



AMIT SHAH FLAGS CONGRESS FUND MISUSE, LAUNCHES RS 2,092 CR HEALTHCARE PROJECTS

ISRAEL LAUNCHES 'WIDE-SCALE' STRIKES ON IRAN AS TRUMP SAYS US NOT READY TO MAKE DEAL TO END WAR



JAY SHAH'S BLUNT REMINDER TO PAK BANGLADESH OVER BOYCOTT DRAMA IN T20 WORD CUP



SPORTS | NEWS

SHORT TAKES

FOUR FAMILY MEMBERS DIE OF SUSPECTED CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING IN PUNGANUR

Amaravati, Mar 15: In a tragic incident in Punganur town of Annamayya district, Andhra Pradesh, four members of a family died after allegedly inhaling smoke from a motorcycle that had been left running throughout the night, police said on Sunday.

GAS CYLINDER BLAST IN NAVALUR HOUSE KILLS TWO CHILDREN, INJURES FOUR

Chennai, Mar 15: A devastating cooking gas cylinder explosion in a house at Navalur on Sunday resulted in the death of two young children and left four others with serious injuries, officials confirmed.

LPG SHORTAGE A CONCERN AMID WEST ASIA WAR, GOVT URGES SHIFT TO ALTERNATIVE FUELS

New Delhi, Mar 14: The government on Friday acknowledged that the shortage of Liquefied Petroleum Gas remains a matter of concern as supply disruptions continue amid the escalating conflict involving Iran, the United States and Israel.

TELANGANA GOVT GIVES TOP PRIORITY TO MUSLIM WELFARE CM REVANTH



Hyderabad TSIT BUREAU: Chief Minister A.Revanth Reddy on Sunday said that the Telangana government accords top priority to the welfare and development of the Muslim community and is committed to ensuring inclusive growth for all sections of society.

mony. All religions should stand united to move the country forward," the Chief Minister said, warning against attempts to sow discord among communities.

achievements. Revanth Reddy said the government is allocating substantial funds for minority welfare across various development programmes.

Airlines cancel flights to three UAE cities on Sunday amid middle east situation

New Delhi, March 15 (UNI) Flight operations between India and parts of the United Arab Emirates were disrupted on Sunday as airlines announced cancellations and schedule changes following restrictions imposed by airport authorities in the region amid the evolving situation in the Middle East.



trip each on the Delhi-Dubai route for the day. The flights will operate subject to slot availability and prevailing conditions at the time of departure.

Air India said it regretted the inconvenience caused to passengers and reiterated its commitment to bringing stranded travellers home safely at the earliest opportunity.

US-Israel offensive on Iran widens; Trump says Washington seeking 'Very Solid' deal

New Delhi/Tehran, March 15 (UNI) The conflict between the United States, Israel and Iran intensified on Sunday as fresh Israeli airstrikes hit Iranian territory while Tehran responded with missile and drone attacks across the region, even as U.S. President Donald Trump said Washington was not yet ready to reach a deal to end the war.



that any agreement would need to be "very solid." Earlier, Iranian authorities had outlined three conditions for ending hostilities: recognition of Iran's sovereign rights, payment of reparations for

damage caused by the attacks, and guarantees against future military action by the United States or Israel. Trump also claimed that recent U.S. strikes had severely damaged Kharg Island, Iran's key oil export hub.

people were killed. The escalating hostilities prompted Iran to launch multiple barrages of missiles towards Israel and claim attacks on U.S. military bases in Iraq and Kuwait.

Iran to hold funeral for killed warship sailors, Aluminium Bahrain cuts output

Taheran (TSIT) The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow chokepoint through which nearly a third of the world's seaborne oil passes, sat at the heart of the crisis on Sunday, March 15, as Iran kept it shut to American and allied vessels, the US energy secretary admitted the waterway was not safe and Bahrain's aluminium giant began winding down production with no clear end in sight.



tion impacts left four people injured. And in Washington, UN Ambassador Mike Waltz confirmed that President Trump had not ruled out targeting Kharg Island, the terminal that handles 90 per cent of Iran's crude oil exports.

es intercepted and destroyed all Iranian drones launched against the country, the latest in a series of attacks that have targeted the Gulf nation since late February. The ministry said the drones were launched from Iran, and that all incoming threats were engaged immediately upon detection and neutralised before reaching their targets.

## Birla writes to leaders; expresses concern over showing of banners, placards, behaviour

**NEW DELHI:** Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday expressed "deep concern" over showing of banners, placards, posters and use of certain language inside the House by some MPs and urged leaders of all political parties to ensure discipline and high ethical conduct among their members.

In a letter to leader of all political parties having members in Lok Sabha, Birla said the House has always had a glorious tradition of dignified discussion and dialogue but for some time now, the dignity and prestige of the country's parliamentary democracy are being undermined by some of the members -- both inside and outside the chamber and within the Parliament complex.

"The manner in which banners, placards, and posters are being displayed, the kind of language being used, and the conduct and behaviour being exhibited inside the chamber and the Parliament House complex is a matter of deep concern for all of us.

"There is a need for all of us to engage in serious reflection and analysis of this situation, both individually and collectively," he said in the letter written in Hindi.

The letter was sent to the lead-

ers of the political parties days after a motion to remove Birla was defeated in Lok Sabha by voice votes.

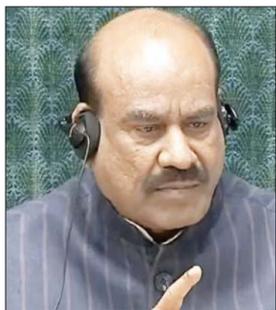
While moving the no confidence motion against Birla, the opposition parties accused him of bias and not giving opportunities to them to speak.

In the past, Birla said in the letter, whenever a decline in the standards of conduct and behaviour was felt within the House, conferences were organised from time to time by all political parties and other stakeholders, where discussions and dialogues were held on the preservation and promotion of the dignity and prestige of the country's democratic institutions.

He said this subject has also been discussed in the Presiding Officers' Conference, and resolutions have been passed.

"I too have urged you on several occasions during meetings of the Business Advisory Committee, with leaders of political parties, and on other instances to maintain high standards of conduct and behaviour.

"It is my humble request that the entire country observes our conduct and behaviour, and the message from the Parliament resonates across all democratic institu-



tions in the country," he said.

The Speaker said the time has come to engage in serious contemplation and introspection to maintain the high dignity and prestige of the democratic institutions.

In particular, he said, the top leadership of all political parties and the leaders of all parties in the House must make special efforts to ensure discipline and high ethical conduct and behaviour among their members within the chamber and the Parliament House complex.

"If we all make collective efforts in this direction, the public's faith in parliamentary democracy will

certainly be further strengthened, and the prestige and decorum of the House will continually enhance. I am confident that you will all extend your full cooperation in upholding the glorious traditions of this great institution," he said.

Birla said the Parliament is the supreme democratic institution representing the sovereign aspirations of the 140 crore citizens of the country and every voice expressed in the Parliament represents the hopes, aspirations, and expectations of millions of citizens.

The Parliament House complex is a sacred site for all of us, he said.

The Speaker said the House represents discussion, dialogue, agreement-disagreement, and diverse thoughts and perspectives.

"This House has always maintained high decorum and a glorious tradition. As members of the country's supreme democratic institution, our responsibility to maintain the dignity and prestige of all democratic institutions becomes even greater.

"As the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, I am writing this letter to you not merely as a formal communication, but with a sense of our shared responsibility toward the democratic system," he said.

## Bengal: IIT-KGP signs agreement with MLA to undertake development initiatives in Malda

**KOLKATA:** The Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur has signed an agreement with Malda Dakshin MLA Sreerupa Mitra Chaudhury to implement development initiatives in her constituency.

An institute spokesperson said on Sunday that the recent signing marked a collaboration between the premier institute and a people's representative to promote technology-enabled development in the region.

The agreement, signed as part of IIT-Kharagpur's Platinum Jubilee year, will

see the institute act as the implementing agency for a development project funded under the 'Bidhayok Elaka Unnayan Pariyojna' (MLA local area development scheme) and facilitated by Mitra Chaudhury.

As part of the initiative, IIT-Kharagpur will work with institutions, including the Border Security Force, Eastern Railway Malda Division and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, to implement technology-driven projects focused on education, public safety and sustainability in the district,

the spokesperson said.

Under the programme, AI-enabled smart classroom infrastructure and STEM laboratories will be set up in two schools in Malda, while a solar lighting network will be installed at select public locations linked to security, railway and community spaces.

IIT-Kharagpur Director Suman Chakraborty said the collaboration reflects the institute's commitment to applying science and technology for societal development.

## Haryana Congress MLAs shifted to HP's Kasauli from Kufri ahead of RS elections

**SHIMLA:** A day ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections, 31 Haryana Congress MLAs, who were lodged at two resorts in Kufri near Shimla, were shifted to Kasauli in Solan district amid tight security and through the rain and hail that lashed the state capital and adjoining areas on Sunday afternoon.

The Congress MLAs left Kufri around 4.20 pm in three small buses within a heavily guarded motorcade. Sources said that 40 rooms have been booked for them at a hotel in Kasauli, located about 60 km from Chandigarh.

Polling for the Rajya Sabha elections in Haryana will be held between 9 am and 4 pm on March 16. Votes will be counted from 5 pm the same day.

Amid concerns over influencing and cross-voting, the Congress had moved its Haryana MLAs to Kufri in the suburbs of Shimla on Friday.

Thirty-seven rooms were booked in two hotels to house these MLAs and the people accompanying them. Only the hotel staff and Congress leaders were allowed inside, while the media were kept at a distance.



While Leader of Opposition in Himachal Pradesh Assembly Jairam Thakur had stated that bringing Haryana Congress MLAs to Shimla and "placing them under house arrest in a luxury hotel" ahead of the election was "abduction of democracy", Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has so far refrained from commenting.

Thakur said the mobile phones of these MLAs were switched off. They were confined inside a "human chain" and not allowed to step outside, he alleged, commenting that the Congress has lost faith in its own legislators.

Two Rajya Sabha seats would fall vacant in Haryana as BJP members Kiran Choudhry and Ram Chander Jangra are set to complete their terms on April 9. BJP's Sanjay Bhatia, Congress's Karamvir Singh Boudh and BJP-backed Independent candidate Satish Nandal are in the fray for those seats, with each candidate requiring 31 votes to make it to the upper house.

The Congress, with 37 members in the Haryana Assembly, has the required strength to help its candidate win a seat. The prospects, however, could be in jeopardy in case of cross-voting.

The ruling BJP has 48 MLAs, the Indian National Lok Dal has two MLAs, and three legislators are Independents in the 90-member Assembly.

## Kerala Assembly polls: CPI(M) announces 81 candidates; CM Vijayan, 11 ministers in fray

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and 11 of his cabinet colleagues were among the 81 candidates announced by the ruling CPI(M) on Sunday for the April 9 Assembly polls in the state.

The list was released by CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan at a press conference here soon after the schedule of the election was declared by the Election Commission in New Delhi.

Of the 81 candidates announced, six are party-backed independents. The independent candidates for the five constituencies-Koduvalli, Kottakkal, Kondotty, Tirur and Palakkad-will be declared soon, he said.

As many as 56 sitting MLAs are in the fray, he

said, adding that 11 ministers besides CM Vijayan, are figured in the candidates list.

Vijayan is the only member of the CPI(M) Politburo contesting the polls, Govindan said.

However, A N Shamseer, who is now serving as Assembly Speaker, and M M Mani, a party veteran from high range Idukki district, failed to find a place on the list.

While Vijayan has been fielded in his sitting seat Dharmadam in Kannur district, senior leader K K Shailaja has been shifted to Peravoor from her current bastion-Mattannoor.

Apart from Vijayan, the ministers contesting the polls are O R Kelu (Mananthavady), P A Mohammed Riyas (Beypore), V Abdura-



himan (Tanur), M B Rajesh (Thirithala), R Bindu (Irinjalakuda), P Rajeev (Kalamassery), V N Vasavan (Ettumanoor), Saji Cherian (Chengannur), Veena George (Aranmula), K N Balagopal (Kottarakkara) and V Sivankutty (Nemom). As many as 10 women candidates are in the fray as CPI(M) nominees.

Govindan said the LDF government had ensured pro-people welfare and development in all sectors and that the past decade had witnessed the implementation of several projects once considered impossible.

He also claimed that the last 10 years had been a period without communalism and conflicts in the state.

