. It needs to be inserted, saying that the 33% allocation in the Lok Sabha will be

distributed to states as a one-third proportion of their current seats' allocation.

Similarly, though 8% of the 33% women's seats are reserved for SC/ST women, there is no provision to provide state funding for their election campaigns. Women from other vulnerable and marginalized groups might need funding too. This is another clause to be inserted in the existing 2023 Act.

Finally, the Special session should resolve to introduce a new Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, for 33% reservation of women's seats in the Rajya Sabha, in the upcoming monsoon session. When Lok Sabha reservation was agreed in 2023, why is Rajya Sabha reservation lagging behind? These points and others have been made by a women's petition to MPs, organized by an ad-hoc group called the Women's Coalition for Women's Representation. The petition has been signed by over 500 people from over 65 civil society groups, from individuals to organizations spanning women's rights, LGBTQI demands, equal representation, municipal councils, panchayats and Mahila Mandals, and child rights. The concerns of these groups deserve to be heard, as do their proposed amendments. As do the concerns of Opposition parties. Government and ruling party spokespeople seek to present any

criticism of the proposed Bills as a failure to uphold women's rights. But the points made by these 65+ civil society groups are not merely opposition to the Bills, they are suggestions from women on ways in which women's reservation can be strengthened as well as implemented. They are also points that the Opposition parties can accept, indeed should accept. If the government allows proper discussion on and acceptance of them in this Special Session, then the much desired parliamentary unity that the Government talks of might be achievable. Without showing openness to Opposition and civil society views, the government sends the message of arbitrary high-handedness. The ball is in their court this time.

Sewers of death: Troubling gap between policy & practice

Prosecutions are rare and systemic reform even rarer

THE tragic death of two sanitation workers during sewer cleaning in Haryana's Nuh, with another battling for life, is a pointer to a system that continues to fail its most invisible workers. Despite a legal ban, hazardous manual cleaning of sewers persists, exposing a troubling gap between policy and practice. These deaths are rarely "accidents." They are the predictable outcome of sending workers into toxic, oxygen-deprived spaces without protective gear, training or supervision. The presence of lethal gases such as methane and hydrogen sulphide in sewers is well known. Yet, safety protocols are routinely ignored, often by contractors seeking to cut costs and by authorities that look the other way. In the past five years, at least 315 sanitation workers have died cleaning sewers and septic tanks across India, with Haryana being among the worst affected. The country outlawed manual scavenging under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, but enforcement



remains weak. Mechanised cleaning, mandated as the norm, is either unavailable or underutilised, particularly in smaller towns. When deaths occur, compensation may be announced, but accountability is diluted. Prosecutions are rare and systemic reform even rarer.

There is also an uncomfortable social dimension. Sanitation work continues to be performed largely by marginalised communities, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability and neglect. The persistence of such practices raises fundamental questions about dignity, equality and the value placed on human life. Decisive action is needed. Strict criminal liability must be enforced against those responsible for violating safety norms. Urban local bodies must ensure universal mechanisation of sewer cleaning. Most importantly, the state must recognise that these are not faceless labourers but citizens entitled to safety and dignity. Until then, sewers will remain silent death traps and the promise of reform, an empty one.

The imperial design of US nationalism

Education serves as an innocuous tool in America's grand project of global dominance

AN American businessman asked a surprising question soon after we had taken adjoining economy seats on a transatlantic flight. It seemed as if the question had bothered him for a long time. In the privacy of an aeroplane, he felt safe enough to ask: "Can you tell me who this guy called Shakespeare was?" I was puzzled, but I smiled. We had introduced ourselves a few minutes ago. He was running an ancillary business for a big computer company. Over the years, I have faced many complex questions from my students, but the difficulty with this question lay elsewhere. If someone didn't know who Shakespeare was, how would you establish his importance? To say that the Bard was a renowned dramatist wouldn't necessarily make sense to a middle-aged businessman. He had completed his education and a considerable part of his professional life without worrying about his ignorance of Shakespeare. Yet, there must be a cognitive void that he was aware of. He wanted to fill that void that very night. When I narrated this story to a friend who teaches literature, she rightly wondered why I felt so uptight about Shakespeare. Perhaps it was a sign of my post-colonial education, I conceded. Decolonisation is the current buzz, and it is growing comfortably alongside an unrecognised counter-trend inspired by the super-speciality focus associated with American education. Cultivation of literary sensibility is now the precinct of 'liberal arts'—the term American universities have exported. Our private universities have adopted it with passion, while despite a much-publicised policy shift, public universities are doggedly carrying on with the old nomenclature of arts faculty departments and degrees. And at the same time, American-style hyper-vocationalism is growing in our private universities. America is geographically distant, but our mental geography imparts it an emotional, inspiring

proximity. Generations of educated youth have been motivated to study and settle there. Successive Indian governments may have entertained doubts about US designs in South Asia, but few would doubt that the public perception in India has treated America as a symbol of opportunity and aspiration. Until quite recently, America symbolised democratic concerns and sensibility. The sight of Indians being sent back handcuffed on military planes created a shock which was soon absorbed. Nowadays, America's denial of global concerns like climate change has been perceived as one of the many eccentricities of the Donald Trump administration. His social media posts have similarly caused amusement more than serious surprise, and certainly not revulsion. His recent announcement of the imminent death of a civilisation was no exception. Abusive words for the nation that America regards as an evil enemy seemed to cross a vague grey, rather than red, line in public discourse. Did the death of a civilisation contain a nuclear threat, many wondered.

America dropped two atomic bombs during World War II, but no US President has expressed regret or vowed future avoidance. Also, there has never been a consensus that American children should learn about Hiroshima with embarrassment. During Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's visit to the US in March, Trump did not hesitate to mention Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941. Four years later, Japan had surrendered when the US dropped freshly manufactured bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Although history books make it a point to deny that these endgame attacks on the two Japanese cities were acts of retribution, any reference to Pearl Harbour usually invokes the nuclear conclusion of the war. Apparently,

Trump did not mind awakening in his Japanese visitor's mind the terrible memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Throughout the ongoing war with Iran, he has maintained a persona of a powerful man who stays cool and jokes about inflicting a hellish experience on ordinary people.

Trump represents a country famous for many universities. They hold a fascination for our youth. I have lost many



of my bright and hard-working students to Trump's nation. He is the democratically chosen leader of his country. If you believe that education should nurture certain basic values like concern for life, his description of bombs and bomber planes as beautiful sounds alarming. When he turns funny in front of journalists, many of them can be heard laughing, suggesting that he is not alone in entertaining violent thoughts. His discourse does represent a wider change in America's public mind. Perhaps it is not a change, but merely an

evolution—and we are expected to ignore its meaning.

A few years ago, an opportunity to grasp the nature of American nationalism came my way quite unexpectedly. A senior friend from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) told me that his son was not going to return home. Nothing extraordinary, I thought. He had finished his M.Phil in computer science. I knew that academic opportunities in computer science must be greater and more attractive in California than in Bengaluru. My JNU friend took out an envelope from his briefcase. It contained the report of his son's M.Phil thesis examiner in America. I looked at the report without much hope of understanding it because the discourse of computer science is Greek to me. But the last paragraph caught my eye. It pointed out with sharp clarity the link between research and nationalism. The examiner had recorded his view that this young man must be discouraged from going home because his work was necessary for maintaining America's leadership in the field.

The idea that knowledge is power is old and common, but its application to a gigantic political project is unique to America. Its project of global dominance has necessitated a model of nationalism which permits easy transfer of talent and feelings. The engineering of this transfer is essential to the imperial design of American nationalism. Education serves as an innocuous tool in this grand project. The popular metaphor that America is a melting pot does not reveal this political ambition.

It is not the first time in history that imperialism and nationalism have come together. Several European nations exemplified this blend in the 19th century when they were consolidating their economic hold across far-flung colonies.

Chester Hill row: Himachal farmers approach Solan DC over land law violations

A delegation of farmers in Himachal Pradesh on Friday met Solan Deputy Commissioner Manmohan Sharma to highlight the serious issues arising from the Chester Hill housing project in Ber Gaon and adjoining villages. The delegation comprising Himachal Kisan Sabha leaders — Mohit Verma, Pyarelal Verma, Keshav, Rakesh, and Nitish Thakur — and a few residents submitted

Shimla. (Agency)

A delegation of farmers in Himachal Pradesh on Friday met Solan Deputy Commissioner Manmohan Sharma to highlight the serious issues arising from the Chester Hill housing project in Ber Gaon and adjoining villages. The delegation comprising Himachal Kisan Sabha leaders — Mohit Verma, Pyarelal Verma, Keshav, Rakesh, and Nitish Thakur — and a few residents submitted a memorandum to Sharma at his office in Solan.

The delegation demanded that the illegal dumping in the natural drains and surrounding areas as part of the project be stopped immediately, and that the debris be removed to restore the natural flow of the drain. It also highlighted that traditional access routes to pastures that

have been blocked should be reopened without delay. Further, the Kisan Sabha urged strict implementation of Section 118 of the Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and Land Reforms Act to curb the growing trend of outside elements forcing farmers to sell their land.

"Earlier also, villagers had filed many complaints, but no concrete action was taken. Today, we have again submitted a memorandum. DC Manmohan Sharma assured us that appropriate action will be taken, but we received such assurances earlier also," Mohit Verma, Kisan Sabha office-bearer, said. CPI (M) leader seeks



action against Chief Secretary. Meanwhile, CPI (M) leaders on Friday reiterated their demand to shift acting Chief Secretary Sanjay Gupta, who had

termed SDM Poonam Bansal's probe report on the Chester Hill project as 'violative of law'. The leaders also urged the Himachal High Court to take suo-moto action on the issue for violating Section 118 of the HP Tenancy and Land Reforms Act, 1972, alleging a direct attack on the spirit of Himachal Pradesh.

CPI(M) general secretary Sanjay Chauhan said, "The state government is saying that DC Solan has been probing the matter.

