

Mamata alleges pressure behind exit polls, urges workers to guard EVM strong rooms

NATION | PAGE

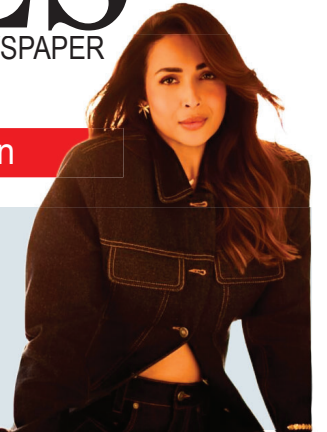
Israel releases all but two activists in Greece after intercepting Gaza aid flotilla

WORLD | NEWS



MALAIKA ARORA IS BACK AND HOTTER THAN EVER

CINEMA | PAGE



SCAN FOR E-PAPER



OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

30-04-2026
Total pilgrims: 59,186
Tonsure: 22,244
Hundi kamalkar: 4.06 CR
Waiting Compartments: Outside line at Bata Ganamma Temple
Approx. Darshan Time for Sarvadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens): 24 H

GOLD RATE 24K
₹ 1,54,860/-

CHARGESHEET FILED IN KASHMIR FRAUD CASE OVER FAKE LAND AND JOB PROMISES

Srinagar (TSIT) The Jammu and Kashmir Crime Branch on Thursday announced that it has filed a chargesheet against an accused in a fraud case involving false promises of land allotment and government jobs. According to officials, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch submitted the chargesheet in FIR No. 84/2022 under Section 420 of the IPC against Bashir Ahmad Bhat, a resident of Astanpora, Taibal Hazratbal in Srinagar. The chargesheet has been filed before the Court of Judge Small Causes Srinagar for judicial proceedings. The case dates back to January 2019, when the accused allegedly deceived multiple complainants by promising them plots of land through the Jammu Development Authority (JDA) and government jobs for their relatives. Investigations revealed that he collected substantial sums of money on the basis of these assurances but

STORM HAVOC IN BIHAR LEAVES 5 DEAD, WIDESPREAD DAMAGE ACROSS DISTRICTS

Patna (TSIT) A sudden and intense spell of stormy weather swept across Bihar on Wednesday evening, leaving at least five people dead and causing widespread destruction in multiple districts, officials said. According to preliminary reports, fatalities were recorded in Patna (2), Bettiah (2), and Begusarai (1) within the last 24 hours. In Patna, two people were killed when a portion of an under-construction six-storey building collapsed near Rukanpura Devi Sthan in the Rupaspur police station area. The victims, identified as Tribhuvan Prasad Sinha (73) and Anita Devi (48), were passing by when debris fell on them. Locals rushed to clear the rubble and took them to a nearby hospital, but both later died during treatment. The extreme weather, which began around 6 pm, brought strong winds, heavy rain, and lightning across large parts of the state, including the capital Patna. Within just a couple of hours, the storm uprooted electric poles, felled large trees, and blew away wedding tents, severely affecting daily life. Nearly 20 districts reported significant impact. The storm caused damage in several other districts as well. In Jehanabad, four people were injured after part of a house collapsed due to strong winds and heavy rainfall. In Buxar, a tree fell on an e-rickshaw, injuring six passengers. In Bhojpur, powerful winds broke a pontoon

CM Revanth announces relief measures for RTC workers, unveils expansion plans



Hyderabad, TSIT:

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday announced a series of key decisions aimed at addressing the concerns of RTC workers and strengthening the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC). Interacting with representatives of various RTC unions at his Jubilee Hills residence, the Chief Minister responded positively to their

demands and declared that wages for the three-day strike period would be released. He also announced the withdrawal of cases filed against workers during the strike and directed Transport Minister Ponnampalabharathi and officials to take immediate action. Reaffirming the government's commitment to protecting workers' rights, the Chief Minister said several measures are being implemented to

improve the financial health and operational efficiency of RTC. He urged workers not to be influenced by opposition politics and appealed to unions to refrain from strikes and dharnas, stressing the need for collective efforts to revive the organisation. Highlighting infrastructure expansion, the Chief Minister announced the development of an international-standard bus terminal over 150 acres at Shamshabad, while 100 acres have already been allocated for another terminal at Gajularamaram. To reduce the financial burden caused by diesel expenses, he said the government plans to introduce 1,000 electric buses and integrate RTC services with the Metro Rail network. Noting that RTC spends around Rs.2,000 crore annually on diesel, he emphasized the need to shift towards electric mobility for long-term sustainability.

Trinamool moves SC against EC's counting supervisor decision

New Delhi (TSIT):

The Trinamool Congress has approached the Supreme Court of India challenging the Election Commission of India decision to appoint central government staff as counting supervisors.

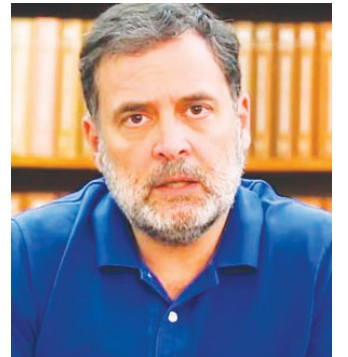
The party has raised concerns over the neutrality of the move, arguing that the appointment of central staff could compromise the transparency and fairness of the counting process. According to sources, the

petition seeks judicial intervention to ensure that the counting of votes remains free from any perceived bias and is conducted in a transparent manner.

The development comes amid heightened political tensions ahead of election results, with opposition parties increasingly questioning the role of central agencies in the electoral process. The matter is expected to be taken up for hearing soon.



LPG price surge triggers row, Rahul calls it 'election bill'



New Delhi (TSIT):

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Friday launched a sharp attack on the Centre following a steep hike in commercial LPG cylinder prices, calling it an "election bill" and warning that petrol and diesel prices could be next to rise. In a post on X, Gandhi said that the price of commercial LPG cylinders has increased by Rs 993 in a single day, terming it the biggest-ever hike. He alleged that the burden of rising costs will ultimately impact common people, particularly those dependent on small businesses and food services.

"Since February, there has been a hike of Rs 1,380, an 81 per cent increase in just three months. Tea stalls, dhabas, hotels, bakeries and sweet shops are all affected, and this burden will reach your plate as well," he said.

Gandhi further claimed that the government had provided temporary relief ahead of elections and is now allowing inflation to rise. He reiterated his earlier warning that fuel prices may also increase following the conclusion of assembly elections on April 29.

Targeting the Narendra Modi government, he alleged that it had benefited when global crude oil prices were low but is now passing the burden onto citizens as prices rise. "When oil was cheap, the government pocketed the gains. Now that it is expensive, the public will bear the cost," he said. Meanwhile, the price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder—primarily used by hotels, restaurants and other establishments—has risen to a record Rs 3,071.50 in Delhi, up from Rs 2,078.50. This marks the third consecutive monthly increase, attributed to rising global energy prices amid ongoing tensions in West Asia.

DMK will form dravidian model 2.0: CM Stalin



Chennai (TSIT):

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president MK Stalin on Friday expressed strong confidence that his party will win the Assembly elections and return to power, forming what he termed the Dravidian Model 2.0 government. TVK may spring surprises, no consistency in exit polls: Vaiko

Stalin made the remarks after paying floral tributes at the May Day Park in Chintadripet, where a memo-

rial dedicated to workers is located. Dressed in a red shirt symbolising solidarity with the labour movement, he delivered a May Day address highlighting the government's welfare approach.

Reiterating the guiding principle of 'Ellarukkum Ellaam' (Everything for Everyone), he said the government continues to function with inclusive welfare as its core ideology.

Turning to the electoral contest, Stalin said there was 'not even the slightest doubt' about the DMK's victory. He added that the results of the party cadre's hard work would be visible on May 4, when votes are scheduled to be counted.