He further said that the selection of candidates was carried out in a democratic manner.

While replying to a question, the Marxist party state secretary said the candidate for Thiruvananthapuram Central seat will be announced after the verdict in the material evidence case involving expelled MLA Antony Raju is pronounced on Monday.

## Light rain lashes parts of Rajasthan; fresh western disturbance likely on Mar 18: Met



**JAIPUR:** Parts of Rajasthan witnessed light rain and drizzle accompanied by thunder in the northern regions in the past 24 hours, the Meteorological Department said on Sunday.

The department said weather conditions across the state are expected to remain largely dry on March 16 and 17.

However, a fresh and strong western disturbance is likely to become active over the region between March 18 and 21, bringing the possibility of thunderstorms, gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph and rainfall at isolated places.

On March 18, parts of the Jodhpur and Bikaner divisions may witness light rain accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds, while the rest of the state is

likely to experience mainly dry weather.

The impact of the western disturbance is expected to be the highest on March 19 and 20, when parts of the Jodhpur, Bikaner, Ajmer, Jaipur and Bharatpur divisions may experience thunderstorms, strong winds and rain at some places, the department said.

Meanwhile, Chittorgarh, with 38.6 degrees Celsius, was recorded as the hottest place in the state on Sunday, followed by Kota at 38 degrees Celsius, Barmer at 37.8 degrees Celsius, and Phalodi at 37.0 degrees Celsius.

The maximum temperature in the state capital, Jaipur, settled at 35.7 degrees Celsius, while Dausa recorded 35.5 degrees Celsius.

## Actor Madhu Malhotra dies at 71

**MUMBAI:** Veteran actor Madhu Malhotra, best known for her work in 'Satte Pe Satta' and 'Karz', passed away following heart failure, her son Manu said. Malhotra died on Friday, aged 71. "Mom passed away on March 13 at 12.30 pm at the Holy Spirit hospital in Andheri. She had cardiac issues; she had blockages in the heart. She passed away due to heart failure," Manu told PTI. Malhotra was a known actor, who appeared in several films from the 1970s to the 1990s. Some of her popular movies include 'Kaala Patthar', 'Vidhaata', 'Sambandhi', and 'Ghulam' among many others.

She also garnered attention with her appearance in the song 'Lambi Judaai' from Subhash Ghai's movie 'Hero'.

## People will vote in favour of development, stability: BJP

**NEW DELHI:** The BJP on Sunday welcomed the announcement of the schedule of the Assembly polls in four states and a Union Territory, and exuded confidence that people will give their mandate in favour of development, stability and good governance.

According to the Election Commission (EC), polling will be held on a single day in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry (April 9) and Tamil Nadu (April 23), while West Bengal will see two-phase polling -- on April 23 and April 29.

Welcoming the announcement of the poll schedule, BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh said, "Elections are a grand festival of democracy, an occasion that not only



strengthens public participation but also paves new paths for development, public welfare and good governance."

It is an opportunity for the people to exercise their franchise and further empower democracy, he said in a post on X. "I am confident that the vigilant citizens of these

states will uphold democratic values and deliver a decisive mandate in favour of development, stability and good governance," the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader added.

BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said with the announcement of the poll

schedule, the "reverse countdown" has begun for the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal.

"Bengal is all set to vote for 'Poriborton (change)'. Bengal is all set to vote for development. Bengal is all set to vote for BJP; Bengal is all set to vote for PM Narendra Modi. This election 2026; People of Bengal are fighting against 'Tolamool' Congress," Bhandari said in a post on X.

BJP election in-charge for Kerala Vinod Tawde asked party workers to reach "every home" with Prime Minister Modi's vision of "Viksit Bharat, Viksit Kerala", and strengthen the movement for development and inclusive governance in the southern state.

## Akhilesh Yadav supports Bharat Ratna demand for Kanshi Ram

**MUMBAI:** Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday supported the demand for conferring Bharat Ratna on BSP founder Kanshi Ram, as he hailed contributions made by the BSP founder in uniting and empowering the Bahujan community.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of a programme, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said Kanshi Ram worked to secure justice for marginalised communities.

On the occasion of Kanshi Ram's birth anniversary, Yadav highlighted the need to continue the fight for social justice and equality as envisioned by Dr B. R. Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram.

"Kanshi Ramji followed Ambedkar's vision to secure rights and justice for marginalised communities.

There was a time when Netaji (Mulayam Singh Yadav) and Kanshi Ramji formed a joint government in UP, also strengthening the BSP," he said.

Responding to a query, Yadav said, "We feel Kanshi Ram should be given Bharat Ratna honour."

Yadav disclosed that he aligned with the BSP in 2019 with the aim of supporting "Mayawati as a potential Prime Ministerial candidate, though the alliance didn't succeed."

"Kanshi Ramji worked for uniting and empowering the Bahujan community. The Samajwadi Party will uphold these ideals in future political struggles. There is a need to continue the fight for social justice and equality as envisioned by B R Ambedkar and Kanshi Ramji," the SP leader added.

## Assam: Pol parties prepared for Apr 9 polls; urge EC for free, fair elections

**GUWAHATI:** Political parties in Assam asserted on Sunday that they are fully prepared for the Assembly elections to be held in a single phase on April 9, with the opposition camp urging the Election Commission to ensure free and fair polls.

They maintained that the short period in the run-up to the elections will not hamper poll prospects in any manner.

BJP senior spokesperson Rupam Goswami claimed the public has already made their choice and the party is confident of forming the government

for a third straight time in the state. "As a party, the BJP is always ready to face any elections. Our preparations are complete. The candidate list will also be declared soon," he told PTI.

He maintained that the voters have also made up their minds on whom to support, with the ruling BJP-led alliance comfortably ahead of the opposition in this regard.

"The people know who to vote for. It is also good that the elections will be over before Bohag Bihu and all can celebrate the Assamese New Year," Goswami added. The BJP senior

spokesperson further said that the single-phase election reflects the return of peace and efficiency of the government, which will be beneficial for the people.

State Congress media department chairman Bedabrata Bora said the party is fully prepared for the elections.

"We already had an inkling that it will be a single-phase election in the first quarter of April. Our preparations were on in that line, and we are ready for it," he said.

"That is why two lists of our party candidates have already been published,"

Bora added.

The Congress leader emphasised that the only concern was for the EC to ensure free and fair elections.

Opposition AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal also stressed the need for free and fair elections.

"Our party is ready for the elections. But the EC has to ensure that it is free and fair one, and there is no 'vote chori'," he said.

Ajmal also urged the youth to come out and vote to elect the new government.

the former MP added.

The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) alleged that the decision to complete the entire election process in the state within just three weeks effectively benefits the ruling BJP.

In a press statement, AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi and general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan said the "ruling party has abundant financial resources and control over the government machinery, enabling it to conduct widespread election campaigns across the state, including the use of helicopters to travel extensively."

"Opposition parties, however, do not enjoy such resources and will face serious difficulties in organising their campaigns within such a limited time frame," they added.

Counting of votes will be undertaken on May 4.

In the current 126-member Assam Assembly, the ruling BJP's strength is 64, while its allies AGP has nine MLAs, UPPL has seven and BPF has three members.

In the opposition camp, the Congress has 26 MLAs, AIUDF has 15 members, and CPI(M) has one MLAs. There is one Independent legislator as well.

## Comprehensive development works of Halasuru Lake are in progress: Rajendra Cholan

Bengaluru : The comprehensive development works of Halasuru Lake, one of the prominent lakes in Bengaluru city, are currently in progress. Various development activities are being undertaken with the objective of improving the lake's environment and providing better recreational facilities for the public, said Rajendra Cholan, Commissioner of Bengaluru Central City Corporation.

In order to enhance the lake's water storage capacity, desilting works are being carried out to remove silt that has accumulated over the past 25 years. This will increase the depth of the lake, significantly improve its water holding capacity, and also help in raising the surrounding ground-water levels.

In addition, a two-level walkway with bund protection is being constructed around the lake to provide a convenient walking path for visitors. This will enable citizens to walk safely, relax, and benefit from improved health.



As part of safety measures, ornamental grills are being installed along the lake boundary, which will enhance public safety as well as add to the aesthetic appeal of the lake.

A connecting bridge linking the lake area with the nearby park is also being constructed. Along with this, a new Kalyani and other allied development works are being undertaken.

Reconstruction of three islands in the lake:

There are three islands in Halasuru Lake, which are currently in a deteriorated condition. These islands will be reconstructed as part of the development works.

Facilitating NDRF training:

With the increase in water depth following desilting works, a section of the lake will become suitable for training activities conducted by NDRF personnel.

Seating arrangements will also be provided for

the convenience and relaxation of citizens and walkers. The park area along the lake will also be developed by planting various species of plants to make the surroundings more attractive. Through these development initiatives, the primary objective is to maintain the ecological balance of Halasuru Lake while providing citizens with a pleasant environment for recreation and relaxation, Commissioner Rajendra

## Varalakshmi-Ragini action story in 'Police Complaint'

Bengaluru: In recent years, the number of female-led action films in Kannada has been very rare. Now a new film is joining the ranks of such rare films. The name of that film is 'Police Complaint'. Actress Varalakshmi Sarathakumar, who was recently seen in the film 'Mark', and Ragini Dwivedi are playing the lead roles in the film 'Police Complaint', which also features Naveen Chandra and Krishna Sai as the lead actors. The rest of the cast includes big artists like Ravi Shankar, Sharath Lohitashwa, Anil Raj, Saptagiri, Prithviraj, Gemini Suresh.

Sanjeev Megoti, who previously directed films like 'Anu', 'Dandu', 'Aaptha' starring Pooja Gandhi in Kannada, has directed the film 'Police Complaint'. The film is produced under the banner 'AASK Prameedashree Films'. The film team, which has already completed most of the post-production work of the film 'Police Complaint', recently released the first teaser and a song of the film 'Police Complaint'.

Actress Prema and the first song of the film 'Police Complaint' were released by the president of the 'Kannada Film Directors Association' N.R.K. Vishwanath and wished the film team all the best. Speaking on the occasion, the film's director Sanjeev Megoti said, 'I am happy to be returning to the Kannada film industry after almost ten years with the film 'Police Complaint'. This is an action-comedy horror-thriller story line. We have made this film keeping in mind the theme of how the karma I have done haunts us. More than 50 artists from Kannada and Telugu have acted in vari-



ous roles in this film. This film has been made in Kannada and Telugu languages, and there are plans to release this film in both languages simultaneously.

Talking about her role in the film 'Police Complaint', actress Ragini Dwivedi expressed confidence that "This is a different film in my film career. In this, my role revolves around the relationship between a mother and a child. Along with action and horror, emotions are also present in the film. All types of audiences will like this film." Speaking about the film, Krishnasai, one of the lead actors, said, 'I have acted in a few films in Telugu so far. This is my first film as a lead actor in Kannada. The film's story and character are very good.' The first song of the film 'Police Complaint' has been composed by Aarohana Sudhindra and B. R. Chhaya has given voice to the song. The cinematography of the film 'Police Complaint' is by Harish Sondekoppa. Other key artists and technicians of the film who were present at the teaser and song launch of the film 'Police Complaint' shared their experiences about the film.

## Now, Karnataka allows II PUC students only two years to improve results

Bengaluru, March 15: The Karnataka Education Department has issued a new directive for II PU (pre-university) students. Candidates who fail or wish to improve their results will now have only two years to appear for examinations for result enhancement. The regulation applies to regular, private, and repeat students and comes into effect from the current academic year. Under the new rule, students can improve their marks only in the examinations held in the year of registration and the following academic year.

Candidates appearing for the three annual exams in a given year must complete any result improvement in the corresponding three annual exams of the next year. The department has made it clear that no further attempts will be allowed beyond this two-year window. Since the 2024-25 academic year, SSLC and II PU students have been allowed to appear for three annual examinations. Previously, students who registered for the 2024 II PU exams in Papers 1, 2, and 3 — whether regular, private, or repeat—could improve their results in subsequent years, but there was no restriction on the number of attempts or the time frame. Students who failed or wished to improve their results were allowed up to six attempts, without any limitation on years.