Do you think a DC can take action against the sitting Chief Secretary? This presumption is among many reasons why we also want the Himachal High Court to take a suo-moto

on this issue".

He recalled the timely intervention of his party in 2015 when a senior Trinamool Congress leader had tried to acquire a huge area of land in violation of Section 118. "At that time too, it was the CPI (M) that raised the issue, following which the land was vested with the state government," he said.

The Chester Hill controversy

Chester Hill, a luxury mega housing project proposed between 2019 and 2025, has been in the eye of a storm over allegations of violation of the state's land laws.

There were complaints alleging benami transactions and violations of Section 118 of the HP Land Reforms and Tenancy Act in Phase-II and Phase-IV of the gated housing project being developed by NG Estate, a private developer.

Short news

Two fatal accidents in UP: One burnt alive in Bahraich, another electrocuted in Badaun

Bahraich/Badaun. (Agency)

Two separate tragic incidents in different districts of Uttar Pradesh claimed the lives of two men on Friday morning. A devastating road accident occurred on the Nanpara-Lakhimpur highway in Bahraich district, between Murawanpurwa and Kudwa villages. A motorcycle and a tempo collided head-on around 5 AM, resulting in a fatal outcome.

The victim, 35-year-old Rajesh Kumar, a resident of Katalapurwa village under Somai Goudhi, was reportedly on his way to Pakdiya Diwan village to deliver a wedding invitation. During the journey, his motorcycle collided with an oncoming tempo. The impact of the collision was so severe that both vehicles veered off the road. The motorcycle caught fire immediately, trapping Rajesh Kumar, who was burnt alive on the spot. The tempo driver fled the scene after the accident.

Upon receiving information from passersby, Motipur police and fire services rushed to the site. The fire was brought under control, and the severely charred victim was taken to the Community Health Centre in Motipur, where doctors declared him dead.

Police have sent the body for postmortem and launched a search for the absconding tempo driver. In a separate incident in Badaun district, a 32-year-old man died after coming into contact with a high-tension electric line in Dhimarpara village under Wazirganj police station limits. The deceased, Arvind, son of Rachhpal Yadav, was reportedly working on repairing an 11,000-volt power line when the electricity supply suddenly resumed. He suffered severe burns due to the electric shock and died on the spot.

Himachal sees political sparring over women's quota issue ahead of PRI elections

Shimla. (Agency)

The fallout from the defeat of the Constitutional Amendment Bill on women's reservation in Parliament, has quickly entered Himachal Pradesh's political arena, sharpening the exchange between the Congress and the BJP.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur turned the national development into a state-level political flashpoint, with both sides framing it to suit their contrasting narratives ahead of the upcoming Panchayati Raj elections.

BJP's Jai Ram Thakur alleged on X that the "anti-women empowerment face of the opposition once again came to the fore in the Lok Sabha." He said the Constitutional Amendment Bill required for the Nari Shakti Vandan Act was not allowed to be passed by Congress, TMC, DMK, and the Samajwadi Party. Calling the blocking of the bill and the "celebration" of its defeat condemnable, he said such conduct was "beyond imagination."

He further stated that the proposal to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies had been stalled repeatedly by the opposition. "This is not the first time Congress and its allies have done this. Their thinking is neither in the best interest of women nor the country," he said.

Thakur warned that the opposition would "pay a heavy political price" for obstructing what he called a decades-long effort to fulfil a long-pending promise. He added that the BJP would continue its fight to secure rights for "Matri Shakti."

Canada fast-tracks study permits for Indian master's and PhD students in 2026 : No cap, no PAL

After sharp fall in 2025 permits, new IRCC push promises quicker approvals, family entry and post-study work pathways

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Amid a sharp decline in study permits for Indian students in 2025, Canada has stepped up efforts to attract high-achieving candidates for postgraduate education. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has launched a targeted campaign to promote easier processes, faster doctoral approvals, family accompaniment and clear pathways to work and permanent residency.

The campaign, titled "Get your graduate degree in Canada", highlights four key benefits for international students. These include simpler processing for most graduate applicants, a two-week processing timeline for PhD visas, the option for spouses and children to accompany students, and post-graduation work rights that can lead to permanent residency.

The measures follow policy changes that came into effect on January 1, 2026. Under these, students enrolling in master's and doctoral programmes at public universities designated as learning institutions are exempt from the national study-permit cap.

They are also not required to submit a Provincial Attestation Letter, a condition that had affected undergraduate and college applicants. The move comes after a steep fall in the number of Indian students going to



Canada. According to IRCC data released in February 2026, study permits issued to Indian nationals dropped from about 188,715 in 2024 to around 94,605 in 2025, a decline of nearly 50%. Rejection rates also rose sharply in several months, driven by stricter financial checks, authenticity verification and overall caps on new permits.

New international student arrivals fell by nearly 60% in the first eight months of 2025 compared to the previous year, reducing India's share from over 30% in 2024 to below 10% by late 2025.

At the same time, Canada has expanded academic ties with India. Under the Canada-India Talent and Innovation Strategy announced in early 2026, more than 20 Canadian university leaders visited India and signed 13 new partnerships. These include collaborations between the University of British Columbia and O.P. Jindal Global University, Dalhousie University and SRM Institute of Science and Technology, and research partnerships involving McGill University and the University of Toronto in areas such as artificial intelligence, clean energy and healthcare. Other linkages involve Panjab University, IIT Tirupati and IISc.

Officials said these partnerships aim to create smoother pathways for students, including joint and dual degrees, research collaboration and scholarships, especially at the graduate level.

Cement Transportation over Northeast Frontier Railway Witnesses Rapid Growth During 2025-26

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 18th April: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved unpre-

cedented progress in transportation of cement cargo by rail and loading & unloading of cement traffic across its terminal during financial year 2025-26. Cement traffic recorded a growth of 7.8% in inward movement, increasing from 9.05 million tonnes in 2024-25 to 9.76 million tonnes in 2025-26. On the loading front, Cement witnessed a remarkable rise of 152.7%. These achievements reflect NFR's sustained efforts to enhance freight efficiency and support infrastructure development across the Northeast region. One of the most notable achievements

was the successful unloading of the first ever cement rake at Sairang Railway Station on 14th September, 2025. This

major boost to regional con-



rake which was loaded from STAR Cement siding near Guwahati was the first freight

train to be operated over the newly constructed Bairabi - Sairang rail route marking a

major boost to regional connectivity. Further strengthening cement cargo operations, NFR achieved the milestone of unloading the first-ever cement rake at Molvom Railway Station in Nagaland on 24th September 2025. The rake consisted of 41 wagons loaded with cement from M/s My Home Industries Pvt. Ltd., Telangana. The Railway also placed its first goods train with an electric locomotive at the busy Star Cement Siding at Tetelia on 11th March 2025, which had handled 50 rakes in the month of February, 2025. In another landmark development, the first-ever goods train containing cement was successfully placed at Nischintapur terminal near Agartala on 24th March 2025. The consignment from Star Cement siding at Tetelia marked a historic moment under the Agartala-Akhaura New Rail Link Project, further strengthening freight connectivity in Tripura and the Northeast.

Himachal: Sirmaur influencer's offensive statement on soldiers sparks uproar, case registered

Nahan. (Agency)

A social media influencer from Sirmaur, who allegedly made offensive remarks about soldiers' wives and girlfriends, has sparked a major controversy.

As the matter escalated, police filed an FIR (first information report) against the accused influencer.

According to reports, a video of the influencer went viral on social media, in which she made controversial remarks about the families of army personnel. The video sparked widespread public outrage. Veterans, social organizations, and citizens strongly condemned the statement and demanded strict action. Protests were also held at several locations. Police officials stated that after receiving the complaint, a case has been registered under relevant sections and an investigation has been initiated. The accused will be questioned if

necessary. It is noteworthy that Ishita Pundir, a social media influencer from Deva Manal village in Naohradhar tehsil, is accused of making comments about Indian Army soldiers. After the video went viral and sparked nationwide backlash, Ishita deleted it from her Facebook page. However, by then, it had been shared hundreds of times, and many people had downloaded and preserved it as evidence. Following this, Ishita Pundir made another video and apologized to the soldiers. On 20th, officials from the Rajgarh Ex-Servicemen Association filed a complaint at the Rajgarh police station alleging derogatory comments against soldiers. They also demanded an investigation into Ishita Pundir's account. Retired Naib Subedar Brijmohan said in a statement to the media that most of Ishita Pundir's followers are from Pakistan and

Bangladesh.

He suspects that Ishita Pundir may have made this video at the behest of an ISI agent to defame the country's soldiers. He also demanded that the police and government investigate Ishita Pundir's bank account. It is alleged that Ishita has previously posted several controversial posts.

Recently, Ishita Pundir said in a video that "soldiers may be loyal to the country and Mother India, but more than 90 per cent of soldiers are not loyal to their wives or girlfriends." When soldiers return home on leave, they hang out with four or five girlfriends. This statement sparked a sharp reaction on social media. One user wrote, "Ishita Pundir, do as much as you can to avoid deleting it later. Commenting on soldiers is unfortunate." Following the controversy, Ishita Pundir publicly

apologized via social media.

However, public anger remains unabated. Many are still demanding strict action and accountability. This matter, concerning the honour of the country's soldiers, is not limited to a single statement; it also highlights the sensitivity of society, where no compromise with the honour of soldiers is acceptable.

Sirmaur District Superintendent of Police, Nishchay Singh Negi, stated that a case has been registered. Further action will be taken in the matter after investigating every aspect.

The administration has appealed to the people to maintain decorum on social media and avoid making statements that hurt the sentiments of any section or community. This entire matter has once again sparked a debate on responsibility and limits of expression on social media.

Pune airport runway opens for flights after shutdown due to IAF jet's hard landing

Pune Airport and police sources indicated that the aircraft may have suffered an undercarriage failure upon touchdown, leading to the blockage of the runway. The runway of the airport has now been restored and declared operational.