"The dedication and efforts of our cadre and volunteers at the grassroots level give me confidence. The people's trust and our governance model will ensure victory," he said. Stalin also extended May Day greetings, stating that labour remains the driving force behind social and economic transformation, and reaffirmed his government's continued commitment to work-

Kharge blames Centre's policies for unemployment crisis, seeks Labour reforms

New Delhi (TSIT):

The Congress on Friday intensified its attack on the Centre over rising unemployment, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge alleging that the situation is a direct consequence of what he termed the government's "hum do hamare do" policies. In a post on X, Kharge accused the administration led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi of pursuing policies that he said have weakened job security and hurt workers across sectors. "Unemployment in India today is a direct result of the 'hum do hamare do' policies," Kharge said, claiming that labour reforms introduced by the government were "anti-worker" and had triggered unrest in several industrial hubs, including Noida, IOCL facilities in Panipat, Adani's factory in Raikiheda, NTPC in Patratu and Samsung's plant in Sriperumbudur.

He argued that the new labour codes promote contract labour and "hire-and-fire" practices rather than ensuring stable employment, and called for a comprehensive review of



these laws.

The Congress president also alleged that the government has weakened the rural employment guarantee framework under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, claiming it had "effectively dismantled" the scheme by shifting 40 per cent of the wage burden onto state governments. "States are unable to bear this cost, and eventually they will be forced to stop providing work," he said. Kharge further contended that workers are increasingly being pushed into precarious employment. "The Modi government has pushed workers

towards unemployment and gig work.

As many as 69 per cent of people are working for less than the minimum wage," he said, adding that stagnant wages have compounded the crisis. According to him, when adjusted for inflation, wage growth for most workers has remained below one per cent annually over the past decade from 2014-15 to 2022-23. Raising concerns about educated unemployment, Kharge said the situation among graduates had worsened due to policy decisions such as privatisation of public sector undertakings and unfilled vacancies in government jobs.

"The government has refused to fill nearly three million vacant posts, and MSMEs have collapsed due to its policies," he alleged.

Reiterating the party's demands, Kharge called for the restoration and expansion of MGNREGA to urban areas, implementation of a national minimum wage of Rs 400 per day, and a "Right to Health" law guaranteeing universal health coverage of up to Rs 25 lakh for workers.

Petrol, diesel price hike in near future not ruled out, say govt sources

New Delhi (TSIT):

An increase in petrol and diesel prices in the near future is not ruled out, government sources said on Friday, as losses mount from a four-year-old freeze in retail rates despite the sharp rise in global crude oil prices. NCERT printing Class 9 books on war-footing; supply being normalised: Officials International crude oil prices this week climbed to a four-year high of USD 126 per barrel before cooling down slightly, but remained above USD 110 a barrel as ship transits through the Strait of Hormuz remained restricted and US and Iranian leaders traded barbs amid stalled peace talks.

Government sources said the possibility of a petrol and diesel price hike in the near future is not ruled out. Earlier in the day, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), making a statement on behalf of the industry, said petrol and diesel price as also domestic LPG rates are not



being increased despite a surge in international energy cost.

SC grants anticipatory bail to Pawan Khera over remarks on Assam CM's wife State-owned oil firms hiked prices of commercial LPG, industrial diesel, 5-kg LPG and jet fuel sold to international airlines in keeping with the cost.

Analysts had earlier flagged the possibility of price increas-

es of Rs 25-28 per litre after the end of polling for assembly elections in West Bengal on April 29. International oil prices spiked after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, and Tehran's sweeping retaliation that effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz - one of the world's most critical energy arteries, linking the Persian Gulf to

global markets and handling roughly a fifth of global oil trade along with significant volumes of liquefied natural gas. Last week, a senior oil ministry official told a news briefing that state-owned fuel retailers were incurring losses of about Rs 20 per litre on petrol and roughly Rs 100 per litre on diesel as pump prices remained frozen for nearly four years despite a surge in global oil prices. Yet there is no plan to increase prices, she had said.

Crude, which was USD 70 per barrel last year, averaged over USD 114 this month.

Retail petrol and diesel prices have remained frozen since early April 2022 - a period during which oil prices rose in some months and fell in other times. When prices fell, state-owned oil firms made handsome profits, which they used to set off losses when rates rose. Petrol is currently priced at Rs 94.77 a litre in Delhi, and diesel comes for Rs 87.67.

After votes are cast, the mask drops: CPI slams Centre over LPG price hike

New Delhi (TSIT):

P Sandosh Kumar, the CPI's Leader in the Rajya Sabha, squarely blamed the sharp increase in commercial LPG cylinder prices on what he described as the Modi government's "hug-lomatic" foreign policy, a pointed reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-profile personal diplomacy with global leaders.

He charged that the Centre with failing to secure stable energy supplies and insulating India from volatile global fuel markets. The government has raised the price of commercial LPG cylinders by Rs 993, in what critics are calling one of the steepest single-day hikes in recent memory. The increase, which came into effect just one day after the conclusion of voting in the ongoing election cycle, has triggered sharp backlash from the opposition, with the Communist Party of India (CPI) leading the charge. The timing of the decision, Kumar said, "Coming just



a day after voting, this vindicates what the CPI had warned that LPG and other fuel prices would be hiked once elections were over, because the Modi government's sole concern is electoral optics, not people's welfare." He further said, "After votes are cast, the mask drops and the burden is shifted onto the common people in an unprecedented manner. This is shameful and must be unequivocally condemned." Kumar alleged that the government had deliberately suppressed fuel prices during the election period to manage public sentiment, only to implement the hike immediately after voting concluded. "This vindicates what the CPI had warned," he said, accusing the ruling dispensation of prioritising electoral optics over genuine public welfare.

Mamata alleges pressure behind exit polls, urges workers to guard EVM strong rooms

Kolkata: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has alleged that exit poll projections showing a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) victory in the state Assembly elections were influenced by external pressure and financial inducements.

In a video message shared on her social media account on Thursday, Banerjee claimed that certain media houses were "pressured and paid" to broadcast favourable projections for the BJP. She alleged that these exit poll figures were circulated to media outlets around 1:08 pm on Wednesday with a deliberate political intent.

According to her, the strategy was aimed at creating an impression of a BJP victory to stabilise financial markets and weaken the morale of Trinamool Congress workers ahead of the counting of votes scheduled for May 4. Banerjee asserted that in reality, her party was poised for a strong performance, claiming



that the All India Trinamool Congress could secure as many as 226 seats or even cross 230. She said such projections had

been distorted by what she described as coordinated efforts against her party. The Chief Minister also thanked party

workers and voters, praising them for turning out in large numbers despite harsh weather conditions and alleged intimidation. She claimed that both central and state forces had been involved in exerting pressure during the electoral process, while her party workers continued to resist what she termed "oppressive tactics."

Calling on her cadre to remain alert, Banerjee instructed Trinamool Congress counting agents to closely monitor the counting process and stay present at all times on May 4. She urged them to ensure that any temporary absence from counting tables, such as for meals or breaks, should be covered only by trusted replacements.

She also said she would personally remain active during the counting process, encouraging party workers to maintain vigilance and safeguard strong rooms where Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are stored.

Police crack 2014 kidnapping-murder case; three arrested

THANE: Kalyan Police in the district have arrested three persons including a history-sheeter for allegedly kidnapping and murdering a 23-year-old man over land development dispute 12 years ago, officials said on Thursday.

Karan Arvind Bagul, a resident of Davdi village, was kidnapped by some persons on October 4, 2014. His body was found in a jungle in Murbad area of the district three days later but the case remained unsolved, said senior inspector Ajit Shinde of Crime Unit-III (Kalyan).

Following a tip-off, the crime branch earlier this week arrested developer Surendra Pandurang Patil (55), Chandrakant Balaram Gaiker (39) and Suresh Gopal Degavat alias Chotu (32). Gaiker and Degavat worked at one of Patil's construction projects, police said.

A dispute between Bagul and Patil over financial transactions related



to land development led to the crime, said Deputy Commissioner of Police Amarsingh Jadhav.