## Gas shortage pushes deep-sea fishermen back to kerosene stoves in Coastal Karnataka

Udupi, March 15: The ongoing LPG supply disruption is forcing fishermen in coastal Karnataka to revert to older cooking methods, as commercial cylinders remain in short supply. The conflict in Middle Eastern countries has severely limited the availability of cylinders

intended for commercial use. While the shortage initially impacted hotels, it has now spread to the deep-sea fishing sector, prompting a surge in demand for kerosene stoves. Earlier, fishermen relied on kerosene stoves for on-board cooking, but these were sidelined once

LPG cylinders became available. "Earlier, we used kerosene stoves on boats. Once gas arrived, those stoves were pushed aside. Now they are back in active use," said Karunakar S Saliyan, president of the Malpe Trawler Boat Association.

## Bharath Auto Cars delivers Maruti Suzuki's first electric SUV e-Vitara in Mangaluru

Mangaluru, March 15: In a significant milestone for electric mobility in coastal Karnataka, Bharath Auto Cars Pvt. Ltd, a dealership of NEXA, delivered the first Maruti Suzuki e-Vitara in Mangaluru on Saturday. The electric SUV was handed over to Shankar Narayana Kannantha and representatives of Amar Infra Projects during a for-

mal ceremony at the dealership. The vehicle was presented by Vishwa Kumar, general manager of Bharath Auto Cars Pvt Ltd, in the presence of showroom manager Sooraj Jain and members of the NEXA team. Dealership officials said the delivery marked an important step in the region's transition towards cleaner and more sustain-

able transportation. The Maruti Suzuki e-Vitara offers a 543-km ARAI-certified driving range, a five-star safety rating from Bharat NCAP, and an innovative battery-as-a-service model designed to make electric vehicle ownership more accessible. Customers interested in the vehicle can contact Bharath Auto Cars for enquiries.

## Scientists Discover Unique Building Block of Human Vision

Research shows that infants primarily see high-contrast, simple patterns, forming an essential visual foundation for later development and influencing both human vision and AI training. What do infants see? What do they look at? The answers to these questions are very different for the youngest babies than they are for older infants, children, and adults. Characterized by a few high-contrast edges in simple patterns, these early scenes also contain the very materials needed to build a strong foundation for human vision.



That is the finding of a new study which was recently published in Science Advances by IU researchers Erin Anderson, Rowan Candy, Jason Gold, and Linda Smith. "The starting assumption for everybody who thinks about the role of experience in visual development has always been that at the scale of everyday experience, visual input is pretty much the same for everyone," explains principal investigator Linda Smith, a professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. "Yet, this study says, no, visual input changes with development. It's not the same for everybody. The daily life input for very young infants appears to be unique to that age." Prior studies in the laboratory and clinic had shown that young infants prefer to look at simple, high-contrast scenes of big black stripes and checkerboards. The current study is the first to ask to what extent these preferences make up their daily life input. "To see what young babies see and look at," says Anderson, a former post-doctoral researcher in Smith's Cognitive Development Lab, she and her colleagues put head cameras on infants to wear in the home during daily life activities.

"You can buy 'baby flash cards' for newborns that show these simple, high-contrast images," she explains. "What the head-camera videos show, what this work shows, is that young infants find these types of images all around them in their

daily life, just by looking at things like lights and ceiling corners." "What we found is a very special, early 'diet' for visual development," adds Smith. "As with food, young infants do not start with rich, complex meals or pizza, but rather with simple, developmentally specific nourishment." Previous work has recognized the critical nature of this early period to the future development of human vision. For example, infants born with visual abnormalities such as cataracts or those in orphanages with limited visual experiences have been shown to have lifelong visual deficiencies. The current study offers some preliminary data for addressing these deficiencies. It also has important implications for the makings of AI visual systems, which likewise acquire stronger visual skills when training begins with the same simple, high-contrast visual content.

To identify the properties of visual input in infants at approximately three to 13 months old, the researchers placed head-mounted video cameras on 10 infants and 10 of their adult caregivers, collecting and analyzing 70 hours of visual documentation of at-home daily life. Clear differences emerge between the contents of the infants and adults' images with a higher concentration of simple patterns and high-contrast edges within the views of infants than in those of adults.

Smith infers that the reason for these views is not only that infants will turn their heads to look at the features of the world they can see, but that parents or caregivers are likely to put them in places where they like to look

at things. "You have to think why they are where they are. There is probably some natural knowledge implicit on the part of parents to leave infants where like to look at things. Mom's not gonna bother you if you're not fussing," she observes. Yet, is this small group of participants from Bloomington, Indiana representative of infants more broadly around the world? To answer this question Smith's lab conducted the same experiment with a collaborator in a small, crowded fishing village in Chennai, India where electricity is minimal and much of daily life occurs outdoors. And while images from the head cameras of 6-month-olds and 12-month-olds looked very different from their Bloomington counterparts, the youngest infants share a common "diet" of high-contrast edges and simple patterns in both Chennai and Bloomington.

Smith and her collaborators have also shown that the same sequence of images improves the training of AI visual systems. In a follow-up to the current study, published in the 2023 Neural Information Processing Systems Conference Proceedings, they found that if you train an AI system by first feeding it images characteristic of early infancy, it has greater success learning to identify visual images than if you feed it images in a random developmental order or simply provide images typical of an adult's daily life. The more precise developmental sequence produced the best results. Their work opens up new avenues for evolutionary speculation.

As Smith explains, "One of the things I always used to ask as a grad student — and maybe

## Beware the Rise of Superweeds: Mowing's Unintended Consequences

Due to plant defense mechanisms, the flowers of silverleaf nightshade (Solanum elaeagnifolium) are consumed less by natural predators like this tobacco hornworm (Manduca sexta) if the plant is frequently mowed. Research indicates that frequent mowing of Solanum elaeagnifolium enhances its defensive traits, making it more resilient and potentially a superweed. The study highlights the necessity for updated weed management practices that consider the adaptive responses of invasive plants to disturbances. Research on the effects of mowing on a common weed has found that what doesn't kill you can make you stronger.

Published in Nature's Scientific Reports, the study found that frequent mowing of Solanum elaeagnifolium may help create a "superweed." Solanum elaeagnifolium — also known as silverleaf nightshade — can be found from south Texas to South Africa and Greece, infesting fields and soaking up valuable nutrients intended for cash crops. The weed with purple flowers — sometimes white and light purple — has prickly spines and poisonous berries. Silverleaf nightshade, scientifically known as Solanum elaeagnifolium, is a perennial weed native to the United States and parts of Mexico but has spread to various regions worldwide. It is easily recognized by its silver-green leaves and purple, sometimes white, star-shaped flowers. The plant contains toxic compounds and bears yellow or orange berries that are also poisonous.

Relatives of the plant, including Solanum ptychanthum or black nightshade, and Solanum carolinense, or Carolina horsenettle, also produce toxic berries and are native to Arkansas. It's a family that also includes some friendly crops such as tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and eggplants. Rupesh Kariyat, an associate professor of entomology and plant pathology with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, has been studying silverleaf nightshade for more than a decade. Kariyat began the study while at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, when he and his graduate



student Alejandro Vasquez took on what turned into a five-year, two-part study to observe the effects of frequently mowed silverleaf nightshade. Kariyat joined the experiment station, the research arm of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, in 2022. Frequently mowed silverleaf nightshade develops more spines on the stem to protect its flowers from caterpillars. Credit: Alejandro Vasquez

Although studies have often highlighted weed fitness and defense traits resulting from disturbances like mowing, most were limited to foliar, or leaf, defenses, Kariyat said. That changed when Vasquez and fellow master's biology students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley monitored fields of mowed, unmowed, and frequently mowed silverleaf nightshade in and around Edinburg, Texas.

"Alejandro's question was, 'how do these flowers differ between mowed and unmowed plants?'" Kariyat said. "And does that have consequences for the insects that actually feed on them?"

Findings in both studies showed that the more silverleaf nightshade was mowed, the more it developed ways to avoid destruction, Kariyat said. The taproot went down further, nearly 5 feet deep, in the first generation of mowed plants. More spikes popped out on the stem as a defense against caterpillars feeding on the flowers. The flowers became more toxic to caterpillars, leading to less pressure from natural predators.

Like time bombs, the plant produced some groups of seeds that germinated faster and others that were delayed. This "staggered" germination was the plant's way to ensure survival over the long haul. "You are trying to mow these plants so that the plants are getting eliminated," Kariyat said. "But what you are actually doing here, you are making them much worse, much stronger." Tilling areas with silverleaf nightshade also spreads the plant because the rhizomic roots, like many weeds, can propagate asexually over multiple years and growing seasons.

Implications for Future Weed Management The observations of mowed, unmowed, and frequently mowed areas with silverleaf nightshade provide evidence that could prompt further studies by weed scientists on best management practices, Kariyat

said. Since the studies focus solely on silverleaf nightshade, Kariyat said other weeds — even the plant's family relatives — may or may not react the same way to frequent mowing. However, the study does provide more insight into the defensive capabilities of plants pitted against human disturbance.

Rupesh Kariyat, associate professor of entomology and plant pathology with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, was the corresponding author of two studies observing the affects of frequently mowing silverleaf nightshade. Credit: U of A System Division of Agriculture photo by John Lovett

"This should be something that we consider when we make management plans," Kariyat said of the plant's defenses. "Management practices need to be better understood using the ecology and biology of the species and the other species which interact with them."

**PAPER PUBLICATION**  
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SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT  
IN THE COURT OF 21st Jt. CIVIL JUDGE  
SENIOR DIVISION NAGPUR, Room No. 713  
Reg. C. S. No. 563/2017 Fixed For: 23/03/2026  
Plaintiff: Dinesh Jagannathprasadji  
Khandelwal And other -Versus-  
Defendants: Reyami Electromechanical India  
& others  
To,  
2) Shreedharan Pothiyaveetil Kodakkateri  
3) Rashid Mubarak Saif Ali Reyami  
Both C/o. Reyami Electromechanical India Ltd.  
Bangalore Karnataka, India 560038.  
Whereas plaintiff has instituted a suit against you  
Suit For Recovery of Amount valued At 1,10,890/-  
to appear in this Court in person or by a pleader duly  
instructed and able to answer all material questions  
relating to the suit, or who shall be accompanied by  
some person, able to answer all such questions on  
the Dt.25/03/2026 at 11.00 O'clock in the forenoon,  
to answer the claim and further you are hereby  
directed to file on that day (or within 30 days from the  
date of service of this summons) a written statement  
of your defence and to produce on the said day all  
documents in your possession or power upon which  
you base your defence or claim for set-off or counter-  
claim, and where you rely on any other document  
whether in your possession or power or not, as  
evidence in support of your defence or claim for set-  
off or counter-claim, you shall enter such documents  
in a list to be annexed to the written statement.  
Take notice that, in default of your appearance on  
the day before mentioned, the suit will be heard and  
determined in your absence.  
Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this  
day of 21st Day of Feb, 2026.  
By order of the Court  
Asstt. Supdt. Court of  
Civil Judge Sr. Dn. Nagpur.

# EDITORIAL

## WHY POWER FEARS LAUGHTER

Last week a satirical cartoon about India's university equity rules flickered online before vanishing under a government takedown order. A small act, perhaps. Yet every silenced joke is a stress test of democracy, and a warning sign when leaders fail it.

Satire is oxygen in a democracy. It clears the air, punctures illusions, and reminds citizens that authority is temporary and answerable. A cartoon exaggerates precisely so the public cannot ignore what polite language conceals: hypocrisy, arrogance, policy failure. When governments choke off that oxygen, they reveal not strength but fragility. History's strongest leaders understood this instinctively. Winston Churchill, lampooned as a bulldog with jowls, collected caricatures and called them the "regular food" of democracy. Franklin Roosevelt endured portrayals as schemer and would-be dictator yet never tried to suppress them. Jawaharlal Nehru told one of India's great cartoonists, "Don't spare me." Each governed through extraordinary strain, world war, economic depression, the birth of new nations, and each accepted ridicule as part of the democratic bargain. They knew that satire was not an enemy of authority but a companion to accountability.

Authoritarians, by contrast, fear the mirror. Recep Tayyip Erdogan prosecutes cartoonists for "insulting" him; Nicolás Maduro drives satirists into exile. China's Communist Party has banned memes comparing its leaders to cartoon characters — not for fear of the image itself, but for fear of what laughter dislodges: the aura of inevitability that authoritarian rule depends upon. In Russia, Vladimir Putin's government has criminalised jokes about the war in Ukraine. A confident regime does not fear laughter. A brittle one does.