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Pune international airport runway has reopened for normal flight operations after it was temporarily shut down following an incident involving an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft hard landing during a routine night sortie at Air Force Station Lohegaon. The incident occurred around 10:25 pm on Friday, with both aircrew safe and no damage to civil property.

The runway remained closed for about nine hours as repairs and safety checks were carried out. IAF personnel worked overnight to restore operations, making the runway functional by 8:00 am on Saturday. Departures resumed at 7:30 am and arrivals at 8:00 am, with air traffic normalising gradually. "Reportedly Two pilots who were on a night sortie. Due to



the incident, all inbound and outbound commercial air traffic were halted until runway clearance was completed. This took around 9 hours," Mos civil aviation Murlidhar Mohol said on Saturday. Late Friday night, IAF said that the runway at Pune airport was temporarily unavailable following an incident involving one of its

aircraft, disrupting both inbound and outbound commercial flight operations.

"Pune runway is temporarily unavailable due to an incident involving an IAF aircraft. The aircrew are safe and there is no damage to civil property. Efforts are underway to operationalise the runway and resume normal operations at the earliest," the IAF said.

The Indian Air Force in a post on X later confirmed that the runway at Pune Airport, which was temporarily unavailable due to an incident involving an Indian Air Force aircraft, has now been restored and declared operational. All necessary safety inspections and clearances have been completed. Operations are resuming in a phased manner.

Airport and police sources indicated that the aircraft may have suffered an undercarriage failure upon touchdown, leading to the blockage of the runway. However, detailed

technical specifics have not yet been officially disclosed.

Authorities at Pune International Airport said the incident took place at approximately 10:25 pm. Following the occurrence, air traffic was immediately suspended as a safety precaution.

The airport, which operates under a dual-use model integrating civilian flights with an active Air Force station at Lohegaon, saw a complete halt in commercial operations. During this period, airlines were notified of the disruption, and flight schedules were impacted accordingly.

Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol also confirmed the situation, reiterating that passenger safety remained uncompromised.

He stated that authorities worked closely to ensure the runway was cleared at the earliest and normal operations resumed without delay.

Air India pilot deported from US over alleged marijuana possession

New Delhi.(Agency)

An Air India pilot, travelling as a passenger on a flight from the national capital to San Francisco, was allegedly found in possession of marijuana and was sent back by the US authorities this week, according to sources. The pilot has been derostered, one of the sources told PTI.

"One of our crew members travelling from Delhi to San Francisco on 14 April, for positioning to operate a subsequent flight, was found to be inadmissible as per local laws and has been sent back to India," an airline spokesperson said in a statement on Friday.



According to sources, the co-pilot was allegedly found in possession of marijuana. The pilot was "deadheading" to San Francisco. An internal probe has been initiated by Air India, sources added.

Generally, 'deadheading' refers to a flight crew travelling as a passenger to his or her base station or to another place for duty.

The airline said appropriate strict disciplinary action would be taken as per laid-down company policies. "Air India maintains zero-tolerance towards any violation of the law and upholds the highest standards of safety, compliance, and professional conduct," it said in the statement. Further details could not be ascertained.

All accused arrested in assault on Army Brigadier and son in Delhi's Vasant Enclave

New Delhi.(Agency)

Four more people have been arrested in connection with the assault on an Indian Army Brigadier and his son in southwest Delhi's Vasant Enclave area. A senior police officer said that all remaining absconding accused in the case have now been arrested.

The accused have been identified as Surjit Singh (36), Sunil Sharma (53), Ashish (32), all residents of Mehram Nagar, and Satender (35), a resident of Bhiwani in Haryana.

Earlier, two accused had been arrested, and they have been identified as Satender, alias Sonu (49), and Sanjay Sharma (56), residents of Mehram Nagar.

According to police, Surjit is known to the main accused, Satender, and all of them were sitting together in Mehram Nagar when Satender received a call regarding the altercation in Vasant Enclave. Thereafter, they all went to the spot in Surjit's Hyundai Aura.

After reaching there, a quarrel broke out, after which they returned to their homes. Later, upon learning that a case had been registered, they absconded but were eventually apprehended and arrested. The car has been recovered, and further examination is under process, police said.

According to another police officer, the accused are evasive and not responding to the questions properly. The incident seems to be a spontaneous one. The incident unfolded on the night of April 11 when, as per the complainants, the brigadier and his son were on a walk after their dinner.

The Brigadier's son said "After dinner, my father and I were going for a walk. On the main road near the society exit, two people were drinking in a car. My father told them that this is a residential area and they should not drink here. They responded that they were locals and would drink there only; we should mind our own business".

Meanwhile, his father asked him to call the police but he said that the PCR was delayed. It took about 15 to 20 minutes for the PCR to arrive. In the meantime, the accused persons were also making phone calls. He added, "They continued drinking and later some eight people came out of two cars and started beating us". While speaking to the media, the Brigadier's wife said that the accused used abusive language and passed inappropriate comments. She further alleged that when she approached the policeman again, he refused to help and said that he would not intervene.

9 Kerala teachers die in Tamil Nadu after bus veers off road, hits multiple vehicles

New Delhi.(Agency)

At least nine people in Tamil Nadu's Salem district died, and several were left injured after a State Transport Corporation bus had a head-on collision with multiple vehicles on the Salem-Coimbatore national highway. All those who lost their lives in the tragedy were teachers by profession, news agency ANI reported.

As per a statement shared by the District Collector's office, the bus, which was heading to Salem from Coimbatore, suddenly veered off the road after the driver lost control while manoeuvring the 13th hairpin bend. It crashed into a two-wheeler and an autorickshaw, which was carrying nearly 10 passengers, and subsequently plunged into the 9th hairpin bend. The bus was carrying 13 tourists from Kerala's Perinthalmanna. Out of these 13,

eight people (1 male and seven females) died immediately on the spot. The five injured, which included the driver, two male juveniles aged between 17 and 18



years, and two females, were immediately rescued and taken to the government hospital in Pollachi. One of the injured later succumbed to their injuries.

The state authorities in Tamil Nadu reacted swiftly to the incident. Upon learning about the accident, two

senior police officers rushed to the spot and supervised the rescue and relief operations. Fire and Rescue Services personnel were also deployed to ensure a prompt evacuation of the injured.

PM, KERALA CM CONDOLE DEATHS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his grief over the loss of lives. "Distressed to hear about the mishap in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. I extend my heartfelt condolences to those who have lost their loved ones in the mishap. Prayers for the speedy recovery of those injured," the Prime Minister's office shared on X. Kerala Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, also expressed his condolences over the death of the Kerala citizens.

As per a report by PTI, Vijayan also gave instructions to the authorities to ensure the best possible treatment for all the injured people.

'Did Not Get Any Internal Complaint, Nida Khan Not HR Head': TCS Amid Probe

New Delhi.(Agency)

Amid the ongoing police probe into allegations of religious conversion and sexual misconduct at its Nashik unit, IT giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Friday said that it had not received any complaints through its internal channels on the matter.

"A preliminary review of the systems and records pertaining to the Nashik unit indicates that we have not received any complaints of the nature that are being alleged on either our ethics or POSH (prevention of sexual harassment) channels," the tech giant said.

The company also announced an oversight panel and engagement of external entities in its internal probe. Finance industry veteran Keki Mistry, an independent director on the company board, will be chairing the oversight committee, as per the statement. Police have arrested seven employees, including six men and a woman HR head.

Another employee, Nida Khan, is on the run.

TCS Nashik Case: What Are The Allegations

The incident came to light after a woman accused a colleague, Danish Sheikh, of establishing a physical relationship with her after falsely promising marriage in 2022 - when he was already married to another woman.

According to a police report, Nida Khan is the sister of Danish Sheikh. She allegedly made derogatory remarks about the complainant's faith and attempted to pressure her to change her religion, the report said. It is further alleged that Khan and another individual, Tausif Akhtar, concealed the fact from the complainant that Danish Sheikh

was already married to another woman. As the police started investigating the matter, seven more women came forward, claiming that their senior colleagues mentally and sexually harassed them, and the human resources department ignored.



Sabarimala case: Supreme Court says religious practices open to legal scrutiny

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Friday said judges must rise above personal religious beliefs and be guided by freedom of conscience and the broader constitutional framework while deciding matters of faith, adding that religious practices are open to legal scrutiny.

The nine-member bench made these observations while hearing the Sabarimala temple entry case. The apex court is reviewing its 2018 verdict that had lifted the prohibition on women between the ages of 10 and 50 years from entering the temple.

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for an intervenor, said the case goes beyond Hindu practices or the Sabarimala issue and deals with the constitutional framework governing all religions and matters of conscience.



The concern is to lay down the law for everybody, every belief and every matter of conscience," Dhavan said, adding that the court's endeavour must be to harmonise when there are divisions in society. He argued that an individual can question a religion, but it must be in a respectful manner.

At this juncture, Justice Nagarathna asked Dhavan, "Are you saying conscience is

something larger than religion? Should conscience take the colour of religion?" Justice Amanullah asked him: "Are you suggesting that judges should not equate religion with conscience, and must rise above personal beliefs to balance them with the Constitution and see the bigger picture?" Dhavan replied that it is the apex court's discretion to interpret conscience in a manner in which they deem it appropriate.

WHAT SABARIMALA PETITIONERS ARGUED TODAY

Senior advocate V Giri, appearing for Sabarimala Achara Samrakshna Samiti, submitted that there is collectively a wisdom that has been followed for years and years in exclusion of women aged between 10-50 not being allowed in Sabarimala temple.

Giri submitted that every temple has its own distinct characteristic and the maintenance of those characteristics is part of the worship.

Delhi plans flyovers, underpasses on key stretches to decongest North and South Delhi roads

Public Works Department Delhi to build integrated corridor project covering Mehrauli-Mahipalpur, Kanti Nagar, Bawana and Kanjhawala stretches to ease traffic congestion across about 34 km.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Aiming to decongest four key road stretches in South and North Delhi, the government has planned to construct flyovers and underpasses. The Public Works Department (PWD) will construct these flyovers and underpasses under the integrated road corridor project.