On October 4, 2014, the accused allegedly abducted Bagul and took him to an office in Davdi village. Patil allegedly beat Bagul on the head and face with an iron rod, resulting in his death, following which the body was disposed of

at an unknown location.

Police have recovered the iron rod used in the crime. The accused were remanded in police custody by a local court till May 2 and further probe is on.

Patil has 14 cases including extortion, assault and Arms Act violations registered against him between 2008 and 2014, police said.

Kerala: Former assistant labour officer gets four years RI in 2012 bribery case

THRISSUR: A court here on Thursday sentenced a former labour department official to four years of rigorous imprisonment after convicting him in a corruption case related to accepting a bribe from a footwear and fancy shop owner in Palakkad in 2012.

Thirissur Vigilance Court Judge K M Ratheesh Kumar also imposed a fine of Rs 2 lakh on K Krishnakumar (62), former Assistant Labour Officer of Mannarkkad and a native of Venjaramoodu in Thiruvananthapuram district.

The prosecution case relates to Krishnakumar allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 6,000 from a footwear and fancy shop owner in Palakkad.

According to the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau, an inspection was conducted by the Mannarkkad Assistant Labour Office in January 2012 at a footwear and fancy shop run by the complainant and his friend at Polakkode in Palakkad district.

During the inspection, officials found that workers were allegedly not being paid minimum wages, following which the complainant was issued a notice directing payment of wage arrears.

When the complainant approached the Assistant Labour Office two months later to remit the amount specified in the notice, Krishnakumar, who had recently taken charge as Assistant Labour Officer, allegedly told him that the amount need not be paid and that the issue could be settled if he paid a bribe of Rs 6,000, the Vigilance said.

He was allegedly caught red-handed by the Palakkad VACB unit while accepting the bribe from the complainant.

The case was investigated by former Deputy SPs Satheesan K and Sukumaran, and former Inspector Firoz M Sheikh of the Palakkad VACB.

Public Prosecutor V K Shylajan appeared for the VACB.

4 dead, 10 missing as tourist boat overturns in Bargi dam reservoir in Jabalpur due to storm

JABALPUR: Four persons died and 15 others were rescued after a river cruise boat carrying 29 passengers overturned in the Bargi dam reservoir after encountering a sudden storm on Thursday in Jabalpur district, an official said.

Ten tourists were still missing and an operation was on in full swing to trace and rescue them, he said.

A total of 29 tickets were issued for the cruise in the Bargi dam reservoir, and among them, four people drowned, while 15 were rescued, the official said.

The Bargi Dam has been constructed on the river Narmada in Jabalpur district.

A search and rescue operation for the missing passengers was continuing on a war footing. The Jabalpur collector and Superintendent of Police, along with SDRF (State Disaster Response Force) and other rescue teams, are present at the site, the official said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said the local administration and rescue personnel were continuing their operation after the tragic cruise boat accident in the Bargi dam due to a severe storm.

Public Works Minister Rakesh Singh, Tourism Minister Dharmendra Singh Lodhi, senior divisional, police officials and local people's representatives have been directed to reach the scene of the tragedy to oversee the rescue operation, the CM said in a post on 'X'.

Through a swift operation, 15 citizens were rescued and efforts were underway to locate those who are still missing, said Yadav.

"In this hour of crisis, the state government stands with the affected families with full sensitivity and is ensuring all possible assistance," he maintained.

The news of the cruise boat accident in the Bargi dam is extremely sad and heart-breaking, said Congress MLA and Leader of Opposition in Assembly Umang Singhar.

"Humble tributes to all citizens who lost their lives in this accident, and deepest condolences to the bereaved families," he said.

The Congress leader demanded that the state government immediately provide adequate compensation and all possible assistance to the families of the deceased.



Delhi court rejects Sucheta Dalal's plea against removal of content defaming Manoj Sandesara

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Thursday dismissed a plea filed by journalist Sucheta Dalal challenging an ex parte interim order restraining the publication of content linking businessman Manoj Kesarichand Sandesara and his family to the alleged Sterling Biotech bank fraud case.

District Judge Vinod Kumar Meena, while hearing the plea, said the appellant had an effective remedy before the trial court, where the application for an interim injunction was still pending adjudication.

"Without going into the length and breadth of legality/merits of the impugned ex parte interim order, the court is of the view that the appellant has an opportunity to be heard before the learned trial court. The ap-



peal is not maintainable at this stage," the court said.

Dalal had challenged an earlier court order allowing an application filed by Sandesara seeking an interim injunction restraining websites from publishing content against him

linking to the Sterling Biotech bank fraud case.

The interim order had restrained platforms such as Google and Meta, along with unidentified parties, from publishing or hosting content linking Sandesara and his family

members to the alleged bank fraud involving Sterling Biotech.

It also directed de-indexing and removal of certain online content, including articles and a YouTube video.

Dalal's firm, Moneywise Media LLP, which runs the Moneylife magazine and digital portal, had challenged the order, contending that it was overly broad, violated freedom of speech and was passed without granting an opportunity of hearing.

It argued that it was not specifically named as a defendant in the suit despite its content being targeted, and that the order effectively amounted to prior restraint on reporting related to the Sandesara family and the alleged fraud case.

Opposing the plea, Sand-

esara submitted that the appeal was premature as the trial court had yet to decide the application within the prescribed period.

The court agreed, noting that the statutory scheme requires parties to first seek relief before the trial court unless there is a failure to decide the injunction application within the stipulated time.

"In view of the above-mentioned, it can be easily deduced that the appeal is not maintainable at this stage, as the appellant has the opportunity to be heard before the learned trial court," the judge said.

It clarified that its observations were confined to the maintainability of the appeal and would not affect the merits of the pending proceedings before the trial court.

WB polls: HC concludes hearing on plea over EC's order to depute central staff for counting

KOLKATA: The Calcutta High Court on Thursday concluded the hearing of a petition challenging the Election Commission's directive of deputing the employees of the Union government and central PSUs for the counting of votes in the West Bengal assembly elections.

The polling for the 294-member assembly was held in two phases - April 23 and April 29, and the counting will take place on May 4.

Petitioner's counsel Kalyan Banerjee submitted before the court of Justice Krishna Rao that the EC notification states that in view of apprehensions on the possibility of irregularities during the counting of votes, at least one among the counting supervisors and counting assistants at each table will be central government/central PSU employees to ensure transparency in the process.

Banerjee, who is also a Trinamool Congress MP,

claimed that this is beyond the jurisdiction of the chief electoral officer (CEO), West Bengal.

Seeking dismissal of the petition, the CEO's counsel Jishnu Chowdhury stated before the court that this is a question of judicial scrutiny of discretion exercised by the Election Commission.

He said the EC has, in its wisdom, selected central government employees to do this job and that it is not an act done contrary to statute.

Another petition was moved before the court of Justice Rao, claiming that a last-minute change of counting centre was made by the Election Commission in the Kasba assembly constituency in south Kolkata.

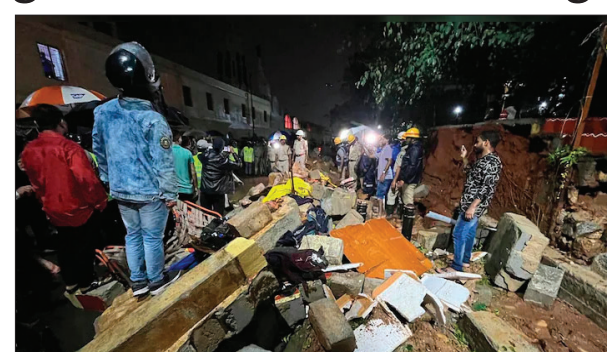
The counting centre for the Kasba seat was shifted from Gitanjali stadium within the constituency area to Biharilal College in Alipore, petitioner Javed Ahmed Khan, the TMC candidate, claimed.

Hospital wall collapse: CM orders suspension of executive engineer; kin of victims get solatium

BENGALURU: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday ordered the immediate suspension of an executive engineer for the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital wall collapse that claimed the lives of seven people, during a high-level review meeting at Vidhana Soudha.