The consequences are not cultural trivia. A society that cannot laugh at its leaders is one where decision-making distorts and dissent shrinks. Leaders shielded from ridicule are more easily shielded from reality. Policies go unchallenged. Bureaucracies learn that loyalty matters more than truth. In Turkey, the prosecutions of cartoonists were not isolated — they were the leading edge of a broader campaign against journalists, academics, and artists. The silencing of humor is always, eventually, the silencing of critique.

Consider India today. The takedown of a cartoon may seem minor beside larger debates over press freedom and judicial independence. Yet democratic erosion rarely announces itself. It begins in the small acts: a joke removed here, a cartoon silenced there, each one chipping away at the culture of accountability, each one signalling that power has grown too brittle to withstand ridicule.

Why does satire matter so much? Because humour is uniquely destabilising to authority. A speech can be rebutted. A protest dispersed. A statistic spun. But a joke, once told, cannot be untold. It lodges in memory. It spreads effortlessly. It punctures pomposity with a single line. Leaders who cannot laugh at themselves lose the ability to connect with citizens as equals, to admit error, to govern with humility. And when humility disappears, hubris, with all its policy consequences, takes its place.

The impulse to censor may buy a moment of quiet. But that quiet is brittle. The joke travels underground, whispered, shared, posted beyond reach. When leaders silence laughter, they discover too late that silence is not respect. It is merely the absence of permission.

Healthy democracies have always understood the simpler truth: the ability to take a joke is not weakness. It is the measure of strength.

## The Union Govt's Counter-Terror Policy Paper Raises More Questions Than Answers

A paper titled 'National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy,' was recently put up on the Union home ministry's website. Since its very first sentence reads, "India has been at the forefront of the ongoing fight against terrorism for several decades now," it begs the question: Why now? Speculating on the answer yields three prompts: internal, internal-external and external.

The internal prompt has the Delhi terror incident late last year focusing minds. The writing up of this policy-cum-strategy paper is perhaps an outcome. The internal-external prompt was the Baisaran meadow terror incident nine months back. Normally it takes that long to come up with a policy. However, the paper appears to be a rushed job, with at least one spelling mistake and one amendment, betrayed by an insertion in a different font. This brings to fore an external prompt. The release of the paper coincided with the prime minister's trip to Israel, which — as it turned out — was just prior to the launch of the 'unprovoked and illegal' attack by the US and Israel on Iran. The paper refreshes officiously the old canard, "while all Muslims are not terrorists, all terrorists are Muslim."

### The paper's deficits

The paper itself is a curious amalgam of policy and strategy that any public policy undergrad knows are in themselves notably distinct tracts. Ordinarily, the expectation is of an exposition on policy from a ministry. National level strategies follow, but merit separate strategy papers because internal security strategies require



addressing the differentiated terrorism variants (proxy war and indigenous) that beset India.

The only policy-level articulation in the paper is the tired refrain: "...the Indian policy of 'zero tolerance' against terrorism." Parenthetically, it is up for an English professor's input whether it should be rephrased as "zero tolerance" for terrorism. At any rate, a single-phrase is inadequate to holistically cover the conceptual edifice, guiding tenets and major considerations. While not being verbose, policy decidedly cannot be merely two-word long, especially in a nation with a continental geography, history and demography. The remainder of the paper carries the counter-terrorism strategy, which incidentally National Security Adviser Ajit Doval once ruled out (1:06:40) as a non sequitur. Even the phrase 'zero tolerance' needs elaboration and guardrails. For instance, while the law provides for banning organisations, iton-

ly outlines the process. A policy must set what criteria must inform the state's decision, to rule out arbitrariness, unilateralism and policy hijack by vested interests and dominant forces.

More significantly, 'zero tolerance' is somewhat misleading, given that 'selective tolerance' is more apt. Rightly, Muslim-perpetrated and Maoist terrorism has been subject to zero-tolerance. However, terror of regime-friendly right-wing actors — not excluding cow vigilantes, lynch mobs, communal mobs, encounter killings and bull-dozer action — is elided, though within definitional scope.

An international definition — that lacking international consensus is yet to see light of day — includes the over-arching of communities through violence as constitutive of terrorism. A definition reads: "criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with intent to cause death or serious bodily injury... with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in

the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population..."

Even the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) acknowledges acts against a 'section of people' in its definition meriting the term: "Whoever does any act with intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, security, economic security, or sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror or likely to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or in any foreign country..." Majoritarian political violence is also terrorism, given that the result and effect is indeed a 'crushing fear.' Late Prime Minister Vajpayee's words need heeding: "No organisation, irrespective of whether it claims to espouse the cause of the majority or the minority community, can be allowed to inflame passions, spread hatred and incite violence." However, in practice vigilantes enjoy impunity. Instead, a majoritarian state

views any counter-action by communities against majoritarian pressure — such as self-defence against mobs — as terrorism. Even a verbal counter is taken as falling afoul of the clause: 'causing disaffection against India,' using expansive UAPA clauses that read: "unlawful activity... means any action taken... intended... to bring about... the cession... or the secession... or which incites... which ... questions... to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity... which causes or is intended to cause disaffection..." With a collapsing of India with Naya Bharat or Hindu India, such trends can only get more troubling. A non-parochial policy paper would have mitigated such concerns. Querying the 'threat profile' Ideological baggage from the political market-place has contaminated what ought to be an exercise in ideology-immune policy formulation. This is clear from the one-para long 'threat profile' painted in the paper:

## WHEN IT COUNTED, INDIA STOOD WITH THE UAE

On 11 March, the United Nations Security Council adopted the historic Resolution 2817, condemning in the strongest possible terms Iran's unprovoked attacks on the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and Jordan. The resolution passed with 13 votes in favour. Not a single nation voted against it.

India did not just vote in support. India co-sponsored the resolution, joining 135 nations in putting its name to a text that leaves no room for ambiguity. Iran's indiscriminate and cowardly aggression against infrastructure, civilian populations, and sovereign territory are a violation of international law, a threat to regional stability, and a danger to global economic security. This resolution sends a clear and unified message that the international community will not tolerate attacks on our sovereignty or the deliberate targeting of civilians and critical infrastructure.

### What Iran Has Done

Since 28 February, in an act of sustained aggression, Iran has launched ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones against the UAE and neighbouring countries. The UAE has borne the brunt of these attacks, facing down 278 ballistic missiles, 15 cruise missiles, and a staggering 1,540 drones as of 12 March. Despite Iran's claims, excuses, and justifications, these are not precision strikes against military targets. Iranian munitions have struck residential neighbourhoods, commercial districts, and civilian infrastructure. In the UAE alone, civilians of multiple nationalities have been killed and injured, including an Indian national whom His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed



Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, personally visited in hospital. Iran's unprovoked, hostile actions are not directed at the states that declared war on it, but rather at its neighbours — countries that have played a significant role in efforts to avert escalation. The UAE categorically rejects any narratives seeking to justify this aggression and views it as further evidence of Iran's short-sighted policies. We remain resilient in the face of any threat and are fully capable of safeguarding our sovereignty, stability, and security. Any aggression will not go unanswered, and the UAE stands fully prepared to address such threats.

### The Safety Of Indians In The UAE

Since the outbreak of the conflict, I have been in daily contact with Indian families in the UAE and across India. The question I consistently hear is: "Are our people safe?" I would like to use this opportunity to dispel concerns directly to the Indian public. The safety, security, and well-being of everyone in the UAE remains the nation's top priority. The UAE is home to more than 200 nationalities, including a substantial Indian commu-

nity, who live together in peace and harmony. This spirit of openness and stability continues to define the UAE today. Daily life continues without disruption. Essential services, including energy, water, telecommunications, transport, healthcare, and supply chains, are operating at full capacity. The UAE's integrated air defence network has intercepted an overwhelming majority of the incoming threats. Our civil defence systems are operational; our hospitals prepared; and our emergency protocols are functioning exactly as designed. His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has made it clear that all nationals living in the UAE, whether they be Emirati or Indian "are all our responsibility". Indians in the UAE are far beyond being considered our guests. They are teachers, engineers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and labourers, whose contributions are woven into the very fabric of our society. In 2024, the UAE was the second-largest source of remittances to India, contributing \$21.6 billion of India's record \$129.4 billion in inflows. The over four million Indians residing in the UAE are not an abstract number. They proudly rep-

resent families and communities in Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and every state in between, whose livelihoods depend on a stable, functioning, and secure UAE. Their safety is an obligation we take seriously.

### A Word On Predictions Of 'Dubai's Demise'

I have read, with interest, the commentary in some quarters suggesting that the current conflict marks the end of Dubai, the collapse of the UAE's economic model, or the beginning of a mass exodus. I understand the instinct behind these narratives. Conflict is alarming, and alarm generates dramatic headlines.

However, allow me to offer the facts. The UAE's non-oil sectors now account for 75 per cent of GDP. Our sovereign wealth funds hold \$2.49 trillion in assets, making the UAE the third-largest sovereign wealth holder in the world, behind only the United States and China. S&P Global affirmed our AA/A-1+ credit rating with a stable outlook just days ago, noting that the UAE's consolidated net asset position will reach approximately 184 per cent of GDP in 2026.

## With A Takaichi Mandate, India-Japan Collaboration Can Enter a New Era

Japan's leadership transition comes amid deep global uncertainty. A Sanae Takaichi government with a clear mandate would give India an opportunity to recalibrate the bilateral partnership-not incrementally, but with strategic clarity and urgency.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the late Shinzo Abe shared rare personal rapport and alignment. Together, they shaped the idea of a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Abe's tragic assassination disrupted that momentum. Now, political authority coupled with continuity in Tokyo provides space to adapt this framework to today's volatile environment.

The ongoing conflict involving Iran is a stark reminder of the fragility of global energy and trade systems. With the Strait of Hormuz under tension and oil markets highly volatile, both India and Japan face heightened risks to energy security and economic stability. Coordinated strategies-ranging from diversified energy sourcing to resilient supply chains for critical technologies-would not only safeguard national interests but also enhance the strategic credibility of the bilateral partnership.

The planned March 19 meeting between Japan's new leadership and President Donald Trump provides a timely peg for this recalibration. Discussions are expected to focus on the Iran crisis, energy security, and long-term defence cooperation, underscoring how immediate geopolitical pressures are reshaping alliance priorities. The summit offers India and Japan a concrete reference point for aligning



strategies on energy diversification, resilient supply chains, and shared security architecture, reinforcing the practical necessity of closer collaboration. India and Japan share more than contemporary geopolitics. Deep civilisational links-Buddhism, shared spiritual traditions, and cultural values-create a reservoir of trust rare in international relations. In an era of transactional diplomacy, this foundation is a strategic asset.

The partnership's strength lies in complementarity. Japan's mastery of advanced manufacturing and technology aligns with India's demographic scale, innovation ecosystem, and market depth. Past successes-Suzuki-Maruti, metro systems, industrial corridors-demonstrate the power of this

synergy. The next phase must decisively address strategic vulnerabilities. Semiconductors, critical minerals, batteries, clean energy technologies, and resilient supply chains are now central to national competitiveness and security. Coordinated India-Japan strategies across sourcing, manufacturing, and innovation can shape future value chains rather than simply react to them. Defence and security collaboration also requires pragmatism. Co-development, modular projects, and selective co-production can build operational familiarity and strategic trust. Demographics offer another point of convergence: Japan's ageing workforce contrasts with India's youth. Structured collaboration in skills, technology transfer, and managed labour mobility

can strengthen both economies. Joint initiatives in Africa and Southeast Asia, combining Japanese technology and financing with Indian entrepreneurship and regional knowledge, can offer a credible alternative to extractive or transactional models of development. Both countries value ties with the United States. Coordinated approaches where interests align can enhance leverage, resilience, and strategic autonomy in a turbulent global order. Acting together in multilateral fora can also help sustain a rules-based system threatened by retreating powers. Shintaro Ishihara and Akio Morita urged a self-confident Japan capable of speaking firmly when confronted with unfairness. Today, a closer India-Japan partnership can enable both countries to act similarly-not in opposition to the global order, but in defence of fairness, credibility, and balance. Persistent bureaucratic differences remain, but sustained institutional engagement and clear accountability can ensure that ambition is translated into results. As global crises-from the war in Iran to instability in the Indo-Pacific-test the resilience of nations, a reinvigorated India-Japan partnership anchored in shared values, strategic confidence, and practical cooperation offers a model for meaningful international engagement. With decisive leadership in Tokyo and attention to the March 19 summit, both countries have a rare opportunity to transform longstanding goodwill into actionable strategic momentum.