The project included construction of flyovers at Mehrauli-Mahipalpur Road - including Aruna Asaf Ali Road - at Kanti Nagar bridge intersection, and a flyover in Bawana and near Kanjhawala Chowk, totalling around 34 kilometres of road stretch decongestion.

"Traffic at these intersections experiences heavy traffic flow, resulting in frequent traffic jams. Construction of an underpass or flyover appears to be a feasible traffic movement. A tender has been floated in this regard," sources said.

The Mehrauli-Mahipalpur road connecting to Aruna Asaf Ali Road near the JNU campus is approximately a 9 km long stretch. To ease traffic congestion on this stretch, the department plans to construct a flyover, an underpass and a U-turn under the flyover.

"Between Kanti Nagar bridge and Telco T-point, which is connected to Mahipalpur Road, approximately a 6 km stretch also faces traffic congestion where the PWD plans to construct a flyover," sources added.

The 9-km stretch in North Delhi's Bawana Road is also said to be decongested after the flyover.

The PWD plans to conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a flyover from Kanjhawala Chowk to Mangolpuri on Outer Ring Road in North Delhi at a cost of ₹3.44 crore. The study will be conducted for a period of four to five months to decongest a stretch of approximately 10 km in length.

NEWS BOX

Brendon McCullum to rejoin KKR? Pietersen makes wild prediction for next IPL season

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

The Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) find themselves in an unprecedented crisis during the 2026 IPL season. Following another demoralizing five-wicket defeat to the Gujarat Titans on Friday, April 17, former England captain Kevin Pietersen took to social media to drop a bombshell prediction regarding the franchise's future leadership. Pietersen's social media post has sparked intense debate among the cricketing fraternity, especially as the three-time champions continue to search for their first victory of the campaign. "Baz McCullum will be the coach of KKR next season. Bookmark this tweet," Pietersen posted on X. The statement has quickly gone viral as the KKR faithful search for answers following a historically poor start to the year. The timing of the comment is particularly poignant given KKR's inability to translate their talent into points on the board.

A Season of Historic Struggles



The three-time champions are currently enduring possibly their worst-ever opening to an IPL campaign. After six matches, KKR remains the only winless team in the tournament. They currently languish at the bottom of the table with a solitary point, which was earned only through a rain-abandoned fixture against the Punjab Kings. Even in their most recent clash against the Gujarat Titans, a fighting 79 from Cameron Green was not enough to stop Shubman Gill's side from chasing down 181 with two balls to spare. The current leadership group, led by head coach Abhishek Nayar and captain Ajinkya Rahane, has faced increasing scrutiny. Despite a high-profile coaching staff that includes names like Dwayne Bravo and Shane Watson, the team has struggled to find a consistent winning formula. Critics have noted the absence of a strong mentor figure in the dugout, particularly following the departure of Gautam Gambhir, who was a key part of the franchise's third title win in 2024. The McCullum Legacy.

Congratulations after a loss? The bizarre exchange that left Ajinkya Rahane moved

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

In the sterile, high-pressure environment of a post-match press conference, these six words felt like a lifeline. For Ajinkya Rahane, the despondent skipper of a Kolkata Knight Riders side currently sinking without a trace, the comment was as unexpected as it was welcome. GT vs KKR: HIGHLIGHTS | SCORECARD

"Thank you so much, thank you," Rahane replied, a flicker of genuine emotion breaking through his usually stoic exterior. Someone really appreciated my hard work. "It was a rare moment of relief amid the deafening noise of a campaign gone haywire. For a veteran who has spent the last month dodging questions about his strike rate and KKR's tactical blunders, the simple acknowledgement of his effort seemed to weigh more than the two points lost on the field. But the warmth of that



exchange couldn't mask the chill of the league table. KKR's visit to Gujarat resulted in their fifth defeat in six matches, a staggering slump that leaves them as the only winless outfit in IPL 2026. At the Narendra Modi Stadium, the narrative was tragically familiar. Despite a flurry of early wickets, the Knight Riders' bowling unit failed to tighten the noose, allowing the Titans to gallop home with overs to spare. Rahane, dismissed cheaply early in the innings, looked a man carrying the world on his shoulders during the chase. When asked what he could possibly take away from such a sustained period of failure, he remained philosophical. "Every day is a learning thing," Rahane noted. "Whether we win or lose, whenever we go onto the field, be it a match or practice session, it is all about learning. It's about winning the key moments as a batting unit or bowling unit. T20 is all about winning at key moments.

Andreeva sinks Swiatek to meet top seed Rybakina in Stuttgart semis**Swiatek has won four of her six Grand Slams on the French Open clay and was considered among the favourites but struggled against the energetic Russian.**

STUTTGART. (Agency)

Top seed Elena Rybakina saved two match points against unseeded Canadian Leylah Fernandez to advance to the semi-finals of the WTA Stuttgart tournament on Friday where she will meet Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva. Rybakina, the 2024 Stuttgart winner, needed three hours to get past Fernandez 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6), saving two match points in the final-set tiebreak. Earlier Andreeva rallied past two-time Stuttgart champion Iga Swiatek 3-6, 6-4, 6-3. "Especially in the beginning there was a lot of frustration. I was just going downhill. The

serve was not going," Rybakina said.

"Somehow I found the fight in me and a couple of points were important in the second set. And somehow I started finding this momentum." Swiatek has won four of her six Grand Slams on the French Open clay and was considered among the favourites but struggled against the energetic Russian.

The Pole capitalised on some clumsy baseline errors from her opponent to win the opening set but Andreeva converted a crucial break point to take the second set. Swiatek ran out to a two-game lead in the deciding set but Andreeva broke back twice to take the initiative, and the match. The 18-year-old rising star also eliminated defending champion Jelena Ostapenko in the first round of the tournament. "She's won so many tournaments I can't even count how many Slams she's won... she's a past winner of this



tournament as well," Andreeva said. "I was telling myself: 'No matter what's happening, I have to keep fighting and keep believing. I can win from any score.'"

Gauff crashes

Earlier Karolina Muchova broke through for a first win over Coco Gauff, eliminating the reigning French Open champion 6-3, 5-7, 6-3 to reach the Stuttgart semi-finals for the first time. The 12th-ranked Muchova will

face Elina Svitolina for a place in the final. Muchova had never beaten world number three Gauff in six matches, including a loss in the fourth round of this year's Australian Open, but prevailed for the first time.

After ensuring Gauff exited the tournament in the quarter-finals for the third straight year, Muchova said she tried not to let the daunting record impact her preparation.

"It was a great fight. I'm just happy that I finally, finally beat her," Muchova said.

"This was actually our first match on a clay court. On clay we were 0-0 in the matches -- I tried to keep it positive." Fourth seed Svitolina moved past Czech Linda Noskova 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 to book her semi-final spot. The in-form Ukrainian has now reached five semi-finals this season. Svitolina told reporters she had rediscovered her fighting spirit after a difficult 2025. "I had a really difficult end of last year, struggling a bit mentally," Svitolina said.

IPL 2026: Mahi Mania in Hyderabad, CSK eye first away win against rejuvenated SRH

Bengaluru. (Agency)

The Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal is no stranger to high scores and high-octane drama, but Saturday evening promises to be a cracker, with more at stake than just two points. It is the quintessential Southern Derby, a collision of two franchises moving in opposite directions yet meeting at a fascinating crossroads. For the Chennai Super Kings, it is a quest to prove they can conquer the road; for the SunRisers Hyderabad, it is about proving their recent demolition of the league leaders was no flash in the pan. The air in Hyderabad usually carries the scent of Irani chai and biryani, but this week it is thick with the musk of 'Mahi Mania'. For the first time in the 2026 season, the familiar No. 7 has boarded the team bus for an away fixture. After a frustrating five-match hiatus due to a stubborn groin strain, one that saw him anchored in Chennai while the team travelled to Guwahati and Bengaluru, MS Dhoni has landed in the Nizam's city. The reception for 'Thala' at the airport on Thursday was a testament to a legacy that refuses to dim. The roars were deafening, and a massive cut-out near the stadium stands as a sentinel to the fans' devotion. However, the romanticism of his arrival is tempered by cold, professional caution. While the excitement is palpable, word from the CSK camp suggests they are not

R Ashwin warns that T20 World Cup fatigue is hitting Mumbai Indians' stars after a 4th IPL 2026 loss. Hardik Pandya hints at "tough calls" as MI struggles to find answers with the ball.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Former India captain Kris Srikkanth did not hold back in his criticism of Shardul Thakur and Deepak Chahar, stating that the two bowlers do not deserve to be part of the Mumbai Indians in IPL 2026. In a forthright comment, Srikkanth urged the Mumbai Indians management to pay the two cricketers and ask them to stay away from the squad for the remainder of the season. Srikkanth's sharp assessment came after Mumbai Indians lost to Punjab Kings at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday, April 16. Mumbai Indians posted 195 in 20 overs, a below-par total on a good batting pitch. On a dewy evening, Punjab Kings made light work of the chase, reaching the target in just 16.2 overs.

Despite knowing Punjab Kings opens Prabhshimran Singh and Priyash Arya were in fine form, Mumbai did not open the bowling with Jasprit Bumrah. Instead,

Deepak Chahar, who opened the bowling, conceded 21 runs, setting a poor tone for their defence. Prabhshimran attacked the



bowling, scoring 80 off 39 balls. He was joined by captain Shreyas Iyer, who was in complete control with his 35-ball 66. While Jasprit Bumrah, under pressure, went wicketless and conceded 41 runs in four overs, Shardul and Deepak gave away 87 runs between them in just 5.3 overs. The two

were hit to all parts of the ground, and captain Hardik Pandya had no choice but to not utilise their full quota of four overs.