A compensation of Rs 5 lakh, as announced by the CM Siddaramaiah, was distributed to the families of seven victims who lost their lives in the tragedy on Wednesday evening, which occurred due to heavy downpour with gusty winds and hailstorm.

The meeting of municipal commissioners of the five corporations, chaired by the chief minister and attended by Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, focused on fixing accountability and examining lapses that led to the tragedy.



"Why was soil dumped in a way that damaged the wall? Why did you not monitor this?" Siddaramaiah asked, pulling up hospital authorities during the meeting.

A statement from the chief minister's office said that the CM ordered the immediate suspension of the executive engineer of the Karnataka Health Systems Development Project (KHS-DP).

He also questioned the

avoid untoward incidents.

Commissioners of all five municipal zones in Bengaluru have been asked to take precautionary steps, including trimming dry and dangerous tree branches, the CMO said.

Siddaramaiah also directed them to get the silt cleared from stormwater drains to prevent flooding, and that immediate action be taken to remove debris and fallen branches from roads.

Further, he instructed that barricades be placed at underpasses where water stagnates and restricts public movement.

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao said in a statement that Shivajinagar MLA Rizwan Arshad distributed compensation cheques of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of the deceased on Thursday.

IUML hints at VD Satheesan for CM role, sparks reaction from SNDP leader Natesan

MALAPPURAM/ALAPPUZHA: The IUML, a key constituent of the UDF, on Thursday appeared to back the Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly, V D Satheesan, for the post of CM if the Congress-led alliance comes to power in Kerala, drawing a sharp reaction from SNDP Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan.

IUML supremo Sadik Ali Shihab Thangal, responding to reporters' queries at Malappuram about his view on Satheesan being given prominence as the next chief minister in the exit polls, said that it probably indicates the public view and the Congress always considers the people's opinion.

"I think that is the public opinion. People must have decided in that manner. UDF has always acted by taking into account the public opinion and in future, even with regard to administration and cabinet formation, it will be done in a manner favourable to the public opinion.

"Congress high command will



decide who will be CM and it will be done by taking into account the public opinion. They understand these things," Thangal claimed a day after the exit polls indicated that the UDF will come to power in Kerala.

Natesan said IUML's support for Satheesan as CM indicates that the League will rule if the UDF wins in the Assembly polls which were held in the state on April 9.

He was referring to Thangal's apparent backing of Satheesan as CM if the UDF wins.

The Sree Narayana Dharma

Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam leader, speaking to reporters here, termed Satheesan as the spokesperson of the League, and that is why it was backing him.

"The IUML should not have said who should be the CM candidate of Congress, but their remark shows that if UDF comes to power, then the League will be ruling, and if that is the case, there will be anarchy in the state," he contended while speaking to reporters at Alappuzha.

Natesan also said that it would not be surprising if there was a CM or Deputy CM from the League which will make such demands if the UDF wins after the results are declared.

"The Congress will give them whatever they want. The ministers and their portfolios will also be decided by Thangal," he alleged.

Natesan also criticised the alleged infighting in the Congress over who would be the CM if the UDF wins, saying, "Imagine what would be the situation if they come to power".

Students in Delhi govt schools will get textbooks before summer break, HC told

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government on Thursday assured the Delhi High Court that students in all government schools will receive their textbooks for the current academic session before the beginning of the summer vacation.

The statement was made before Justice Sachin Datta who was hearing a petition by NGO Social Jurist seeking initiation of contempt action against the secretary (education) for "deliberate and intentional disobedience" of a 2024 judicial order on providing educational material to students in a timely manner.

The judge issued notice to the official on the contempt petition and took on record the assurance given by a government official present for the hearing.

The NGO, represented by lawyer Ashok Agarwal, submitted that lakhs of students studying in classes 1 to 8 in Delhi government schools

were suffering due to failure of authorities to provide textbooks for the current academic session that began on April 1, which affected their right to education.

Delhi government standing counsel said tenders were floated and consequently, 10 lakh students have received the books and another around eight lakh were remaining, who will also receive their books in the next few days.

"It is submitted (by the government counsel) that tender process for distribution of the textbooks for the current academic year has been concluded and substantial distribution has already been done. It is assured and undertaken (by the official) that distribution of textbooks in all respects to all students in classes 1 to 8 in government schools in Delhi shall be completed before the commencement of the summer vacation," noted the court in its order.

Tamil Nadu to see rain as low-pressure area likely over Arabian Sea

CHENNAI: The India Meteorological Department has indicated the formation of a low-pressure area over the southeast Arabian Sea in the second week of May, raising the possibility of an early onset of the southwest monsoon. According to the Regional Meteorological Centre Chennai, a trough extending from south interior Karnataka to the Gulf of Mannar across Tamil Nadu is influencing current weather conditions. As a result, light to moderate rain accompanied by thunder, lightning and gusty winds (40-50 kmph) is likely in parts of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and



Karaikal on May 1.

Heavy rainfall is expected at isolated places in districts including Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Tirupur, Theni, Dindigul and Erode.

In Chennai and its suburbs, the sky is expected to remain partly cloudy, with maximum tempera-

tures around 40-41°C and minimum temperatures near 29-30°C. High humidity levels may lead to discomfort. The IMD has further noted that the southwest monsoon, which usually begins in June, may set in earlier this year, likely during the second week of May.

Madurai Chithirai festival: Lord Kallazhagar, presiding deity of Alagar Kovil, enters Vaigai river

MADURAI: Amid thundering chants of Lord Govinda and a sea of humanity, Lord Kallazhagar, the presiding deity of Alagar Kovil, entered the Vaigai river here on Friday morning, marking the celestial peak of the annual Chithirai festival. Tamil Nadu to see rain as low-pressure area likely over Arabian Sea Adorned in green silk, a traditional symbol indicating prosperity and a good harvest for the year, the deity entered the river on a golden horse "vahanam" as lakhs of devotees from across the state and beyond witnessed the spectacle. The event is held every year to commemorate the legend of Lord Sundararaja Perumal, in the guise of Kallazhagar, providing salvation to Mandooka Maharishi from his curse. The festival proceedings had commenced on April 27 at the Alagar hills, with the deity departing in a golden palanquin.



known as Ethir Seva at Three Mawadi upon entering the city, the procession moved through various neighbourhoods, including Pudur and Tallakulam.

TVK campaign office near Srirangam set on fire, Aadhav Arjuna condemns incident

At the Prasanna Venkatachalapathi temple in Tallakulam, the deity wore the garland sent from the Srivilliputhur Andal temple and later appeared

on the thousand-pillar vahanam. As the procession moved toward the riverbanks, devotees dressed as Kallazhagar and Karuppanasamy sprayed scented water from leather bags while women offered prayers by lighting lamps made of jaggery in their hands. Upon reaching the Vaigai, Kallazhagar was received by Lord Veeraraghava Perumal mounted on a silver horse. The deity then entered the river area, which had

been specially decorated with two tonnes of flowers and lotus leaves. After circling the area three times to bless the gathered crowd, special prayers and deeparadhana were performed at the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department and Veeraraghava Perumal mandagapadis.

Madurai city police commissioner Abhishek Dixit supervised a massive security operation, with iron barricades installed to manage the crowd flow and heavy deployment of personnel from Tallakulam to the river.

Fire and rescue services were stationed around the riverbanks while medical teams were kept on standby for emergencies. Following the river entry, the deity proceeded to the Ramaraya mandapam for the 'theerthavari' ritual, while thousands of devotees fulfilled their vows by tonsuring their heads along the riverbanks.

TVK campaign office near Srirangam set on fire, Aadhav Arjuna condemns incident

CHENNAI: A campaign office of the actor Vijay-led TVK was allegedly torched by unidentified miscreants in Kamanayakkanpalayam village near Srirangam in the early hours of Friday, police said. According to the police, the damage is minimal. Fire had engulfed the thatched roof providing shade at the entrance of the building that served as the party's election office for the Srirangam constituency.



registered a case and initiated a search for the perpetrators.