US-IRAN WAR:

# Russia, China to Israel — Who wants the Strait of Hormuz to open soon?

The US-Iran war has entered its third week, and still, there are no signs of any de-escalation in this Middle East crisis. According to experts, the US-Israel-Iran war has created a complex geopolitical situation where different global powers have very different economic and strategic incentives. They said that Russia is the biggest beneficiary of this US-Iran war as soaring oil prices strengthen sanctioned Russia's energy revenues. China can also reduce its energy security threat after the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz by drawing on its buffer oil stocks and Russian oil imports. Even the Iranian government would want to delay the end of this conflict and push the crude oil prices, as it would negatively impact Donald Trump's party's winnability in the mid-term polls scheduled in November 2026. Tehran has a belief that a U-turn by Donald Trump would establish its leadership in the Islamic world of the Middle East.

**Why has the US-Iran war gotten overstretched?**  
On the reasons for the over-



stretched US-Iran war, Ponmudi R, CEO at Enrich Money, said the Middle East tensions involving the United States, Israel, and Iran have created a complex geopolitical situation in which different global powers have very different economic and strategic incentives.

Highlighting the Russian interest in a US-Iran war, the Enrich Money expert said, "Russia is arguably the biggest short-term beneficiary if the conflict continues. Higher oil prices strengthen Russia's energy revenues at a time when sanctions are

already straining its economy. At the same time, global attention shifting toward the Middle East could reduce pressure on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and potentially slow Western military support to Ukraine."

**US-Israel-Iran war: Challenge for China**

Pointing to the threat to China's energy security due to disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, Ponmudi R said that prolonged disruption in the Strait poses a direct risk to China's energy security, given that a significant portion of its oil imports transit

through this route. While a prolonged U.S. engagement in the Middle East could divert Washington's focus away from the Indo-Pacific, Beijing would generally prefer stability in global energy markets. However, Anuj Gupta, a SEBI-registered market expert, believes the threat to Chinese energy security due to the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz is temporary. Beijing can address the demand-supply imbalance by increasing Russian oil imports. Anuj Gupta also said that the Chinese government has been working on enhancing

its oil storage capacity. So, it can also use the oil buffer available at its current oil storage.

**Push to the US oil exports**

Highlighting the benefits for the US from disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, Ponmudi R of Enrich Money said that higher oil prices may support alternative energy supply chains and increase exports from countries like the U.S. and Venezuela to Europe and Asia. He said that Donald Trump would love to have a bigger role in the global trade order for crude oil, where Middle Eastern countries are replaced by Venezuela and the US. However, the US will have to pay for it. Soaring crude oil prices may lead to higher inflation, which could reduce the chances of a near-term US Fed rate cut.

**Mid-term US election**

SEBI-registered expert Anuj Gupta said the US Fed may have to delay rate-cut plans in the wake of higher inflation. This may go against Donald Trump's Republican Party candidates' winnability in the mid-term US polls.

## SEBI MANDATES BOARD APPROVAL, CLARIFIES CAP ON INTRADAY BORROWING FOR MUTUAL FUNDS

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has formalized a framework for intraday borrowing by mutual funds, allowing them to temporarily take money without an upper limit to manage same-day liquidity mismatches. In a circular issued on Friday, the regulator mandated board approvals and disclosures, and clarified the circumstances under which mutual funds can temporarily borrow from banks. Mutual funds are generally allowed to borrow up to 20% of a scheme's net assets, with the duration of such borrowings not exceeding six months. This ceiling will not apply to intraday borrowing carried out to meet redemption payouts, Sebi said. To be sure, mutual funds already borrow intraday without an upper limit. However, the borrowing amount and the absence of a limit were not solidified in regulations. The change will come into effect on 1 April. It was introduced in a gazette notification for the new Sebi (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026, in January. Mutual funds engage in intraday borrowing to maintain liquidity for redemption payments for liquid and overnight schemes. Redemption proceeds for the schemes are typically paid to investors on the morning of



T+1, while maturity proceeds from instruments such as Tri-Party Repo Dealing System (TREPDS) or reverse repo transactions are received only later in the day. This can create a temporary cash crunch, which is often resolved through short-term borrowing arrangements with banks. Sebi said the absence of the cap does not imply unrestricted borrowing. Intraday borrowing should not exceed guaranteed receivables expected on the same day from the central government, the Reserve Bank of India and the Clearing Corporation of India Ltd. Approval and disclosure The board of the asset management company (AMC) and the board of

trustees are required to approve a policy for intraday borrowing, which must be disclosed on the mutual fund's website. The regulator said AMCs have to absorb any costs arising from such borrowing. Any charges or losses caused by delays or unforeseen events in receiving the expected funds must be borne by the AMC. Sebi clarified that equity-oriented index funds and exchange-traded funds may borrow temporarily if their sell trades remain under-executed on stock exchanges, but only for participation in the closing auction session in the equity cash segment, which was introduced by the market regulator in January.

## 'Gruesome' war bets fuel calls for crackdown on prediction markets

Stew, a 35-year-old from Montana, has enjoyed dabbling in sports bets since he downloaded the Kalshi app about 18 months ago. But just a few weeks ago, after spotting reports of elevated pizza deliveries around the Pentagon during some late-night scrolling, he made a different kind of bet - wagering \$10 (£7.50) on the odds that Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei would be "out" by 1 March. It was a trade that tested the limits of the kinds of bets Americans are allowed to make. So-called prediction markets - overseen by firms such as Kalshi - have exploded in popularity over the last year, hosting more than \$44bn in trades. They are rapidly transforming the betting landscape in the US, where sports betting was largely illegal until 2018 and gambling on elections had been off-limits for years until 2024. While much of the activity on the platforms revolves around sporting matches, users can speculate on any number of questions, including local elections, whether the US cen-



tral bank will cut interest rates and the year of Jesus Christ's return. The apps caught fire during America's 2024 presidential campaign, after a legal victory cleared the way for them to accept election bets and they showed the odds tilting toward Donald Trump. But it is more grisly wagers tied to military action involving Iran, Venezuela and Israel that have drawn attention lately. In theory, such bets run afoul of US financial rules, which bar trading on contracts involving war, terrorism, assassination, gaming or other illegal activities. But that hasn't stopped firms from taking in mil-

lions of trades. Critics have seized on the activity, calling for a crackdown on the apps, which they say are facilitating unseemly, and potentially illegal, war profiteering, generating national security risks and enabling opportunities for insider trading and corruption. "You have now opened up gambling basically on almost anything and it has turned into this very, very gruesome type of thing on the death of a head of state," said Craig Holman, government affairs lobbyist at the Public Citizen advocacy group, which recently filed a complaint this week over the bets. Polymarket alone has hosted what Bloomberg

estimated as more than \$500m in bets related to the Iran war, at one point offering an opportunity to play the odds on the chance of nuclear detonation. The company, which is headquartered in New York but operates on a limited basis in the US, eventually removed that market after it drew scrutiny on social media but users can still submit bets on questions like when US forces will enter Iran. It did not respond to the BBC's request for comment. Kalshi also ended up cancelling the Khamenei market, which had drawn \$54m in trades, noting that US-regulated entities are barred from "having a market directly settling on someone's death". The company, which did not respond to a request for comment for this article, has said the war bets are happening on unregulated exchanges outside the US. Concerns about the war bets have collided with a bigger battle over how prediction market firms should be regulated.

## Air India finds large-scale misuse of staff travel policy, begins action

**New Delhi/Mumbai:** Air India has detected large-scale discrepancies in the utilisation of its leisure travel policy, involving more than 4,000 employees and has initiated corrective actions, including imposing penalties on the erring staff, according to sources. Loss-making Air India was acquired by the Tata Group in January 2022, and the airline, which has faced multiple headwinds in recent times, is also in the midst of implementing an ambitious transformation plan. The airline has more than 24,000 employees. The sources in the know told PTI that the large-scale discrepancies in the use of Air India's Employee Leisure Travel (ELT) policy were detected after a detailed internal investigation. The ELT policy allows a specified number of free air tickets for individual employees and their nominees, including spouse and parents. These are subject to certain conditions. Many employees were found to have misused the policy by showing those not related



to them as relatives to avail the benefits. Some were reported to have even availed the free tickets and sold them to people at a higher price, the sources said. A detailed set of queries sent to Air India on Thursday seeking comments on the issue and the actions taken remained unanswered. One of the sources said more than 4,000 staff were found to have misused the ELT policy. Violations dating back to the last financial year, claims were also detected, sources said. Specific details about the number of employees, the amount involved due to the misuse

of the policy and the time period for which the violations have been detected could not be ascertained. Air India has started taking corrective actions, and the employees concerned have been asked to refund the amount that was availed in a fraudulent manner. Heavy penalties were also imposed on many of the staff who indulged in such practices, the sources said. There seems to have been failures at various levels, and the whole issue raises the "question of morality and conduct", one of the sources said. Another source claimed that most of the employees, who were

**Air India has detected large-scale discrepancies in the utilisation of its leisure travel policy, involving more than 4,000 employees and has initiated corrective actions, including imposing penalties on the erring staff, according to sources.**

found to have misused the policy, had joined the airline post-privatisation. As a fallout of the fraudulent practices, Air India has tightened the requirements for availing the benefits under the ELT policy, the sources said. For the policy benefits, an employee has to provide nominee details, along with proof of the relationship to the company. A total of 14 passages or return air tickets are provided for staff in a financial year. This can also include open-jaw tickets, which refer to booking a ticket for a flight that is from a different point to the origin destination.

## NIPPON LARGE CAP FUND CROSSES RS. 50,000 CRORE IN AUM

Nippon India Large Cap Fund on Thursday said its large-cap fund had crossed the ₹50,000 crore mark in assets under management (AUM), joining the ranks of ICICI Prudential and SBI, whose large-cap funds have AUMs of more than ₹50,000 crore despite the lower flows in equity mutual funds. Profit booking after the recent rally amid persisting uncertainties over an India-US trade deal, concerns over valuations and relentless foreign capital outflow. Large-cap mutual funds are often considered a relatively safer option for new and risk-averse investors, as they invest in blue-chip stocks. These companies have robust business models and are typically leaders in their respective sectors. Hence, large-cap funds tend to be more stable and resilient to economic downturns and market fluctuations, compared to mid and small-cap mutual funds. Stable and consistent



price fluctuations. Since large-cap mutual funds invest across a wide range of established companies across sectors, these funds come with a built-in diversification, reducing the impact of a below-par performance in any single company or sector.

The Nippon India Large Cap Fund has delivered returns of 19% and 22% over the last three and five years, respectively. In the same period, ICICI Prudential Large Cap fund (18% and 19%) and Invesco India Large Cap gave returns of 17% and 18%.

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## Gold rate today: Yellow metal slips below Rs. 1.60 lakh level. Is it the right time to buy amid US-Iran war?

**Gold rate today:** Gold prices have slipped below the psychological 1.60 lakh in India amid no signs of de-escalation in the US-Iran war. Gold prices in India continued to decline, putting the metal on track for a second consecutive weekly loss as escalating tensions involving Iran, Israel, and the United States kept global markets volatile and unsettled. On Friday, MCX gold prices settled marginally lower at 1,58,400 per 10 grams. Meanwhile, in the international front, the COMEX gold rate was hovering around \$5,120/oz. What's driving gold prices in India Gold's rally has lost momentum since the US-Israel conflict with Iran began nearly two weeks ago, with no clear resolution in sight. Donald Trump said the US had intensified strikes on Iran to unprecedented levels, signalling that the conflict - which is disrupting energy flows and global markets - is unlikely to ease anytime soon. Meanwhile, surging



energy prices and mounting inflation concerns have significantly lowered expectations that the Federal Reserve and other central banks will begin cutting interest rates. Fresh US consumer spending data released on Friday also showed that spending barely increased in January amid

weaker-than-expected economic growth, reinforcing worries that inflationary pressures were already building even before the attacks on Iran. "Gold price has declined mainly due to stronger US Dollar which is bolstered by concerns over a prolonged conflict in the Middle East and rising oil

prices. Also, rising US Treasury yields has put additional pressure on the Gold price. Bond yields have surged to 4.27%," said Aamir Makda, Commodity & Currency Analyst at Choice Broking. What should investors do Makda further said that moderately bearish trend in gold price in upcoming

sessions can be expected, meanwhile, suggested traders to look for 'sell on rise' opportunity. Meanwhile, Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, believes that the momentum indicators currently reflect a temporary neutral to mildly bearish tilt in the short term, as the market continues to trade below the recent swing resistance. On the technical outlook of gold prices, Ponmudi added, "As long as prices hold above 1,58,000, gold retains the potential to move toward 1,62,000-1,65,000 initially, and possibly retest higher resistance around 1,68,000-1,70,000 if bullish catalysts strengthen. However, a decisive break below 1,57,000 could intensify downside pressure, potentially extending the corrective move toward the 1,55,000-1,50,000 support zone. Despite this near-term correction, the broader bullish bias remains intact as long as key structural support levels remain unbroken, supported by favorable macroeconomic tailwinds."