"I don't know how MI are playing Deepak Chahar in the XI. I don't know why they retained him. First over, he gave away 21 runs. In the previous match, it was 22 runs. 2.3 overs, 45 runs," Srikkanth said on his YouTube show. Our sir, Shardul Thakur. 3 overs, 42 runs. Combined, they bowled 5.3 overs and 87 runs. "How can you win a match if two of your important bowlers are giving away 87 runs in 5.3 overs? How can you play both of them in the XI? I asked that question in the pre-match show? Are you saying they don't have any good bowling options?" Send them home. Pay them their money and request them not to return this season. Tell them if they are needed, they will be called. Yes, you can do this. It's not wrong," he stated.

When Shreyas Iyer's blinder vs MI made Jonty Rhodes feel like grandfather of fielding

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

The Wankhede Stadium, a venue renowned for its legendary moments, witnessed another historic feat during the high-stakes match between the Mumbai Indians and the Punjab Kings. Amidst the electrifying atmosphere, Shreyas Iyer's extraordinary athletic display became the talk of the cricketing world, drawing praise from none other than Jonty Rhodes, the icon who transformed fielding into an art form.

Rhodes, who once set the benchmark for fielding excellence, was so impressed by Iyer's performance that he took to social media to express his admiration. In a post on X that rapidly gained traction, the South African legend acknowledged the unprecedented level of athleticism in modern cricket, a standard he never imagined during his playing days. Watching Shreyas Iyer perform that acrobatic fielding to assist in the 'team catch' made me appreciate how fielding has evolved since

my retirement," Rhodes remarked. He humorously reflected on his own legacy, noting that while he was once considered the "father of fielding," today's athletes make him feel like the "grandfather of



fielding." The moment of brilliance unfolded with the dismissal of Mumbai Indians' star Hardik Pandya. Facing a delivery that seemed destined for a six, Pandya connected with power and precision. However, Iyer, patrolling the boundary, had other plans. With impeccable

timing and awareness, he launched himself into the air, reaching back to intercept the ball even as his body was poised to land beyond the boundary. In a stunning mid-air maneuver, he managed to flick the ball back into play, allowing a teammate to complete the catch.

This gravity-defying act left the cricketing fraternity in awe. The dugout cameras captured the astonishment of Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav, both known for their own on-field heroics, as they witnessed Iyer's "hang-time" with wide eyes and open mouths. The Punjab Kings, currently in blistering form, have made this elite level of fielding a signature of their IPL 2026 campaign. As the only unbeaten team in the tournament, with four wins and a draw, they sit comfortably at the top of the table. Their all-round excellence, highlighted by efforts like Iyer's, has turned them into formidable opponents, leaving no room for easy runs or missed chances.



quite ready to throw him into the furnace of a live game just yet. Stephen Fleming and the medical staff are playing the long game, preferring a fully fit Dhoni for the business end of the season over a premature cameo in April. Even if he spends the evening in the dugout, his presence alone will be the loudest thing in the stadium.

SRH vs CSK: HEAD-TO-HEAD

CSK have not won in Hyderabad since 2018, losing on their last two trips to the city. However, they have a positive head-to-head record against SRH, winning 16 and losing only seven of their 23 encounters.

CAN CSK KEEP TRAVISHEK QUIET?

On the field, the narrative shifts from nostalgia to raw, modern aggression.

A promise kept: Frank Lampard helps Coventry secure promotion to PL after 25 years**Coventry City ended a 25-year absence from the Premier League by securing direct promotion with a dramatic late equaliser against Blackburn Rovers. The achievement marks a remarkable turnaround for the club after decades of financial struggles, lower-league football, and exile from their home stadium.**

Mumbai. (Agency)

Once in a blue moon, a moment comes along that makes you believe fairytales are real, and one such story has unfolded in a small West Midlands city. Coventry City have ended their 25-year exile from the Premier



League, sealing direct promotion with a hard-fought 1-1 draw at Blackburn Rovers. Coventry, one of the founding members of the Premier League in 1992-93, had not played in the competition since their relegation in the 2000-01 season. So when centre-back Bobby Thomas scored the equaliser in the dying minutes, the 7,500 travelling fans were

bound to erupt like kids—crying, going topless, and holding up signs reading, "We're back." "It was an incredible moment (when Thomas scored)," Coventry City head coach Frank Lampard told Sky Sports. "We knew we were nearly there, but to finally get over the line after 25 years—wow! It's amazing. What the fans have gone through." As the

achievement sank in, Lampard, the former Chelsea and England midfielder, also became emotional, as this marked his first promotion as a manager. "This is a serious football club. These boys have achieved something unique. This is right up there for me," he said. "I was fortunate to be part of great Chelsea teams, winning league titles and Champions Leagues, but to do this—I'm very proud to be their manager." FINANCIAL BENEFITS?

This promotion to the top tier not only takes them back to the promised land but also brings in broadcast revenues worth around 120 million pounds. Beyond the base revenue, the club will benefit from merit payments, which are distributed based on a team's final league position. For every place higher a team finishes in the Premier League table, they typically earn an additional 2.5m to £3 pounds in prize money. Coventry had spent 34 consecutive seasons in England's top flight after their promotion in 1967, surviving countless.

Govt approves 2% dearness allowance hike for central govt employees, pensioners

New Delhi, (Agency)

The Union Cabinet has approved a 2% increase in Dearness Allowance (DA) for government employees and pensioners, according to sources following the Cabinet meeting. The Dearness Allowance is linked to inflation and is revised twice a year, usually in January and July. It is calculated using the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW), which is released every month by the Labour Bureau under the Labour Ministry. This time, however, there was a delay in the announcement. The Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers (CCGEW) expressed concern, noting that normally the hike is announced in late September and arrears are paid in early October. During the meeting, the Prime Minister sharply criticised the Opposition over its refusal to support the Women's Reservation Bill. He said the Opposition had made a serious mistake by not backing the bill and would have to bear the political cost in the future.

He asserted that the Opposition's stance reflects a negative mindset towards women and stressed that this message must reach every village across the country. The Prime Minister added that Opposition parties are now trying to justify their position after opposing the bill, and said they had effectively "defeated" the women of the country. The Cabinet also approved the creation of a Sovereign Maritime Fund with a corpus of Rs 13,000 crore. The fund aims to provide stable and affordable insurance coverage for Indian-flagged vessels, as well as ships operating to and from India. In addition, the Cabinet cleared the extension of the Prime Minister Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) till 2028, with an additional allocation of Rs 3,000 crore.

US extends waiver allowing sale of Russian oil already at sea amid energy pressure

New Delhi, (Agency)

The Trump administration has issued a month-long sanctions waiver allowing the sale of Russian oil and petroleum products already at sea, extending an earlier relaxation of restrictions amid surging global energy prices. India has been among the major beneficiaries of these waivers. The license, issued by the United States Department of the Treasury, came two days after Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Washington would not renew waivers for Russian or Iranian oil. The order permits transactions involving oil and petroleum products loaded onto vessels as of Friday through 12:01 am (0401 GMT) on May 16. It replaces and supersedes General License No. 134A, which expired on April 11, with General License No. 134B. The US had earlier granted a series of temporary exemptions, including a one-month waiver beginning March 5 allowing India to purchase Russian oil, followed by similar permissions for other countries. These exemptions also ended on April 11. India has been among the major beneficiaries of the waivers.

The latest general licence does not authorise any transactions involving persons, entities or joint ventures in Iran, North Korea, Cuba or parts of Ukraine. The move follows heightened volatility in global energy markets after disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, which intensified after Tehran's retaliation to the US-Israeli war against Iran. The developments pushed up oil prices and US gasoline costs, adding pressure on households ahead of key midterm elections. The waiver also comes amid concerns in Western capitals over continued Russian oil revenues funding its war in Ukraine, launched in 2022 and now the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War II.

SEC, Adanis seek extension, propose new briefing schedule in US case

New Delhi, (Agency)

The US Securities and Exchange Commission and Indian businessmen Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani have jointly requested a US court for more time to file key submissions in a civil securities case, proposing a revised schedule for motions and responses.

In a filing before the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York, the parties said they had conferred in line with the court's April 7 directive and agreed on a new timeline, which has been submitted for approval to Judge Nicholas G Garaufis. The SEC had sued Adani Group founder Gautam Adani and his nephew, Sagar, in November 2024, alleging they had misled investors by failing to disclose an alleged bribery scheme tied to Indian state officials, framing the case under US securities laws. Denying all allegations, the two, through their lawyers, on April 7, filed a pre-motion letter ahead of a planned April 30 motion, seeking dismissal of a fraud lawsuit, arguing the case represents an impermissible extraterritorial application of US law and fails for lack of personal jurisdiction. Under the proposed schedule, the defendant's (Adanis) motion to dismiss would be due by June 8, the SEC's amended complaint or opposition by August 7, and the defendants' reply by September 21. The parties also suggested May 20, May 22 or May 29 as potential dates for a pre-motion conference, subject to the court's availability. The request follows a pre-motion letter filed by the defendants on April 7, after which the court directed both sides to confer on next steps. In their anticipated motion to dismiss, Adanis are expected to argue that the court lacks jurisdiction because the claims concern conduct outside the United States, that the alleged statements are too general to be relied upon by investors, and that they were not involved in a \$750 million bond offering in 2021. The SEC filed the lawsuit in November 2024, alleging violations of US securities laws. An earlier briefing schedule approved in January set April 30 as the deadline for the motion to dismiss, June 29 for the SEC's response and August 13 for the defendants' reply.

Below-normal monsoon, West Asia conflict cloud India's agriculture outlook

New Delhi, (Agency)

A looming below-normal monsoon forecast and the ongoing West Asia conflict has cast a shadow over the future of the Indian agricultural sector as it threatens to disrupt production and rural economic growth. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued its first long-range forecast for the 2026 Southwest Monsoon, estimating rainfall at 92 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA). This projection represents the lowest initial forecast in at least 25 years and indicates a sharp reversal from the above-normal rainfall recorded during 2024 and 2025. Bank of Baroda noted that the performance of the monsoon carries heavy weight for the broader economy. "Total rainfall has a close relation with both kharif and rabi output and hence will have an impact on overall growth in farm income and hence rural consumption," the Bank stated.