Condemning the attack, TVK leader Aadhav Arjuna, in a post on X, termed the act "strongly condemnable" and alleged that it was carried out due to "growing fear of electoral defeat" among rivals. "It is evident to the public that this act is a manifestation of their increasing fear of

losing the election," he said. He further accused "anti-people, authoritarian forces" of being unable to tolerate the rising support for his party and resorting to violence by "inciting hooligans." Arjuna also urged swift action from authorities and called on the Election Commission to ensure strict law and order during the vote-counting process.

Raw material price spike, labour crunch push Tirupur garment output down 40%

CHENNAI: Tirupur's domestic garment industry is staring at a sharp slowdown, with production dropping by nearly 40% in the past month due to surging raw material costs and a worsening labour shortage, even as fresh demand picks up ahead of the school reopening season, according to a Daily Thanthi report.

Tamil Nadu to see rain as low-pressure area likely over Arabian Sea Tirupur, known for its large knitwear base with over 10,000 units, supplies garments to several states including Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra. While summer clothing orders were completed and shipped earlier, manufacturers are



now seeing fresh demand for school uniforms such as innerwear, chemises and shorts.

However, many manufacturers are hesitant to take on new orders due to rising input costs and worker shortages. Over the past three months,

yarn prices have increased by up to Rs 24 per kilogram. At the same time, global supply issues have made sourcing raw materials more difficult, pushing overall production costs up by around 20%.

The South India Knitwear Manufacturers

Association (SIKMA) has announced a 7% increase in garment prices, but manufacturers say this is insufficient to offset rising costs. Despite this, they continue production due to a lack of viable alternatives. Industry representatives also point to a labour crunch, as many migrant workers have returned to their hometowns for elections. According to SIKMA vice-president Balachandrar, these combined challenges have led to a 40% drop in domestic garment production over the past month.

With costs rising and workforce availability shrinking, Tirupur's domestic apparel sector remains under pressure, even as demand begins to recover.

NO FIRECRACKER MANUFACTURING DURING PEAK HEAT HOURS: ERODE COLLECTOR

CHENNAI: In light of the prevailing heatwave conditions, the District Collector of Erode has imposed time-based restrictions on the manufacturing of firecrackers.

The Collector's order directs all firecracker manufacturing and hazardous chemical mixing work to be avoided during the peak heat hours of 11 am to 3 pm, according to a Maalaimalar report. Erode district has been experiencing intense summer heat over the past two months. The highest temperature recorded on Thursday (April 30) was 106°F, with hot and humid winds blowing during the day. Meanwhile, District Collector S Kandasamy has warned of strict action against manufacturing unit owners who violate this order.

Why humanities matter in a tech-driven world

Ask a bureaucrat, an industrialist or even a policymaker about the kind of education we ought to prioritise in order to progress as a nation. It is quite likely that they will put extraordinary emphasis on artificial intelligence, robotics, machine learning, data sciences and information technology. Likewise, if you ask middle-class parents about their preferences, it is quite likely that you will hear that they want their children to opt for STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) subjects and settle down in life as engineers, doctors and techno-managers.

Indeed, amid this all-pervading notion of 'relevant' education, it is not easy to plead for 'soft' disciplines - liberal arts, humanities and social sciences. In fact, even if your child wants to pursue physics as well as history, or accountancy and philosophy, it is almost impossible for our schools to make it possible because of a hugely problematic and rigid classification of disciplines into science, arts and commerce.

In fact, quite often, it is argued that 'soft' disciplines are irrelevant because your knowledge in history or literature does not help the market to flourish or technology to grow. In other words, a purely market-driven instrumental reasoning has become the dominant discourse in our times; colleges/universities are asked to follow the dictates of the emergent neoliberal bosses; and education has been reduced into a merely job-oriented skill for the techno-economic growth. Is it, therefore, surprising that throughout the world, we are seeing the new trend of colleges and universities closing their departments of liberal arts and humanities because of low enrollment as these domains of knowledge are seen to be 'non-



profitable?

Yet, I have no hesitation in regarding this trend as the poverty of pedagogic imagination. In fact, the growing devaluation of 'soft' disciplines like literature, philosophy, history, sociology or fine arts will prove to be utterly disastrous for the psychic, intellectual development as well as politico-historical sensibilities of the young generation growing up in these turbulent times.

In this context, it will not be inappropriate to reflect on my own academic trajectory — from physics and mathematics to social sciences. Of course, physics and mathematics helped me to evolve what can be regarded as some sort of scientific-mathematical reasoning. But then, social sciences and humanities enriched me in another meaningful way. First, it sharpened my politico-historical sensibilities. I could make sense of my own biography in the context of the larger social and political development — say, modernity, secularism, nationalism, caste, class, ethnic divisions, patriarchy, feminist assertions and new social movements. In other words,

it helped me to become an active and alert citizen, taking part in the process of social transformation. Second, self-reflexivity became an integral part of this journey. When you meditate on, say, Karl Marx and Michel Foucault, Gandhi and Tagore, or, for that matter, Albert Camus and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, it is impossible to exist as a cold, detached, impersonal reader of the text; it is not like solving a MCQ riddle and finding the 'one and only one correct answer'. You entertain existential ambiguities; you ask new questions; and you look at your own desires, confusions, moral dilemmas and possibilities. In other words, you tend to become humane, reflexive, empathic and dialogic.

And third, my love affair with humanities and social sciences helped me to sharpen my critical thinking. It is not cynicism. Instead, it is the ability to ask the kind of questions that a technocratic or fundamentalist social order seeks to hide — say, the questions related to the ecological cost of what is otherwise projected as techno-economic development;

or the questions related to religious fundamentalism, neo-fascism and social conservatism. It is impossible to nurture the spirit of democracy without this sort of critical thinking. Well, I am not underestimating the importance of artificial intelligence, robotics, data sciences, or STEM subjects. But then, if in the name of pure instrumentality and economic rationality, we deprive the new generation of the treasure that great poets, mystics, philosophers, historians, sociologists and artists embodied, it will cause a great damage to the mental, aesthetic and political sensibilities of the new generation.

Think of the world we are living in. When we reflect on the accelerated growth of right wing nationalism and authoritarianism, we realise that democracy is fast degenerating into some sort of electoral autocracy. We are also seeing the close affinity between these neo-fascists and select techno-economic elites. In recent times, the alliance between Donald Trump and Elon Musk reveals this dangerous trend.

In fact, when technocracy, right wing nationalism and religious fundamentalism tend to merge, we find ourselves in a dystopian world. Social welfare, distributive justice, egalitarian spirit, peace, ecological sensibilities and cultural pluralism — in fact, all redemptive projects are suspected or castigated as some sort of 'leftist' propaganda.

Not solely that. What this system abhors is the very idea of libertarian education: the kind of education that makes one think, interrogate the prevalent 'order', and imagine a just world free from war, militarism, climate crisis, religious fundamentalism, hyper-nationalism and a purely technocratic vision of life. Not surprisingly,

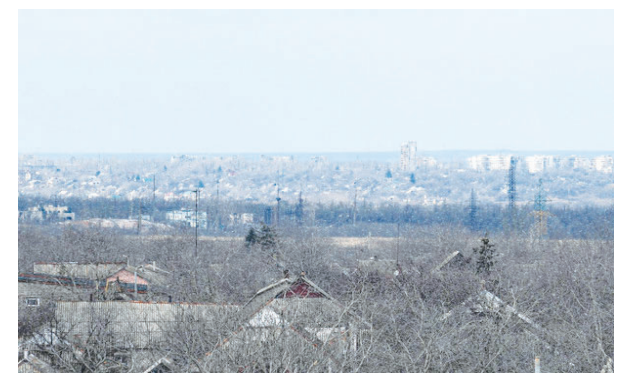
The second candle and the international jungle

The masters of the profession taught us not to fall under the weight of the event, not to jump to hasty final conclusions and to put the scene within the context of history and geography. We must pay attention to the deep spirit in the arena of events, the arsenal of hatred and the temptation of revenge. Thus, we were trained to feel some anxiety when confronted with coups and earthquakes.