# Israel launches 'wide-scale' strikes on Iran as Trump says US not ready to make deal to end war

Operations at one of the largest oil facilities in the Middle East have restarted after it was targeted by a drone strike, reports say. Thick plumes of smoke were seen at the port of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday and Fujairah officials said a fire was caused by "falling debris following the successful interception of a drone by air defenses". Bloomberg reports that oil loading operations at the port have now resumed, quoting several people who are familiar with the situation. The port is a key location for fuelling ships as it sits 70 miles from the Strait of Hormuz - meaning vessels do not need to navigate through the key oil route that has been practically cut off. Officials in Bahrain say five people have been arrested for their involvement in collecting and passing on "precise and sensitive information" to the Iranian Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC). Bahrain's Ministry of the Interior says the



arrests were also for "recruiting terrorist elements" to carry out terror plots against Bahrain. The ministry says a sixth individual is also on the run abroad. These point to Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's comments on Friday that the US are using 99% stand-in weapons over targets now - which also illustrates a greater level of air supremacy over parts of Iran. These precision-guided weapons have a thickened outer casing of steel allowing

them to penetrate hardened and buried targets. A delay fuse means they can detonate at various depths depending on what intelligence is advising. Also here are the heavy B-1 Lancer bombers which have been carrying out frequent strikes - again using mainly GBU-31 bunker busters. It seems stand-off cruise missiles are still in use against Iran. I spotted a B-52 at the RAF base loaded up with AGM-158 JASSM/JASSM-ER

munitions - three to a pylon on each wing. With a range of up to 500 miles, these missiles are used against heavily defended or high value targets where getting closer using free-fall precision guided bombs would be deemed too dangerous. There's a lot of people running towards the area, presumably to try to find out if anyone they knew has been hurt. It's a pretty built up residential neighbourhood. Most of these Iranian missiles are

being shot down, but some are getting through. Some of these missiles break up in the sky and form these smaller cluster bombs that don't do as much damage when they fall, but are still potentially deadly. Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Air Base (PSAB) at Al-Kharj, near the capital of Riyadh, has come under repeated missile and drone attack from Iran. The air base is home to a number of US warplanes, with the Saudi defence ministry saying it has intercepted at least 10 drones in the Riyadh and Eastern Province regions. Iran's Fars news agency says it has fired a salvo of missiles at the base. One man describes how Kharg Island, where the US says it struck more than 90 military targets on Saturday, is a "very small island with kind people" but had not progressed much. "It is the Islamic Republic's fault that they were neglected," he adds. A man in his 20s who is not being named, from Tehran, says he strongly disagrees with the attacks and

tells the BBC "at this pace we will end up with a ruined Iran". Another man in his 20s, from Keraj, adds: "I just hope energy facilities are not attacked. It's unclear how many years it would take to rebuild them - but I really don't care about military sites." US intelligence shows that Iran's late supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was wary of his son, Mojtaba Khamenei, taking power, sources tell the BBC's US partner CBS News. The sources report that the elder Khamenei was wary of his son ever taking power because he was perceived as not very bright, and was viewed as unqualified to be leader. The intelligence also indicated that the father was aware that his son had issues in his personal life. Mojtaba Khamenei has not been seen publicly since he was elected supreme leader on 8 March, but on Sunday Iran's foreign minister said he was "in good health" and "fully controlling the situation".

## Treasure hunter freed from jail after refusing to turn over shipwreck gold



A US deep-sea treasure hunter who refused to disclose the location of a famed shipwreck's gold coins has been released from prison after a decade, with 500 coins still unaccounted for. Tommy Thompson, 73, discovered millions of dollars' worth of sunken treasure from the 1857 wreck of the SS Central America, also known as the Ship of Gold, off the coast of South Carolina in 1988. Investors in Thompson's venture accused him of cheating them out of promised proceeds and after years on the run he was jailed in

2015 on a criminal contempt charge. When it sank in 1857, the ship had been carrying 30,000 pounds of gold newly minted in San Francisco. The ship's treasure, which had been en route to the east coast to create a reserve for banks, sank 7,000 feet to the bottom of the ocean, taking with it 425 passengers and crew, and contributing to the financial panic of 1857. A total of 161 investors had given Thompson \$12.7m (£9.4m) to find the ship on the understanding that they would see returns on their investment.

## ISRAELI FORCES KILL PALESTINIAN COUPLE AND TWO OF THEIR CHILDREN IN OCCUPIED WEST BANK



A Palestinian husband and wife, and two of their young children, have been shot and killed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank. The Bani Odeh family were travelling in their car in the town of Tammum, in the northern West Bank, when Israeli forces opened fire. Two of their other children were injured but survived. Israeli authorities said a joint operation by the army and Israel's paramilitary border police was taking place in the town at time. They claim the car accelerated towards Israeli forces, who felt endangered and responded by shooting. "As a result, four Palestinians in the vehicle were killed," a statement from the Israeli military and police said, adding that the circumstances of the incident were being investigated. The Palestinian health ministry said that four of the family members, parents Ali and Waad, and two of their children, five-year-old Mohammed and seven-year-old Othman, were killed. They all arrived at the hospital

with gunshot wounds to the face and head, the ministry said. Two older children aged eight and 11, who were also travelling in the car and witnessed the deaths of their family, survived with minor injuries from shrapnel. The Palestinian Red Crescent said in a statement that Israeli forces initially prevented their crews from reaching the injured inside the car and ordered them to leave the area. The UN says much of the occupied West Bank has remained under heightened movement restrictions since the outbreak of the war between the US, Israel and Iran on 28 February. Violent attacks have also continued, according to Palestinian authorities and the UN. More broadly, violence there has risen sharply since the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks, which triggered the war in Gaza. Between 7 October 2023 and 8 March 2026, the UN's humanitarian affairs office, OCHA, said 1,064 Palestinians were killed in the occupied West Bank, including at least 231 children.

## US NAMES SIX CREW KILLED IN REFUELLING PLANE CRASH IN IRAQ



The US military has named all six crew members who were killed when their refuelling aircraft crashed in Iraq. The Pentagon said those on board the KC-135 plane were: John Klinner, 33, from Alabama; Ariana Savino, 31, from Washington; Ashley Pruitt, 34, from Kentucky; Seth Koval, 38, from Indiana; Curtis Angst, 30, from Ohio; and Tyler Simmons, 28, also from

Ohio. The first three were Air Force personnel, and the latter three served in the National Guard. The US military previously said neither hostile nor friendly fire were involved in the loss of the plane in western Iraq on Thursday. The aircraft was on a combat mission as part of ongoing US operations against Iran and was one of two planes involved in the incident. The second landed safely.

## ZELENSKY ACCUSES EU ALLIES OF 'BLACKMAIL' IN OIL PIPELINE ROW

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has accused European allies of seeking to "blackmail" Kyiv into reopening a pipeline transporting Russian oil to Hungary and Slovakia. He said restoring the flow of Russian crude oil through Ukraine into the European Union (EU) would be like lifting economic sanctions on Moscow. Ukraine says the Soviet-era Druzhba oil pipeline was damaged by Russian air strikes in January and has yet to be repaired. Hungary depends on Russian energy and is blocking both fresh EU sanctions on Moscow and a vital 90bn (\$103bn; £78bn) loan for Kyiv until the pipeline is reopened. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has made hostility towards



Ukraine a key issue ahead of April elections. His party is entering the race trailing behind in opinion polls. The EU has urged Zelensky to repair the pipeline quickly and is asking him to allow inspectors in to visit the damage. Some EU officials fear Zelensky's resistance may help Orban win re-election. But talking to reporters

in Kyiv, including the BBC, Zelensky said he was simply opposed in principle to allowing Russian oil to transit through Ukraine while the EU sanctioned its sale elsewhere. He said: "We either sell Russian oil or we don't. Because [the EU] are forcing me to restore Druzhba. How is this different from lifting sanctions on

the Russians? Why can we in one case tell the United States that we oppose lifting sanctions, while on the other hand forcing Ukraine to resume oil transit through Druzhba - and at a political price that effectively pays for anti-European policies?" Zelensky's comments come after the US loosened sanctions preventing other countries buying Russian oil in order to ease the energy supply crunch sparked by the US-Israel war with Iran. The move has drawn criticism from a number of European leaders. "If we have decided to restore Russian oil supplies, then I want them to know that I am against it. And there is no need to accuse me of blocking anything. I am not blocking it," Zelensky said.

## UGANDAN OPPOSITION LEADER GOES ABROAD AFTER TWO MONTHS IN HIDING

Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine says he has left the country after spending two months in hiding following January's disputed election. Bobi Wine says he has gone abroad for "critical engagements" and to help mobilise the international community against President Yoweri Museveni. The pop star turned politician, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, repeated his claim to have won the presidential election, saying it had been rigged in favour of Museveni, who has been in power since 1986. Museveni, 81, won the election with 72% of the vote and has



accused the opposition of seeking to overturn the results through violence. Wine's statement, posted on a five-minute video on X, called for targeted sanctions against Museveni. It was his first public appearance in weeks. While some members of the government have

denied that the security forces are looking for Bobi Wine, Museveni's son, Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who is head of the country's military, said he was "wanted dead or alive" and also threatened to castrate him. Those messages have since been deleted from his X

account. He did not accuse Wine of committing any specific offences. Wine, 44, alleged that the authorities had repeatedly raided the homes of his supporters looking for him, including as recently as Thursday, as well as setting up roadblocks around the country. He said that his house in the capital, Kampala, was still surrounded by the military, as it has been since election day. "I thank all you fellow Ugandans who have concealed and protected me all the time while the regime was looking for me," he said in the video. He denied having broken the law, saying "running for president is not a crime".

## We will intervene on energy bills if necessary, says Miliband



Energy Secretary Ed Miliband has said "if it's necessary to intervene, we will" if people's energy costs surge due to the US-Israel war in Iran. Speaking on the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme, Miliband left the door open to interventions on fuel duty and energy bills if the impact of the Gulf crisis demands it. "We're going to stand by people in this crisis," he said, adding the government was "preparing for all eventualities". Oil and gas prices have surged due to the US-Israel war in Iran and, with no clear indication of how long conflict will continue, economists have warned about the possible impact on the global economy and cost of living. Chancellor Rachel Reeves is expected to offer a support package to households struggling with higher heating oil costs this week. Petrol prices have jumped to an 18-month high, according to motoring organisation the RAC, leading to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer

warning his government "will step in" if fuel companies "try to rip off customers" last week. Shown that the largest chunk of petrol cost at the pump was fuel duty at 38%, Miliband was asked whether the government would maintain the current freeze on fuel duty from September. "With five months to go until September, we'll have to see where we are," he said, adding: "We will stand by the British people in this crisis and we will do what it takes to do that." Last week, Miliband got into a row with petrol retailers after warning them the independent watchdog the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) was keeping a close eye on potential "price gouging" around the current conflict. Petrol retailers labelled the warnings "inflammatory language" and responded by briefly threatening to withdraw from a Downing Street meeting, although they did eventually attend.



Severe flooding kills 62 in Kenya, as heavy rains continue

## The women bringing chess into the 21st Century - with 'bullet' matches and viral videos

During Covid, Nemo Zhou was "losing [her] mind" locked down at home and thought it would be nice to make some money. So she started streaming chess - and now it's turned into a career. A woman grandmaster - the highest female-only chess title - Zhou was pursuing a degree in economics and mathematics at the University of Toronto at the time. She launched her own stream in 2020, after first making guest appearances on a friend's channel, and the timing was impeccable. A few months later, the Netflix show The Queen's Gambit was released. Along with the pandemic, it led to a chess boom. Zhou's channel quickly took off. Sensing



the boom was here to stay, she dropped out of university to focus on her new career. Five years on, Zhou, now 26, has more than two million followers across Twitch, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. She streams for five to six hours a day, at least five days a week, drawing her biggest audiences at weekends.