The geopolitical situation in West Asia further complicates the outlook for the current year. The conflict has caused disruptions in the supply of gas, which is a primary component in the production of essential farming inputs. "A good supply of water is a necessary condition for a good harvest although this year, due to the disruptions caused in supply of gas due to the war, other inputs that go into agriculture like availability and cost of fertilizers and pesticides will also have a bearing on the final outcome," the statement added. Given that irrigation coverage in India ranged from only 50 to 60 per cent over the last five years, rainfall remains vital for several crops, especially those grown in the interior regions. Beyond field crops, the monsoon determines reservoir levels for year-round water supplies and influences allied

agricultural activities. The Bank tracks these impacts across two distinct periods,



using the July-September and October-December quarters to cover kharif outcomes, while the January-June period accounts for rabi production. "This measurement also includes non-crop items such as horticulture, tobacco, and rubber," the Bank said. Historical data suggests a strong correlation between monsoon performance and agricultural

growth rates. According to the bank, the correlation coefficient for kharif production with actual monsoon performance is 0.64, while rabi stands at 0.59. This indicates that kharif crops tend to be more dependent on rainfall levels than the rabi season. "Sub-normal monsoon i.e. less than 96% of LPA has been associated with lower growth rates in agriculture. In 2014-15 and 2015-16 when monsoon was less than 90% of normal, kharif production had declined. But in these years, rabi production was positive and significant," the bank said. The growth of value addition in agriculture is currently reckoned over a 12-year period starting from 2012-13. With the IMD's midpoint estimate for 2026 falling below the levels seen in previous decades, the sector remains under watch for its impact on overall GDP calculations and the stability of rural incomes.

India's auto sector faces risks if West Asia conflict prolongs: FADA

New Delhi, (Agency)

The President of the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), C.S. Vigneshwar, has raised concerns about the potential impact of prolonged conflict in West Asia on India's automotive sector.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Vyapar Delhi event, Vigneshwar said that ongoing geopolitical tensions could disrupt exports and affect the supply of key inputs such as oil and aluminium. While India's domestic auto market has shown strong resilience following a period of robust growth, extended instability could pose challenges for both production and global trade.

He explained that the sector is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in oil supply, which affects fuel, lubricants, and overall vehicle operations. In addition, shortages of gas

and aluminium could hinder manufacturing. Although he expressed confidence in government efforts to mitigate these risks, he acknowledged that the industry may face difficulties in the coming months if the conflict continues. Vigneshwar also highlighted concerns about a potential decline in vehicle exports, even as domestic demand remains strong. He noted that the industry recorded approximately 13% growth across segments last year, providing a buffer against global uncertainties.

Despite possible disruptions, he remains optimistic about continued domestic performance. He further emphasized the importance of managing supply chain disruptions, especially given India's dependence on imported resources like lithium. Stressing the need for balance, he called

for accelerated development of domestic lithium reserves and battery manufacturing capabilities.

On the electric vehicle (EV) front, Vigneshwar pointed out steady growth in adoption rates. Electric two-wheelers have reached around 9% market share, while passenger vehicles stand at about 5-6%, and commercial vehicles at roughly 2%. He underscored the importance of building a strong ecosystem to support cleaner mobility solutions and prepare for future demand. The Vyapar Delhi event brought together dealers, OEMs, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, including the Chief Minister of Delhi, as well as representatives from insurance and finance sectors, to discuss challenges and shape future policy directions for the automotive industry.

Govt strengthens DGFT Norms Committees to speed up export authorisations, cut delays

New Delhi, (Agency)

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has introduced a set of reforms to improve the functioning of Norms Committees under the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), aimed at faster disposal of Advance Authorisation applications and easing process for exporters.

In an official statement, the ministry stated that the move comes as part of the government's broader push to enhance ease of doing business and reduce delays in approvals under export-linked schemes. The Ministry noted that "DGFT administers the Advance Authorisation (AA) Scheme and the Duty-Free Import Authorisation (DFIA) Scheme under the Foreign Trade Policy. These schemes allow duty-free import of inputs that are physically incorporated in export products." At present, seven such committees operate across sectors, comprising technical experts and officials from various ministries. However, their functioning had been impacted by capacity constraints,

leading to a rise in pending applications. To address this, the government has introduced process and capacity-related reforms. These include



fixed scheduling of meetings on a fortnightly basis, prioritisation of long-pending cases, and time-bound finalisation of meeting minutes. Monitoring mechanisms for pendency and case ageing have also been strengthened. In addition, line ministries have been asked to nominate more technical experts to the committees. As part of this effort, the

number of technical members has increased from 12 to 22, improving the committees' ability to handle a higher volume of cases.

A special disposal drive has also been launched to clear pending applications in a time-bound manner, with cases being taken up in chronological order to ensure transparency. According to the ministry, these measures have already begun to show results. Between January 2026 and April 7, 2026, a total of 38 committee meetings were held, during which 3,925 cases were reviewed and 1,770 cases disposed of.

The reforms are expected to reduce transaction costs, shorten approval timelines, and provide greater predictability for exporters, particularly small and medium enterprises.

The ministry will continue to refine the norms mechanism to support export growth and improve overall trade facilitation.

5 tonnes gold, 8 tonnes silver stuck at customs since April 1 after DGFT lapse; import permissions restored for banks

Nearly 5 tonne of gold and 8 tonne of silver have remained stuck at Indian Customs since April 1 due to the lack of a formal government order authorising bullion imports

New Delhi, (Agency)

A bureaucratic lapse by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) led to tonnes of imported gold and silver being held up at Customs since April 1 - an error that could have resulted in prices of precious metals going up ahead of Akshaya Tritiya. The issue, however, was rectified on Friday after the government renewed the list of banks authorised to import precious metals for FY27. Banks had permission to import gold and silver only until March 31, 2026. In the absence of a fresh notification, they halted import orders from overseas suppliers, resulting



in a pile-up of consignments at ports. According to media reports and economist estimates, around 5 tonne of gold and 8 tonnes of silver have remained stuck at Indian customs since April 1 due to the lack of a formal government order authorising bullion imports. The government, however, has not provided an official estimate. "It is difficult to give a consolidated figure right away because

multiple cargoes are stuck across several ports," a government source said.

Officials from DGFT and Customs, when contacted, sought to attribute the lapse to each other. As per a notification issued by the Ministry of Commerce, 15 banks have been authorised to import both gold and silver, while two banks have been allowed to import only gold. The approval is effective from April 1, 2026, and will

On paper, compliant: How labour laws are quietly undermined

New Delhi, (Agency)

The labour uprising in Noida for low wages, wrong wages (actual payouts being less than salaries in the records) and poor working conditions, is a perfect case for arguing why we need a strict regulatory structure, even if that structure is derided as inspector raj.

What appears as compliance in official records often conceals deliberate strategies to deny workers their legal protections—revealing a deeper failure of enforcement. What is often presented as "smart management" is, in reality, a calculated evasion of the law. Across industries, employers—frequently aided by labour consultants acting as intermediaries—deploy methods that systematically deny workers their rightful protections. More troubling is the role of certain officials who choose to enable or overlook such practices.

In one instance, a factory inspector conducted a routine visit and reported full compliance. According to his findings, several workers were engaged by contractors outside the factory premises, in areas not covered under the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act.

He further stated that the employer neither supervised their work nor exercised control over them. On this basis, the employer was deemed free from liability for statutory contributions in respect of contract workers. The conclusion was convenient, and entirely misleading. This version went unchallenged until an accident altered the course of events.

A junior-level local office manager, known for his integrity, visited the factory to investigate the incident. His role was limited to accident enquiries, not regular inspections. However, his observations told a different story: on the day of his visit, he found at least ten workers employed within the factory premises without being brought under ESI coverage. His report led to a special inspection being assigned to me. The factory manufactured agricultural implements and bus bodies using electrically operated machinery. These operations were carried out within the premises through two so-called contractors—one handling framework and the other sheet metal work. The employer claimed that such work was occasional, limited to about ten days a month. The reality was otherwise.

remain valid until March 31, 2029. The previous order, issued in April 2025, had expired on March 31, 2026.

The 15 banks permitted to import both metals include Axis Bank, Bank of India, Deutsche Bank, Federal Bank, HDFC Bank, Punjab National Bank, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank, among others. Union Bank of India and Sberbank have been allowed to import only gold.

Importers other than those operating in special economic zones (SEZs) or export-oriented units (EOUs) will now require specific government licences to import precious metals. The rule has come into effect immediately, with no transition period, even for shipments already in transit. With Akshaya Tritiya approaching and banks unable to import during the interim, concerns had mounted over a potential spike in domestic prices. Madhavi Arora, chief economist at Emkay Global, said: "No fresh imports from banks and reduced inflows imply supply tightening, drawdowns from existing stocks and ETF redemptions. This could lead to higher domestic premiums, especially around Akshaya Tritiya."

Jacqueline Fernandez

Seeks To Turn Approver In Suresh Chandrashekhar Money Laundering Case

Jacqueline Fernandez has made a significant move in the ongoing money laundering case linked to alleged conman Suresh Chandrashekhar, expressing her willingness to turn an approver.

Jacqueline Fernandez Seeks to Turn Approver

In a key development, Jacqueline has moved an application before a Delhi court seeking to become an approver in the case. The court, taking note of her plea, has issued a notice to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and sought its response. The matter is now scheduled for further hearing on April 20.

Delhi Court Asks Actor to Approach ED

During the proceedings, the court informed Jacqueline that she would have to follow due procedure and make a formal request to the ED if she intends to turn approver.

As per legal protocol, such a request must first be made to the federal probe agency. The ED would then record her statement and decide whether to move an application before the court recommending that she be granted approver status. At present, the decision rests with the agency, effectively placing the ball in the ED's court.