I was part of a press delegation shortly after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war. On the Iranian side of the border, I witnessed two Iraqi soldiers escort an old Iranian man "to a safe place" from his house, where he was hiding. The man's face showed signs of fear and humiliation, and I wondered about the extent of revenge Iran would carry out when it had the opportunity. Decades later, the world watched Gen. Qassem Soleimani dancing with the Iraqi militias after the withdrawal of the American forces that had uprooted Saddam Hussein's regime.

I was also worried when the US military pounced on Saddam's regime based on accounts that it had ties to Al-Qaeda and possessed mobile biological weapons facilities. Some victories carry within them signs of their eventual collapse, especially when the party with enormous power fails to understand what is taking place underneath the scene of its victory. I also felt anxious as I was leaving a meeting with a Syrian official and received a phone message saying Rafik Hariri had been assassinated in Beirut.

I was worried when I traveled from the Middle East to witness the collapse of the Berlin Wall. It was no secret that the wall was both a state border and an imperial fron-



tier. Empires do not usually disappear without bloody feasts, even if they are delayed. I did not know that day that a young KGB officer had quickly destroyed his documents near where he was stationed by the wall and fled back into Russia's depths. The officer's name was Vladimir Putin.

I remembered the masters' lessons when I walked down Arbat Street in Moscow under Boris Yeltsin. The sight of Red Army officers' uniforms displayed with their medals for a handful of dollars was cruel and terrible. History is a strict teacher. Russia scratches its wounds under the snow and then rises to start a great fire. And this is what happened.

In a few days, Putin will extinguish the second candle of the "special military operation" that he launched on Feb. 24, 2022, to correct both history and geography. He dispatched the Red Army to chase the

"Nazis" in Ukraine, which he asserted was a country that would not have existed had it not been for a mistake committed by Stalin. After the advisers leave, he will celebrate alone. The czar is always one and alone. He will smile sarcastically. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last week ordered his forces to withdraw from the city of Avdiivka in front of Russian forces after aid and ammunition were delayed due to the "wars" raging in the corridors of the US Congress. Russia scratches its wounds under the snow and then rises to start a great fire. Zelensky's position reminded me of a remark made by late Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to former Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, that "the one who is covered by the Americans is naked." The same phrase could be said by Putin to Zelensky.

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Date 02/May/2026			Rahul Gupta

EDITORIAL

Judicial Review, Religion And Sabarimala: How Constitution Empowers Courts

On a hill in Kerala, a centuries-old tradition recognised as a customary law barred women of menstruating age from entering a temple. In 2018, the Supreme Court struck it down. The country was convulsed. Review petitions soon flooded the Supreme Court. A nine-judge bench was constituted to look at larger questions of law and religion. Seven years later those nine judges are examining questions that reach far beyond one shrine, one community, and one set of beliefs. One of the critical questions that the court has framed for arguments is its own power of judicial review. It is a power that the Constitution gave to the judiciary and that no subsequent parliament has been able to take away. Understanding that power, what it is, why it exists, and why it is especially indispensable when religion is involved is essential to understanding what the nine-judge bench is truly doing.

What Is Judicial Review?

Judicial review is the authority of the Supreme Court and high courts to examine whether a law enacted by parliament or a state legislature, or an action taken by the executive, is consistent with the Constitution. If it is not, the court may strike it down. The law ceases to exist, not because a new law was passed against it, but because the Constitution rendered it void. The phrase itself does not appear anywhere in the Constitution. It does not need to. It is embedded in the document's architecture. Article 13 declares that any law inconsistent with or in derogation of fundamental rights shall be void. Articles 32 and 226 give the Supreme Court and high courts the authority to enforce fundamental rights. The Supreme Court can exercise its special plenary powers under Article 142 to take any action to impart "complete justice" in any matter. In the decades after Independence, parliament and the Supreme Court were engaged in a sustained tug-of-war. Parliament repeatedly amended the Constitution to override court decisions, particularly on property rights and land reform. The court pushed back. In 1973, in *Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala*, a 13-judge bench settled the matter in terms that have never since been disturbed: Parliament may amend the Constitution, but it may not damage its basic structure. Judicial review, the court held, is part of that basic structure. No legislature can remove it. No executive can override it. That verdict is the floor beneath all of constitutional law. Everything that has followed: Shah Bano, Shayara Bano, Sabarimala, and now the nine-judge bench, adjudicates on the limits judicial review rests upon.

Can Courts Interfere In Religion?

Ever since the nine-judge bench hearing began at the Supreme Court, we have heard it repeatedly from the Centre represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the court should not interfere in any matter that is to do with religion. In other words, he argued that there should be a hands-off approach by the judiciary when it comes to religions and religious practices. With that in mind, the Supreme Court would have never struck down "triple talaq" or given Shah Bano her right to maintenance in 1985, and with that approach Mary Roy as a Syrian Christian woman would have never got an equal share in inheritance. Many judges on the bench have argued that they cannot look at every religious practice with a judicial lens and religion must be understood by the eyes of a devotee. And one agrees, religion can only be judged, understood and reformed by a devotee or the state. But judicial review ought to be understood in its own context. There is already a line that the courts have drawn for themselves; it's called the Essential Religious Practices Test which originated in the famous case of *Shirur Mutt* and has been used ever since.

The Essential Religious Practices Doctrine

The ERP doctrine was not born of a petition challenging discrimination or gender exclusion but from a dispute about money and management. When *Shirur Mutt* challenged a legislation regulating Hindu religious endowments in the early 1950s, the question before the court was whether that legislative intervention violated the denomination's rights under Article 26. It was the then Attorney General, defending the government's legislation, who introduced the ERP doctrine. His purpose then was to give the court a principled basis on which it could uphold what the state legislature had done and not to open a new avenue of judicial supervision over religious life. The test he proposed was simple and bounded: distinguish between the genuinely religious activities of a denomination and its essentially secular activities such as the administration of property and funds. The ERP doctrine was the line between those two categories. It was designed to save legislative reform from being challenged under Article 26. That was its purpose and its limit. The pattern across the post-Independence decades confirms this. In *Devaru*, the court upheld the Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Act, finding that the state's power of social reform under Article 25(2)(b) could override a denomination's claim to manage its own affairs. In *Ratilal*, careful lines were drawn between protected religious administration and regulable secular management. Across a dozen such disputes, the court consistently used the ERP test to uphold legislative intervention, not to resist it. What these cases share is a common structure. A religious institution challenged that action and the court adjudicated the boundary between what the state could and could not regulate. The individual devotee, the woman denied entry, the community member facing expulsion, was nowhere in this picture. The doctrine was forged in litigation between the state and religious institutions. Its application to claims brought by individuals against discriminatory practices is a later development, and one that requires far more justification than has typically been offered.

The Drift And Its Consequences

Over time, the ERP test migrated from its original institutional context into a broader role. Courts began applying it as a threshold inquiry in all religious practice cases, not merely those involving legislative challenge. A practice found to be essential came to be treated, in some formulations, as though it were insulated from further fundamental rights scrutiny. The doctrine designed to protect reform gradually acquired the character of a defence against it.

A New World Struggles To Be Born

The war in West Asia has accelerated the unravelling of the post-Cold War order. For all its contradictions, this was an order that generated unprecedented wealth and lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty. But it struggled to reconcile power with principle and universality with diversity. It also produced shifts in the global distribution of power that it has been unable to adapt to. The question, therefore, is not whether the old order will endure. It will not. The real question is what comes next. This is a difficult question because it asks us to imagine the future. In doing so, one must try to be both optimistic and idealistic, and not let the brutishness of the current environment, or even the inherent nature of international relations, undermine that imagination. At the same time, ignoring the realities of the world, the enduring role of states, and the historical experiences of violence that have marked the transition of orders would do a disservice to the inquiry. Feasibility, therefore, becomes the parameter that mediates between idealism and the realities of current times.