## JAY SHAH'S BLUNT REMINDER TO PAKISTAN

BANGLADESH OVER BOYCOTT  
DRAMA IN T20 WORD CUP

**AGENCY**  
**Mumbai:** The T20 World Cup 2026 witnessed unprecedented scenes as Bangladesh were forced out of the tournament after refusing to travel to India over alleged "security concerns." Despite receiving assurances from the International Cricket Council (ICC), Bangladesh stood firm on their stance and were replaced by Scotland. Later, in solidarity with Bangladesh, Pakistan threatened to boycott their group-stage match against India before eventually making a U-turn. ICC chairman Jay Shah, who had remained silent during the controversies, has now spoken about the pre-tournament drama. Speaking at the Indian Business Leader Awards in Mumbai, Shah revealed how the entire

tournament's fate was jeopardised by the dilemma surrounding certain teams' participation. As the head of cricket's global governing body, he stressed the importance of asserting that "no team is bigger than the organisation."

"This ICC World Cup was very important because there was a lot of chatter before the start of the tournament about whether certain teams would participate and how the World Cup would go ahead. As



ICC chairman Jay Shah sent a blunt reminder to Pakistan and Bangladesh over their pre-T20 World Cup boycott drama.

ICC chairman, I can say that no team is bigger than the organisation and no single team makes an organisation. An organisation is a combination of all teams," Shah said during the award function, without naming Bangladesh or Pakistan.

Shah also highlighted the grand success of the T20 World Cup 2026, which shattered viewership records, with 7.2 million concurrent viewers reportedly tuning in. "The World Cup has shattered all viewership records. For the first time in history, we recorded 7.2 million concurrent viewers. All records were broken in overall viewership. If you see, the USA gave India a

hard time, the Netherlands troubled Pakistan, Zimbabwe beat Australia, and Nepal gave England a scare. I congratulate all the associate teams; they have done very well against the full members," he added. To conclude, Jay Shah delivered an important message to the T20 World Cup-winning Indian team. "I have a message for Surya and Gautam Bhai: slipping from the top to the bottom takes only months, while climbing from the bottom to the top takes years. Keep working hard and keep winning awards. When I was with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), I had planned till the 2028 Olympics. Now I am in the ICC, and others are in charge at the BCCI. All of you should prepare for 2030, 2031 and even 2036," he said.

## Delhi Capitals React As Kevin Pietersen Quits As Franchise's Mentor Ahead Of IPL 2026

Delhi Capitals bid farewell to the team's now-former mentor Kevin Pietersen after the England veteran announced on Saturday that he was stepping down from his role, stating that he could not commit the time it requires. The 45-year-old, however, will be back in the commentary box for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026. DC had appointed Pietersen for the role in February last year, for the 2025 edition of the tournament, as he worked alongside the support staff, which included Director of Cricket Venugopal Rao, Head Coach Hemang Badani, Assistant Coach Matthew Mott and Bowling Coach Munaf Patel. The England veteran took to X on Saturday to share the news, saying, "I cannot be a mentor for Delhi Capitals in this IPL season. I can't commit to the time that the job requires. Best wishes to all the players for this season! However, I'll see you



back in the commentary box! IPL is the world's best league, and I can't wait to see all of you soon!" The franchise shared an edit for Pietersen on Sunday, captioning it, "Once a Dilliwalla, always a Dilliwalla. Thank you for all the love & roars, KP." The former England cricketer also reacted to their post by dropping a heart emoji. Earlier this week, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the schedule for the first phase of IPL 2026, to be played from March 28

to April 12, 2026. "As three states are scheduled to undergo State Assembly elections during this period, the full schedule of the tournament will be announced once the poll dates are announced," BCCI said in a statement. The 19th edition of the biggest T20 league on the globe will commence with defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru.

## "BABAR AZAM DOESN'T HAVE A VOICE":

## PAKISTAN STAR QUESTIONED OVER ROLE CHANGE WITH VIRAT KOHLI EXAMPLE

Once considered Pakistan's biggest star across formats, the manner in which Babar Azam's career derailed left many surprised. The batter made a return to Pakistan's team for the T20 World Cup 2026 but was given a role in the middle order despite playing most of his career as an opener. Former Pakistan cricketer Basit Ali questioned Babar as well as Fakhar Zaman's decision to accept the change. Basit cited India icon Virat Kohli's example, suggesting that Babar and Fakhar should not have accepted this change, even if things were not going their way. "Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman don't have a voice.



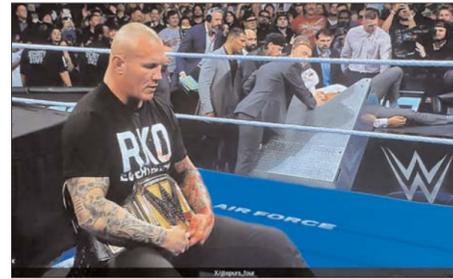
How come they agreed to bat in the middle order?" said Basit on the Game Plan show. "I just have one example. Virat Kohli was not made the captain, he said, 'Okay, bye.' Virat Kohli. He retired; he should have been made the captain for the

England series. He was told that he was not in their scheme of things as far as captaincy was concerned. He said, 'Okay, tata, bye-bye.' He doesn't have a shortage of money. Babar should not have accepted the decision to bat at No. 4. If I were

his close aide, I would have told him to refuse. You just threw him under the bus," he added. Offering his opinion on the topic, another former Pakistan cricketer, Kamran Akmal, disagreed with Basit, saying players cannot decide which position they will play. If they try to dictate that, they would be sidelined. "No player dares to go against the team management. I have only seen Younis Khan being adamant about his position. As a player, you simply cannot say that. You will be thrown to the sidelines if you say such things," said Akmal. "When the form is not there, no player says such things.

## Cody Rhodes' Gruesome Injuries From Randy Orton's Heel Turn Intensify WrestleMania Drama

The road to WrestleMania 42 took a rather ugly turn, as WWE released disturbing images of Cody Rhodes' injuries on social media. Rhodes sustained the injuries during Randy Orton's shocking betrayal on WWE SmackDown. The photos, now circulating widely across social media, have amplified the storyline and left fans questioning whether Rhodes will even be fit to defend his Undisputed WWE Championship at WrestleMania 42. Right before Randy Orton's heel turn, the SmackDown episode started with the contract signing between Rhodes and The Viper. However, it quickly descended into chaos as Orton, who had spoken warmly about his history with Rhodes,



suddenly smashed his head into the table. Then, he delivered a low blow, and unleashed a vicious steel chair assault on Rhodes. The attack marked Orton's official heel turn, positioning him as the ruthless challenger heading into WrestleMania. While Orton's heel turn is part of the storyline in the build-up

twist, but a deliberate attempt to weaken Rhodes before the biggest match of the year. The release of these photos has heightened anticipation for WrestleMania 42. Rhodes, already seen as the resilient hero of WWE, now faces the added challenge of overcoming both physical injury and psychological trauma. Orton, meanwhile, has re-established himself as a cold, calculating villain-one who thrives on dismantling opponents before the bell even rings. The WWE fanbase has responded with a mix of outrage and excitement. Some fans are concerned about Rhodes' condition, while others see the incident as a masterstroke in storytelling, ensuring that the championship clash carries real emotional weight.

## Carlos Alcaraz's 16-Game Win Streak Ended By Daniil Medvedev In Indian Wells Semi-Final

Daniil Medvedev handed top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz his first loss of the year and advanced to the final at Indian Wells with a 6-3, 7-6 (3) victory Saturday. The 11th-seeded Medvedev, from Russia, will face second-seeded Jannik Sinner of Italy. Sinner beat Alexander Zverev 6-2, 6-4. Alcaraz had won 16 straight matches this year, including titles at the Australian Open and Qatar Open. But Medvedev ended the possibility of an Alcaraz vs Sinner final. Medvedev had dropped his last four meetings against Alcaraz, including a loss in the Indian Wells final in 2024. This was Medvedev's first victory over him since the U.S. Open semifinals in 2023. Sinner made quick



work of Zverev, beating him in 1 hour, 23 minutes. Sinner notched six aces against the fourth-seeded Zverev. Zverev won his first eight points on serve. But Sinner broke Zverev in both the fifth and seventh games to secure the first set. Sinner now leads the head-to-head series against Zverev 7-4. Neither Medvedev nor

Sinner has dropped a set yet in this tournament. Sinner has won his last three matches against Medvedev, including in the U.S. Open quarterfinals in 2024. In the women's doubles final, Taylor Townsend and Katerina Siniakova beat Anna Danilina and Aleksandra Krunic 7-6 (4), 6-4.

## Hardik Pandya Buys Rs 12 Crore Ferrari

Days after India's T20 World Cup 2026 victory, star all-rounder Hardik Pandya bought a new supercar. He added the luxurious Ferrari 12Cilindri to his collection. The reported price of the supercar is Rs 12 crore. In a video that is going viral on social media, Hardik could be seen driving the black colour convertible car, with his girlfriend Mahieka Sharma sitting beside him. It is worth noting that the all-rounder already owns cars like the Rolls-Royce Phantom, Lamborghini Huracan EVO, Lamborghini Urus, Mercedes-AMG G63, Range Rover Vogue, and Audi A6. As per CarDekho, here are the important features of the Ferrari 12Cilindri bought by Hardik Pandya: The supercar has a naturally aspirated 6.5-litre V12 engine The maximum torque of the supercar



is 678Nm at 7,250 rpm Its maximum power is 818 bhp at 9,500 rpm The car, which has a top speed of 340 kmph, can reach 0 to 100 in just 2.9 seconds It has a seating capacity of two people, including the driver The fuel tank capacity of the car is 92 litres Hardik Pandya had a brilliant run in the T20 World Cup 2026 as India clinched the title with a one-sided victory over New Zealand in the final. They beat the Blackcaps by a mas-

sive margin of 95 runs for their third title. The all-rounder scored 217 runs in nine innings at an average of 27.12 and a strike rate of 160.74, including two fifties in the tournament. His half-centuries came against Namibia (in the first round) and Zimbabwe (in the Super Eight). The 32-year-old star also shone with the ball for India as he scalped nine wickets in as many matches, with best figures of 2 for 16.

## Chinese GP: 19-Year-Old Kimi Antonelli Wins For The 1st Time, Lewis Hamilton Secures Podium After 477 Days



An emotional Kimi Antonelli won a grand prix for the first time on Sunday in China ahead of Mercedes teammate George Russell and Lewis Hamilton, who made his maiden podium for Ferrari. The 19-year-old Antonelli converted being the youngest pole-sitter in Formula One history into victory after both McLarens dramatically failed to start the Shanghai race. Antonelli briefly lost the lead at the start but once he got back in front he controlled the pace to cruise home to the chequered flag by more than five seconds from Russell. Charles Leclerc was fourth in the second Ferrari. "I'm speechless, I'm about to cry to be honest," said Antonelli as he choked back tears. "Thank you to the team for helping me to achieve this dream." It was an almost flawless drive from the youngster, apart from one heart-fluttering moment when he locked up at the hairpin on his penultimate lap. But he recovered to avoid nothing more damaging than a small excursion off track. "I really wanted to bring Italy back to the top and we did

today. Even if I gave myself a little bit of a heart attack towards the end a flat spot," Antonelli added. Early championship leader Russell was full of praise for his young teammate after the dominant Mercedes team secured a one-two for the second race running. "A huge congratulations to Kimi because it's always very special to win your first race," said Russell, whose lead has been cut to four points by Antonelli. The Italian replaced Hamilton at Mercedes and the seven-time world champion said he could not be more pleased for the teenager and his old team. "I'm so happy for you buddy, and I'm so honoured to be able to share this moment with him," said Hamilton. "He took my seat obviously, at this great team. So big congratulations to Mercedes. They're really pulling ahead at the moment. We've got a lot of work to do to try and keep up." Hamilton, as he had done in Saturday's sprint, got a great start and had taken the lead by the time the teams emerged from the first complex of turns.