U-Turn in Ongoing Case

Jacqueline's move is being seen as a major shift in her stance in the high-profile case, which has been under investigation for alleged money laundering linked to Suresh Chandrashekhar. The development comes months after the Supreme Court refused to

quash the criminal proceedings against the actor, allowing the case to continue.

Case Background

The case revolves around Suresh Chandrashekhar, who is accused of orchestrating a ₹200 crore extortion racket, allegedly duping high-profile individuals including the family of former Ranbaxy promoters. The Enforcement Directorate named Jacqueline Fernandez as an accused in its money laundering probe, alleging that she received expensive gifts worth several crores from Chandrashekhar, which were suspected to be proceeds of crime.

Jacqueline has consistently denied any wrongdoing, maintaining that she was unaware of the illicit origin of these gifts.

Over the years, the case has seen multiple twists, including repeated questioning of the actor by the ED, legal challenges to quash proceedings, and public attention due to Chandrashekhar's claims and letters from jail. With Jacqueline now seeking to turn approver, her testimony could become a crucial element in the investigation, potentially shedding more light on the alleged financial network and the extent of involvement of those linked to the case.



Alia Bhatt's Sister Shaheen Bhatt Gets Engaged To Ishaan Mehra; Ananya Panday, Rohan Joshi And More Shower Love



In 2025, Alia Bhatt's sister, Shaheen Bhatt, made her relationship with fitness coach Ishaan Mehra Instagram official. Since then, the duo has been giving major couples on social media. Interestingly, the couple is now engaged. On April 17, Shaheen took to social media and shared a series of pictures with her partner to announce their union.

A while ago, Shaheen Bhatt shared pictures from her proposal, offering fans a glimpse into the intimate and heartfelt occasion. She was seen flaunting her stunning engagement ring while posing with Ishaan Mehra. The photos suggest that Ishaan chose a serene and picturesque setting to pop the question to his dream girl. Along with the pictures, Shaheen penned a quirky note that read, "We may have overdone this whole liking each other thing."

Soon after she shared the announcement, her post got flooded with congratulatory messages. Ananya Panday commented, "Shaheeeen! Soooo happy for you. all the love and joy in the world." Navya Naveli Nanda wrote, "Congratulations Shaheeeen." Arjun Kapoor dropped a red heart emoji. Director Zoya Akhtar commented, "Congos and bongos." Shah Rukh Khan's manager Pooja Daddani too put a comment that read, "Congratulations!!!!" Shaheen's ex boyfriend and comedian Rohan Joshi too congratulated the couple. He wrote, "OMG OMG CONGRATULATIONS." Even fans couldn't stop gushing over her engagement pictures. One fan wrote, "My heart is so full seeing this. What a beautiful surprise! Can't wait to hug you tight and say the biggest congratulations. Wishing you and Ishaan all the love and happiness in the world." Another fan wrote, "I dont even know you guys, I mean I know who you are @shaheenb but not personally. And yet, these photos make me really happy! Its probably the genuinely happy and positive vibes radiating from you both. All the very best for this new chapter!"

Tiger Shroff Grooves To Michael Jackson's Billie Jean, Pays Tribute: 'He Taught Me Everything'



Bollywood actor Tiger Shroff has paid a tribute to Michael Jackson as he performed on the iconic track Billie Jean and said that the King Of Pop taught him everything he knows about movement. The actor took to Instagram, where he shared a video of dancing on the number and performing the iconic steps like moonwalking and the leg shuffle. He added the song Billie Jean as the score to perform on.

"He taught me everything I know about movement. About presence. About what it means to give a stage everything you have," he wrote as the caption.

The Bollywood actor also tagged the "Michael" biopic page on Instagram. The upcoming follows the life of American singer Michael Jackson, covering the period from his involvement in the Jackson 5 in the 60s to his early solo career.

Jackson is portrayed by his nephew Jaafar Jackson in his film debut. The cast includes Nia Long, Laura Harrier, Juliano Krue Valdi, Miles Teller, and Colman Domingo. The film is set to release on April 24.

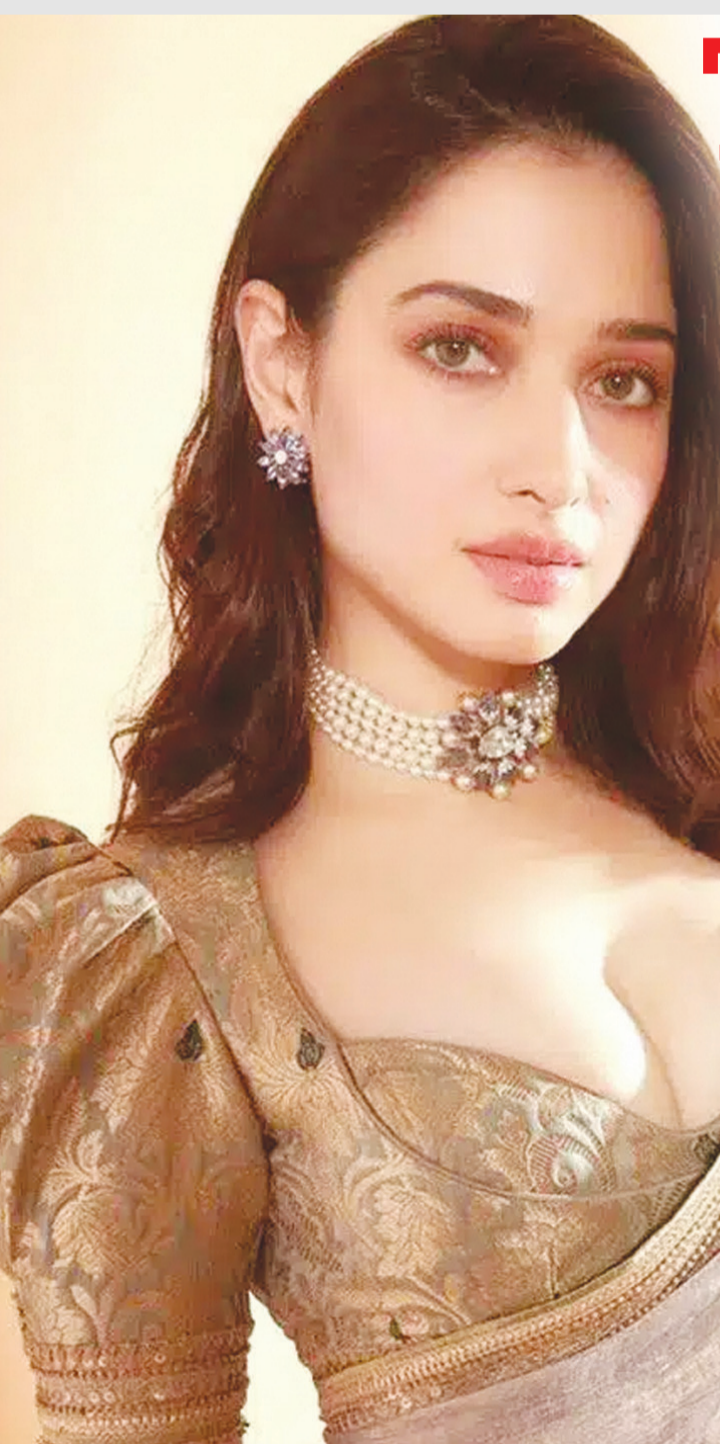
Meanwhile, Tiger made his acting debut with the action romance Heropanti in 2014. He went on to star in the commercially successful action films Baaghi, Baaghi 2 and War. He tasted failure with big-budget action films such as Heropanti 2, Ganapath and Bade Miyan Chote Miyan and Baaghi 4. He has featured in Forbes India's Celebrity 100 list in 2018 and 2019.

His last film was Baaghi 4, directed by A. Harsha. The film stars Tiger Shroff, Sanjay Dutt, Harnaaz Sandhu and Sonam Bajwa. It is the fourth installment in the Baaghi film series.

It is an unofficial remake of the 2013 Tamil film Ainthu Ainthu Ainthu. In the film, a grieving man awakens from a coma and sets out to uncover the truth about his missing girlfriend who nobody believes even exists.

Tamannaah Bhatia

Requests Paparazzi To Dim Lights While Comforting Crying Fan



Celebrity fan moments can be unpredictable... sometimes joyful, sometimes overwhelming, and occasionally deeply emotional. A recent interaction involving Tamannaah Bhatia is now going viral for all the right reasons, showing a softer, more compassionate side of stardom. The incident reportedly took place during one of Tamannaah's public appearances, where she was interacting with fans and posing for pictures. What began as a routine meet-and-greet quickly turned intense when a fan, upon seeing the actor up close, became visibly emotional. Overcome by the moment, the fan broke down in tears and found it difficult to compose herself.

Instead of moving on, Tamannaah paused and chose to stay back with the fan. She handled the situation with patience, speaking to her gently and encouraging her to calm down. The actor reportedly asked her to take a few deep breaths, ensuring she felt at ease during the interaction.

Realising that the environment might be adding to the fan's distress, Tamannaah also made a request to the paparazzi present at the venue to dim the lights. The move was aimed at reducing the intensity of the situation and helping the fan feel less overwhelmed. In addition, she offered the fan a bottle of water, a small but thoughtful gesture that helped her regain composure.

The video of the moment, shared by paparazzo Viral Bhayani on Instagram, has since drawn attention online, with many praising Tamannaah for her calm and considerate response.

Tamannaah Bhatia has built a strong career across Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi cinema. With nearly 89 films to her credit, she is regarded as one of the prominent actors in South Indian cinema. Over the years, she has received several honours, including three Santosham Film Awards, two SIIMA Awards, and the Kalaimamani Award.



I had fruit smoothie for Breakfast

for a week, here's what happened

Many among us do things off our way to lose weight. I belong to this league. The thought came to me a month ago to alter my diet for the better while I was working out at home following an app which promised a 30-day transformation. It was working, indeed, but I wasn't satisfied. Like a typical Arian hankers quick results, so do I. So, there I went with my fruit smoothie challenge.