Before outlining what the contours of the next global order should or are likely to be, it is important to identify the tensions that such an order must contend with. First, there is a tension among three forces. On the one hand are the norms of the Westphalian system, such as state sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-intervention, and the legal equality of states. On the other hand is the enduring impulse of great powers to pursue absolute advantage, remain above constraining rules, and shape spheres of influence or even empire. Overlaying this is a third force, that is, overreach based on a particular ideological zeitgeist about how global civilisation should be organised: be it liberal internationalism or the rejuvenation of nativism and even fascism today. Any sustainable order will have to balance and contend with



these competing impulses. Second, there is a tension between the ideas underpinning the liberal international order, such as open markets, free trade, global capitalism, democracy, human rights, rule of law, and collective security, and the realities of cultural and civilisational pluralism. The aspiration to identify shared values is a noble one. It is possible to imagine a baseline of common principles. But the challenge lies in how those values translate into policy across different societies. Even something as foundational as individual liberty, which many would consider universal, is mediated through varying balances between the individual and the collective. There are no uniform templates for managing these tensions. Any future order must, therefore, accommodate pluralism rather than seek to erase it. Third, there is a tension between rhetoric and delivery. An order is sustainable only when it aligns not just with the aspirations of its participants but also with the actual distribution of power. Today, that distribution is uneven and volatile. In many ways, the world is simulta-

neously unipolar, bipolar, multipolar, and non-polar. Moreover, the drivers of future power, such as compute, algorithms, data, network infrastructure, and skilled talent, are evolving rapidly, even as traditional sources such as territory, population, and natural resources remain significant. Accounting for this dynamic mix is an enormous challenge for order builders.

■ WHAT, THEN, DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE NEXT GLOBAL ORDER?

First, it must be rules-based; otherwise, it cannot meaningfully be called an order. A critical mass of actors must agree on shared codes of behaviour. But these rules need not replicate those of the past. They will evolve, reflecting both shifting power balances and the realities of pluralism. Second, the emerging order is likely to be unevenly multipolar, more plurilateral than multilateral, more regional than global, and more pluralistic than universalistic. Power will not be evenly distributed, nor will institutions be universally binding. Instead, clus-

ters of states will likely coalesce around specific issues, interests, and geographies, producing overlapping and sometimes competing frameworks of cooperation. Third, this order will likely be more state-centric and less individual-centric. The post-Cold War flowering of civil society is already under severe strain. This is most evident in the collapse of trust in news media around the world and crackdowns on non-profits and development organisations in various countries. Going ahead, private actors and transnational corporations, once seen as relatively autonomous, will find themselves increasingly subordinate to state priorities and geopolitical imperatives. Will such an order be stable and peaceful? Perhaps. It may produce pockets of stability within regions or issue-specific arrangements. But will it generate the same degree of prosperity as the post-Cold War era? That seems unlikely. Fragmentation, strategic competition, and the prioritisation of security over efficiency will impose costs on global growth. For India, this emerging order

presents both opportunities and constraints. A more multipolar and plurilateral world aligns with India's long-standing preference for strategic autonomy. It opens space for New Delhi to shape regional arrangements, deepen partnerships across different poles, and play a more active role in norm-setting in different domains. At the same time, the very features that create these opportunities also complicate India's developmental ambitions. A more fragmented global economy, characterised by weakened multilateralism and heightened geopolitical risk, creates a more transactional world that is less conducive to rapid growth. Greater state control over technology, capital, and supply chains globally could also limit access to the very drivers of future power that India needs to accelerate its growth trajectory. In other words, India may find itself potentially more influential, but not necessarily more prosperous at the pace it desires. This is a critical challenge because one's influence is linked to the material capabilities one brings to the table.

PhD: Not a degree, but a continuous journey of knowledge creation

-Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

There are many misconceptions prevalent in society today about the PhD (Doctor of Philosophy). Some consider it merely a "degree," some consider it a means to obtain a job, while others consider it a symbol of prestige. Articles and comments periodically appear on social media, debating the usefulness, difficulty, and true meaning of a PhD. In reality, a PhD is not merely a certificate, but a continuous intellectual journey to push the boundaries of knowledge. It is not a process that ends with the writing of a thesis, but rather a continuous pursuit of research, reflection, analysis, and socially useful contributions. The primary purpose of a PhD is not to reiterate established knowledge in a subject, but to add to it. At the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, students typically study, understand, and validate existing knowledge through examinations. However, the PhD goes beyond that point, where the researcher formulates questions, identifies problems, chooses methods, gathers evidence, and presents conclusions. In this sense, the PhD is more about "creating something new" than "learning." Many people think that a PhD simply means submitting a lengthy thesis. This thinking is incomplete. A thesis is a written document of a long journey, completed over many years of study, fieldwork, experimentation, data analysis, critical reflection, and revision. A good thesis is not just about word count, but about originality of ideas, integrity of research, and usefulness of findings. Only if the researcher has deeply understood the problem, employed appropriate methodology, and produced

unbiased conclusions is their research considered meaningful. A PhD teaches researchers patience. Research often doesn't yield immediate results. Sometimes months of effort are thwarted, but the researcher keeps starting over. Experiments in a science lab may fail, surveys in the social sciences may not yield the expected results, and literature may be incomplete. Yet, the researcher never gives up. This persistence is what transforms them from ordinary students into researchers. It's also true that a PhD is not just a personal achievement, but also a social responsibility. When someone conducts research on topics related to education, agriculture, health, economics, language, environment, technology, or policy, their findings can guide society. For example, research on rural education can improve the condition of government schools; research on water conservation can help in policy-making; research on Indian languages can preserve cultural heritage. Therefore, the value of a PhD is not limited to the university campus. However, it must also be acknowledged that the research world is currently beset by numerous challenges. In some places, the quality of research is being questioned. In some places, there is a lack of guidance, in others, a lack of resources, in others, unnecessary administrative burdens on researchers, and in others, a tendency to simply fulfill formalities. Some people consider a PhD merely a qualification for promotion or employment. This affects the essence of research. When the objective is not knowledge but only profit, research becomes superficial.

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Does it abet the dowry practice?

Despite six decades of legal proscription, the practice of dowry remains deeply embedded in marriage system of India. What began as voluntary gifts - such as cash or securities - has devolved into coercive demands, often leading to harassment, cruelty, and even death. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 was enacted to curb the menace. That the practice of dowry - in one form or other - continues to be an integral fixture of the marriage system, the success of the legislation entirely lies in its enforcement and proper use. NCRB Data and Conviction Trends According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, thousands of cases are registered annually under dowry-related offences. The offences include cruelty by husbands or his relatives, often culminating in dowry deaths. The year 2023 recorded 15,489 cases which is a significant 14% increase from the previous year. The 6156 dowry deaths in 2023 translates to 16-20 deaths per day. The numbers reflect a continuing and unabated menace. However, conviction rates remain comparatively low, often hovering between 11 to 17%, which means 5 out of the 6 accused go unpunished. This gap between registration and conviction highlights systemic weaknesses in investigation, prosecution. Also, filing false cases and later settling them outside the court is defeating the very spirit of the Act. egal Framework: ack of clarity in statutory provisions