## Kuldeep Yadav Marries Vanshika Chaddha In Dreamy Mussoorie Wedding

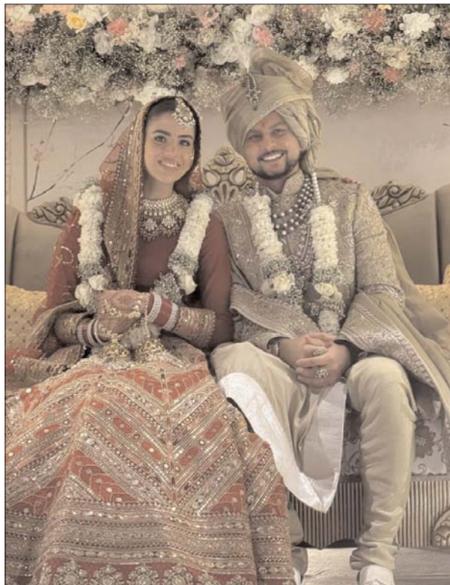
India spinner Kuldeep Yadav tied the knot with his childhood friend, Vanshika Chaddha, on Saturday in the hill station of Mussoorie. The ceremony was attended by several current and former cricketers, including Kuldeep's 2026 T20 World Cup-winning teammates Tilak Varma and Rinku Singh. Social media was flooded with pictures and videos from the couple's festivities, following their private engagement last year. In one viral clip, Kuldeep and Vanshika are seen walking hand-in-hand as

pyrotechnics lit up the background. Kuldeep and Vanshika's wedding was hosted at the Welcomhotel The Savoy, which was reportedly reserved for several days to accommodate the guests and festivities. "So happy you've found your forever love. Cheers to a beautiful life, Lil Bro," Indian cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal posted on X. Photos and videos circulating on social media have offered glimpses of the colorful Sangeet ceremony held on Friday evening. In images shared by cricketing icons Suresh Raina and Yuzvendra Chahal, the

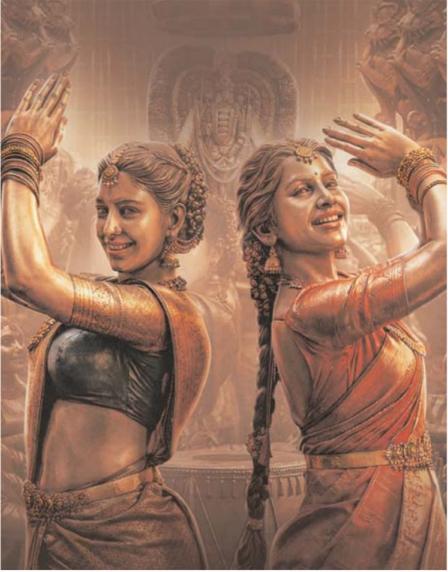
bride and groom were seen in coordinated traditional outfits that quickly went viral online. Tilak, who reached Mussoorie on Saturday, earlier said that he will enjoy the wedding before getting into the preparation for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, where he will represent the five-time champions Mumbai Indians. "We're going to Kuldeep's wedding to have fun. After that, we'll prepare for IPL," Tilak told IANS. Media reports suggest that Kuldeep postponed the wedding, originally scheduled for November 2025, to focus

on helping India clinch the T20 World Cup 2026. The couple, who both hail from Kanpur and grew up just 3 km apart, got engaged last year at a hotel in Lucknow. Vanshika currently works as an LIC employee.

Despite the team's success, Kuldeep featured just once during the T20 World Cup, returning tidy figures of 1/14 against arch-rivals Pakistan in the group stage. Meanwhile, the spinner's father, Ram Singh Yadav, visited Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath last week to personally extend a wedding invitation.



## The Devotion Era Begins: The Sacred Masterpiece "NAMORE" From Pan-India Magnum Opus Nagabandham Unveiled



Directed with ambition by Abhishek Nama and produced by Kishore Annappreddy and Nishitha Nagireddy, the upcoming pan-Indian magnum opus Nagabandham, starring Virat Karma, promises to be a visual and emotional spectacle. With a strong lineup of seasoned actors and culturally rooted storytelling, the film aims to celebrate India's artistic depth, spiritual heritage, and narrative richness. The devotion era begins, as the much-awaited single NAMORE has now been unveiled—and it's already being hailed as the spiritu-

al anthem of 2026. Soul-stirring and visually majestic, the song pays homage to Lord Narayana while exploring themes of devotion, inner strength, and faith. Composers Juned Kumar and Abhe infuse the track with a seamless blend of classical and contemporary soundscapes, while lyricist Sriharsha Emani pens lines that evoke deep spirituality and introspection. The heartfelt vocals of Sindhuja Srinivasan and Aishwarya Daruri elevate the composition, giving this sacred masterpiece a resonant emotional core.

## Priyadarshi, Sai Kumar "Suyodhana" Movie Teaser Released, The Movie Is Coming To A World Wide Grand Release On 27th Of This Month

"Suyodhana" is a film under the banner of Prajwala Line Creations featuring Priyadarshi, Drishika Chander as the hero heroine, dialogue king Saikumar and senior heroine Prema in pivotal roles. This film is being directed by YS Madhav Reddy and is being produced by Bosubabu Nidumolu. This movie which has completed all the programs is releasing worldwide on 27th of this month. Sri Lakshmi Pictures, which has released many hit films, is releasing the movie "Suyodhana". Today, the teaser release event of this movie was held in Hyderabad in a grand manner. In this program Music director Jai Krish said - When we do BGM for a movie, we watch the movie as a music director. We all



felt happy after seeing the performance of Saikumar and Priyadarshi. I can confidently say that the movie "Suyodhana" will be a good success. Said.

Editor Chhota K Prasad said - Priyadarshi is a good friend of mine. I have been watching his career from the start. He reached great heights by doing good films. This movie

will bring him more fame. Also Sai Kumar's Police Story movie is our favorite movie. Our director Madhav is happy to get an opportunity to use Saikumar's dia-

logue delivery and performance in this film. Said.

Producer Bosubabu Nidumolu said - We decided to make a movie as soon as our director told this story. Saikumar was the first actor that came to our mind after reading the script.

Editor Chhota K Prasad has personally steered the project. As per his suggestion we approached Priyadarshi. He acted very well. We made this movie with a strong subject. Director Madhav directed this film as his own film. He worked hard in the making of the movie. Thank you to everyone in our movie cast and crew. Said.

Heroine Drishika Chander said - I am playing the character of Samhita in this film. Thanks to the director and producers for giving me

the opportunity to act in this character. I am happy to share the screen with good artists like Saikumar and Priyadarshi. This movie will impress you all. Let's meet in theaters on 27th of this month. Said.

Director YS Madhav Reddy said - This is my first film as a director. I have no previous experience. However, our producer Bosubabu believed in me and gave me the opportunity to direct such a big project. After thinking of this story as concept oriented, I met Priyadarshi. I thought it would be good if he did this movie. After hearing the script, he said OK. I got a lot of confidence in the script after the movie Priyadarshi did OK. I thought the character of Suodhana in the flashback was Saikumar from the first.

## SUPERB RESPONSE FOR HARSHITH REDDY'S "DEEWANA" TEASER



Young hero Harshith Reddy's upcoming film "Deewana" is drawing attention not only from audiences but also from industry circles. The recently released teaser has been receiving a superb response from all quarters. With its intense love story and cult romance vibe, the teaser has raised strong expectations for the film. The glimpse also reminds viewers of the emotional tones seen in films like Baby and Arjun Reddy, which has sparked significant interest from trade circles as well. The fresh pairing of Harshith Reddy and Sneha Manimegalai, beautiful visu-

als, and the background score featuring the song "Prema Idi Prema" have instantly connected with the audience. Set for a release during the summer season, when students and youth flock to theatres, "Deewana" appears poised to attract strong youth engagement. The film is produced by Vasudev Koppineni and Sridevi Karyampudi under the banners Arha Media and V Studios, and is directed by Srikanth Sangishetty, who presents the story as a beautiful love saga. Geetha Film Distributors will release Deewana grandly in theatres.

## Vijay Deverakonda showers brother Anand Deverakonda with birthday love



## Anil Kapoor still earns from Slumdog Millionaire after 15 years

Anil Kapoor recently revealed that he still earns royalties from the Oscar-winning film Slumdog Millionaire, nearly two decades after its release. The actor shared this surprising update while speaking at the India Today Conclave 2026, where he reflected on the long-lasting impact of the film on his career and finances.

Ageless Revel: Rewriting the Rules of Stardom, Anil Kapoor said that he had received another payment from the film just a day before the event. He described the moment as emotional because the film was released more than fifteen years ago. The actor revealed that the most recent payment was around 3,000 pounds. Kapoor added that he openly shares the amount because he pays all his taxes. According to him, the total earnings he expects to receive from the film will reach nearly Rs. 6.17 crore (500,000 pounds).

Kapoor jokingly said that the film has made him a millionaire through royalties alone. He also clarified that he never demanded such payments from the filmmakers, and the profit sharing was something they provided themselves.

The actor said he accepted the role because he wanted to learn and grow as an artist. According to Kapoor, working with an international team helped him gain new experiences and stay relevant in the film industry.

the late Irrfan Khan appeared as the police officer investigating Jamal.

### ANIL KAPOOR STILL RECEIVES ROYALTIES



During a session titled 'The

## DIA MIRZA URGES ALL TO CHANGE HOW WE LIVE TO HEAL OUR RIVERS

Actress Dia Mirza handles to talk about the various environmental issues that tend to pose a threat to our survival in the future. This time, Dia decided to speak up about how to heal our rivers. The 'Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein' actress said that in order to save the rivers, one must make small changes in our habits in everyday life. Dia even gave some insightful suggestions, such as closing the tap while brushing, putting the filters in the plants, switching to phosphate-free cleaners, and adding tap aerators, among other things. The 'Lage Raho Munna

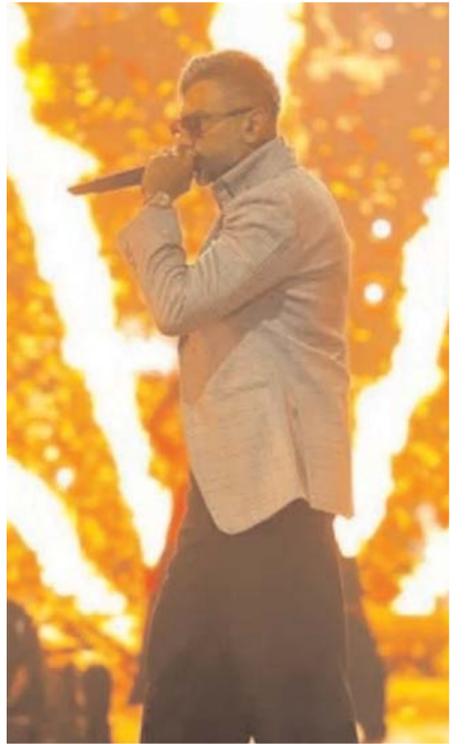
Bhai' actress shared a thought-provoking note on her official Instagram handle, saying, "To heal our rivers, we must change how we live...It starts at the tap: Closing it while brushing saves up to 12 liters of water every minute. In the kitchen, we can mimic the forest by repurposing 'rejected' water from filters to water our plants, ensuring no drop is wasted." "We must also stop the 'white foam' at the source by switching to natural, phosphate-free cleaners like soapnuts. Adding tap aerators reduces our flow by 40%, and fixing a single leak can save 50 liters a day," she went on to write. Dia pointed out that by ensuring that our rivers are clean, we are securing a lifeline for the coming generations. "These small daily acts are the heartbeat of a Jan Andolan—a people's movement.

## ZAKIR KHAN'S HOSPITAL VIDEO SPARKS HEALTH CONCERNS



Stand-up comedian Zakir Khan has left fans concerned after he appeared in hospital robes in a recent Ramzan vlog shared by his brother Arbaz Khan. The video, which has been circulating widely online, shows Zakir resting in a hospital room while casually watching a cricket match on television. The unexpected glimpse of the comedian in a hospital setting quickly caught the attention of viewers and sparked discussion across social media.

## YO YO HONEY SINGH CONCERT VIDEO GOES VIRAL AFTER CROWD CLASH



Live concert by rapper Yo Yo Honey Singh in Delhi turned chaotic after a fight reportedly broke out among people in the crowd. Videos of the incident quickly went viral on social media, showing a heated scuffle taking place while the rapper continued performing on stage. The incident happened on Saturday, March 14, at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi. The concert marked the opening show of Honey Singh's My Chapter - India Tour, which has generated huge excitement among fans across the country. Altercation Between Fans

and Sponsor Team According to reports, the trouble began after an argument broke out between some attendees and members of the event's sponsor team. The disagreement soon escalated into a physical fight. Videos circulating online show several people pushing and hitting each other in the middle of the crowd. Some audience members tried to watch the performance while others gathered around the scuffle. Despite the chaos in the audience area, Honey Singh appeared to continue performing on stage, reportedly unaware of the situation unfolding in the crowd.