Full disclosure: Though I had thought that I would also alter my other meals besides my breakfast, I was only partially successful. Some days, as I had longed, I had salads for my dinner and skipped the traditional meal with daal and rotis. While when hunger pangs took better off me, I couldn't resist and had a bowl of daal and a bowl of vegetable with a multigrain roti.

I had decided to pull some fruits, vegetables and nuts in my smoothies and had decided to keep it more or less same for the seven days. I avoided the frozen variety and went only for fresh and organic selection.

Day 1

My experience of not eating any grain for my breakfast was pretty much non-existent. I belong to a typical Punjabi family that cannot start its day without paranthas. Though I had tweaked it a bit for myself and had added muesli, oats, daliya and poha for variety, fruits and fruits alone had never happened for me. But I didn't mind this fact today. I was looking forward to see a drop in my weighing scales and I was told it happens in the kitchen.

I pulled in a banana, an apple and a kiwi in my blender, poured in half a cup of low-fat milk and added walnuts, cashews, almonds and raisins. After a minute's blend, it gave me a fine, thick, limish smoothie. It tasted fine. I liked the afterward more. I was hungry again in two hours and felt lighter throughout the day.

Day 2

I followed a similar routine and pulled in exactly the same ingredients with two exceptions. I added two strawberries and a spoon of peanut butter. This changed the taste of my smoothie to make it a little more on the side of sour. I supposed that my kiwi was also a little more tart than the previous day. It left me with a



pleasant acidic kick in my mouth.

Day 3

A good riddance was replacement of my

happening with this happy morning breakfasts with smoothies. I would usually sip tea after my multigrain paranthas, poha or vegetable daliya in the mornings. But you can't have it after a smoothie. This reduced my tea intake to one in a day (in the evening) from two previously.

On the third day, I decided to give my smoothie a vegetable kick. Today I pulled in a banana, a green apple, a kiwi, some spinach leaves and an orange carrot. I added some water to it. It made a mix of over a glass and was too heavy but I somehow had it. I am also not a fan of spinach personally, so I thought what better way to



have it than by masking its taste among fruits I love. But this experiment failed, kind of.

For the past two days, I felt hungry again in two hours so I assumed it will happen today also because fruits and vegetables are nothing but fibre and will get digested. But it was four hours already and I could still not have anything more. A chef-friend suggested me to drink at least three to four glasses of water to rid that feeling of bloatedness because it was too much fibre for my body. Not that it was bad, it just needed more water to digest itself.

Day 4 and 5

The fourth and the fifth day were almost the same. I replaced my banana for a mango. It got yummiier and tangier. With nutritionist Rujuta Diwekar siding with mangoes so much, I gave them a green signal too. The smoothie turned out really yummy on the fifth day particularly because, I assume, the mango was very sweet and pulpy. After the spinach disaster, my stomach would have thanked me today.

Day 6 and 7

It was the weekend. I usually indulged in a heavy breakfast on holidays. But this time, though I couldn't but I made a deal. I did have smoothies in the mornings but I treated myself during lunch. That's how I made sure my stomach loves me again.

I had melon-based smoothies on the sixth and seventh day. I took watermelon, pomegranate and a kiwi and blended them. I did not add water because watermelon already gives a flowy texture to the drink. This time, I kept nuts for dressing and sprinkled a few walnuts and almonds over my smoothie. It tasted delicious. This was, by far, the best smoothie I had yet made.

Conclusion

Having raw fruits and vegetables first thing in the morning is definitely worth two days a week. It made my digestion better (though I was sipping hot lemon water in the mornings too) and that could have aided my ailing digestion as well, made me feel like I had the optimal amount of food in the morning and kept me gladly hungry throughout the day. Above all, I felt happier as I was leading a healthy way of life. Sometimes, it was difficult managing to make it or get it made in the mornings as it needs an extra effort from your end. There would be days when you would simply not feel like toiling for it and have what's made for others in the family but as I said, two days a week is healthy enough. Keep them as a source of nutritive variety and have cereal in milk, daliya, oats or multigrain paranthas on other days.

As far as my weight was concerned, there wasn't much difference on my weighing scale but I could see myself shedding inches. It was the beginning after all and it sure did give me goals and a determination to achieve them.

Bedtime habits for Good sleep

Like with most other things, there's a protocol for peaceful bedtime. A comforting bath, softly-lit ambience, relaxing conversation and no stimulants... are some factors that decide whether you'll sleep well. Studies prove a good sleep hygiene solves long-term sleep issues.

Lay out your clothes

You can help your body recognise that bedtime is looming by setting routines and repeating them every night, like laying out your nightwear. If people establish nightly routines, they can help their brain shift into sleep mode faster.

Fix the lights

As it starts getting dark outside, your body releases the chemical melatonin, which peaks at 2-3 am.

refreshed.

Cut the noise

High intensity sounds can cause arousals (periods of wakefulness in sleep) resulting in poor quality of sleep. It results in fatigue during the day. For instance, intense traffic noise causes increased cortisol levels, resulting in poor sleep. So, what content you watch or listen to before sleeping is also crucial. Soothing chants or symphonies, a light banter with kids or simply catching up with your spouse can put you at ease.

o nap or not to nap

Snoozing while travelling or catching short power-naps in between work is a habit with most of us. However, studies have shown that sleep is best



It automatically makes you sleepy. Any kind of light (gadgets, phones, iPads) that interferes with the secretion of melatonin, causes a delay in sleep and poor quality slumber. Lights in the bedroom should be dimmed and gadget use avoided for at least one hour prior to bedtime.

No stimulants

A heavy meal or spicy snack too close to bedtime can leave your digestive system working overtime. Also, any substance high in caffeine or nicotine acts as a stimulant and interferes with the ability to fall asleep. They are best avoided for at least 4-6 hours before bed. Also, contrary to common belief, alcohol relaxes and induces sleep only initially. In the long run, it actually keeps you from getting the deep, restorative REM sleep you need to feel



obtained in a single and continuous block and such frequent naps during the day may eventually hamper a restful night's sleep. Breakfast, rich in vitamin B6, and sunlight exposure in the morning hours (for at least 10 min) is known to improve sleep quality.

What's Stressing You out?



Ever lost your cool at the tiniest thing, and five minutes later wondered why? Sometimes small things that happen every day, like spilling water or being unable to find your socks, can send you into a flying rage. But why did you lose your cool? You are not going through any life crisis — your job doesn't require you to clock in insane hours and your personal life is looking up. What many of us don't realize is that stress can be caused by several little factors that, on the surface, seem harmless.

Smartphones

Your do-it-all phone is supposed to make your life easier since you can check your mail, chat with friends, play games and add final touches to your presentation, all on the go. So if anything, it should be a stress-buster, right? Wrong. The ability to stay in touch wherever you are and at any time of the day, makes it hard for you to focus on the task at hand; be it in the office, in a party or a picnic. And that phantom buzz — the feeling that your phone vibrated even when it didn't — is a classic sign of stress. People get obsessed with their phones and keep thinking about why they haven't got any calls or texts in a while. All this constantly inflates your stress.

Cubicle-free offices

Most offices today have done away with cubicles. In 'open plan' offices, everyone can see what everyone else is doing. And without realizing it, the things that your colleagues do can add to your stress. Strong perfumes, loud conversations, squeaky chair wheels or the constant prying eyes on your computer screens, can all evoke a reaction within you. Haven't we all clenched our fists in frustration and felt the need to punch the person sitting next to/across from us at least once?

Noise

Finding a quiet corner has become close to impossible, even in our homes. Throughout the day we are bombarded with noises — horns blaring in the traffic, phones ringing in the office, the passing of cars outside your bedroom, the buzz of tube lights or the hum of your computer fan. We are used to many of these noises and don't even notice them anymore, but that doesn't mean that you are immune to their effects. Constant background noises raise your blood pressure, and secretly also affect your ability to pay attention, all thanks to the build up of stress.

Rude encounters

Being hung up on by someone on the phone, told off by the auto driver or ignored by a salesperson — all these can result in stress. When you feel insulted, the thought tends to linger long after the incident has passed. This plays on your mind, and any negative thoughts can spark off stress. In the long-run, it can alter your

hormones and weaken your immune system.

Automated customer assistance

Waiting for what seems like an eternity and pressing all the buttons on your keypad just to get to speak to the customer care representative is a shared irritant. These systems are designed to save companies money, but all they manage to do is steadily raise your frustration. Even though you may not use this service on a daily basis, a single call is enough to stress you out. Getting agitated during or after the call is an instant sign of this.

Bedroom lights

Finding complete darkness is difficult. It's late, you have turned off all the lights in your bedroom and drawn the curtains, but still the light from the streetlamp manages to find its way into your room. If not that, it's the bright LED air conditioner display, your glow-in-the-dark alarm clock, or simply that you have left the TV on. Sleeping eight hours a night is not enough; mind needs uninterrupted, good-quality sleep, and this is not possible with a bright stimulus.

Not paying attention to your appearance

You may pretend to not care about how you look, or how the world views you, but one frown after looking in the mirror is a sign that your appearance has an effect on your psyche. There is a strong link between how you present yourself and how the world views you. When people respond positively, you feel good, and the opposite holds true when you get negative feedback. Not being happy with how you look hits your confidence, and constantly thinking about it,



leads to stress.

Mess

Gravy stain on the carpet, toys scattered everywhere, or the stack of dirty dishes in the sink. A messy living environment can make anyone irritated, especially if it feel like you are the only one who seems to give a hoot about it. Coming back to a messy house after a long day at work makes things that much more annoying. This only adds to your to-do list, no longer making your home a place where you unwind and relax.

Dieting

Ever noticed how someone on a diet is easily irritated? Dieters consume fewer-than-required calories and even end up skipping meals. This sends the body into craving mode, resulting in irritation, headache and fatigue. Cheating on the diet makes you guilty, and blaming yourself for the binge trip results in enormous stress.