Murali Mohan Ajjampudi



B. Pavani

creates interpretational ambiguities, and thus aiding the rime tacitly to continue. For instance, the Section 3 of the DP Act penalizes both giving, abetting and taking dowry. However, Section 7(3) of the same Act introduces a non-obstante lause, stating that a person giving dowry may not be prosecuted if he is the aggrieved party. This creates a legal paradox: while giving dowry is punishable, the law simultaneously shields the dowry-giver - albeit under certain circumstances. Consider this situation: the wife files a false case on husband. The wife becomes the aggrieved party. Her relatives who make written statements of giving dowry to the accused can not to be prosecuted based on their own statements as per Sec 7.3. Very often, a compromise transpires between the parties. The consequent withdrawal of case will take away the 'aggrieved' tag from the wife, while the husband suffers the constriction from initiating legal action against the wife. Courts do not punish the wife for the trumped-up case, and at the same time do not permit the husband from initiating prosecution. This legal provision is directly

facilitating and actively abetting the dowry practice. The dowry giver - real or fictitious - walks out free. Complexities Around Section 7(3) First, if a person actively participates in giving dowry, it is unclear whether they can later claim protection as an aggrieved party. Second, if giving dowry is socially normalized as "custom," the ame logic could arguably be extended to taking dowry, weakening its enforcement. Third, in ases of false allegations, husbands often question whether they can initiate counteraction under Sections 3 and 7(3). Fourth, is the money lender who facilitates/abets the dowry entitled to the 'aggrieved party' status? The law does not clearly address this, leaving room for misuse and confusion. Thus the protective shield under Section 7(3), while well-intentioned, may inadvertently enable false accusations to persist, as it limits the accountability for those who admit to participating in dowry transactions. Section 498A IPC and Judicial Intervention Section 498A of the IPC (section 85 BNS), meant to protect women from cruelty, has faced criticism for misuse. The Supreme Court in *Arnes*

Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014) laid down guidelines to prevent automatic arrests, emphasizing due process. Similarly, *Rajesh Sharma v. State of U.P.* (2017) attempted procedural safeguards, such as reviewing the complaints by Family Welfare Committees before police action. However, these directions were subsequently revisited in *Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar v. Union of India* for the said judgment confers powers on the Family Welfare Committee to look into the criminal complaints under Sections 498-A IPC which is contrary to the procedure prescribed under the Code of Criminal Procedure. These judgments reflect judicial concern over balancing the protection of genuine victims from the misuse. The Way Forward Addressing dowry menace requires both legal and societal reforms. Police must discourage frivolous FIRs while ensuring genuine complaints are pursued rigorously. Witness protection mechanisms, fast-track courts, and better forensic investigation can improve conviction rates. At the same time, strict penalties for false accusations must be enforced to maintain credibility of the law. Public awareness campaigns and community engagement remain essential to dismantle the social acceptance of dowry. Only a balanced approach—combining strong enforcement with safeguards against misuse—can ensure justice and gradually eradicate this entrenched practice.

IS SAUDI ARABIA'S SPORTS REVOLUTION UNRAVELLING?

The decision by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund to stop bankrolling LIV Golf at the end of the season has plunged the future of the breakaway series into doubt. It has also posed questions over the country's many other sporting investments. After all, the kingdom has ploughed tens of billions of pounds over the past decade into establishing itself as a global sports hub, hosting an array of major events, from high-profile boxing fights and Formula 1 races, to tennis and horse racing. Most significantly, the kingdom will host the men's Fifa World Cup in 2034. So what does the Public Investment Fund's (PIF) withdrawal from LIV mean for the rest of their portfolio? "PIF remains committed to deploying capital internationally in line with its investment strategy, including its substantial current and future investments in various sports as a priority sector." The final sentence of the statement released by PIF on Thursday when finally announcing it was pulling out of LIV Golf, ending weeks of intense speculation. The intended message was clear; despite abandoning a tour it had long portrayed as the future of the game, Saudi



Arabia was still committed to the world of sport. Up until recently, no such reassurance would have been required. Its huge spending has also extended to luring some of the world's biggest stars - including Cristiano Ronaldo - to its revamped domestic football league, and buying a majority stake in Premier League club Newcastle United. A sprawling collection of sports sponsorships cemented its burgeoning and disruptive influence over international sport, and a future Olympic bid felt like a formality. The country claimed that this was designed to help it to

modernise and to diversify its economy by boosting tourism as part of the Crown Prince's Vision 2030 strategy, while inspiring its population to be more active. Critics of its human rights record accused it of 'sportswashing' its reputation. The country's international standing was severely damaged by the 2018 killing of Jamal Khashoggi, a US-based Saudi journalist who was a prominent critic of the government. It has also faced scrutiny over its use of the death penalty. But whatever the motive, has Saudi Arabia's relationship with sport started to cool? 'Shifting spending priorities' - but

some sports better placed than others. In January, BBC Sport was told that towards the end of last year there was "a shift" in the kingdom's attitude towards some investments, with "everything in the PIF world under serious review". The change in the strategy - with an emphasis on more sustainable investments that would bring a return - came after a major budget deficit of \$73bn last year, driven by increased spending and lower oil revenues. It was notable that the 2029 Asian Winter Games in Saudi Arabia was suddenly postponed indefinitely. It then emerged that the end of

season WTA Finals in women's tennis would be leaving Saudi Arabia after a three-year hosting deal was not extended. The sense that the era of lavish spending was coming to an end seemed to be reinforced by the conflict in the Middle East. The war has caused disruption to Saudi Arabia's oil exportation, and required increased spending on defence. Last month, PIF confirmed a new emphasis on "sustained value creation...and maximizing long-term returns", with a statement, external making no mention of sport, fuelling the sense that its interest was waning. Soon after, PIF announced it had sold Saudi Pro League club Al-Hilal. The Saudi Arabia Snooker Masters was cancelled, just two years into a 10-year deal, and the country reportedly abandoned plans to bid to host the 2035 rugby union World Cup. But the biggest casualty of all was LIV Golf, with PIF stating: "The substantial investment required...is no longer consistent with the current phase of PIF's investment strategy. This decision has been made in light of PIF's investment priorities and current macro dynamics."

April Gross GST Collection Hits Record High, Rises Nearly 9% To Rs 2.43 Lakh Crore

India's goods and services tax (GST) collections surged to a record high in April, with gross revenues rising on an annual basis despite a sharp jump in refunds issued during the month. Gross GST collections rose 8.7% year-on-year to Rs 2.43 lakh crore in April, the highest monthly tally on record, government data released on Friday showed. The previous all-time high was recorded in April last year, when collections crossed Rs 2.23 lakh crore. Revenue from domestic transactions increased 4.3% to more than Rs 1.85 lakh crore during the month, indicating steady consumption activity. Collections from imports, however, jumped sharply by 25.8% to Rs 57,580 crore, providing a significant boost to overall GST revenues. Refunds issued in April climbed 19.3% from a year earlier to Rs 31,793 crore, reflecting faster processing and settlement of claims. After adjusting for refunds, net GST collections stood at about Rs 2.11 lakh crore, up 7.3% compared with April 2025. Tax experts, however, note that collections in April, which represent activity in March, typically come in higher as both industry and the tax admin-



istration make a final push to achieve the financial year-end targets. Data shows that every April since the rollout of GST in 2017 has seen a record-high collection figure, except for April 2020, which was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. "April 2026 GST collections cap off a resilient FY26 for the GST regime, with gross revenues rising 8.7% year-on-year to about 2.43 lakh crore compared to April 2025, despite continued global uncertainty and West Asia-related geopolitical headwinds," Mahesh Jaising, Partner & Indirect Tax Leader at Deloitte India said. The data shows that net collections, once refunds are accounted for, stood at Rs 2.11 lakh crore in April 2026, up 7.3% over April 2025. Notably, the data also

shows that the growth in collections was once again driven by imports rather than domestic sales. That is, gross collections from imports grew nearly 26% in April 2026 to Rs 57,580 crore. On the other hand, collections from domestic sales grew a relatively slower 4.3% to Rs 1.85 lakh crore in the same period. "Post GST 2.0, a steady 7-8% monthly growth seems to be emerging as the norm which is broadly in line with budget estimates," Pratik Jain, Partner, Price Waterhouse & Co said. "Notably, growth in import-led revenues continues to outpace domestic transactions, which could indicate some softness in consumption - possibly reflecting a moderation in discretionary spending amid ongoing geopolitical uncertainties."

US STOCK MARKET TODAY:

Dow Jones Rises, S&P 500 Hits Record High As Iran-US Talks Make Progress; Apple Shares Surge

Hopes of easing geopolitical tensions are fuelling optimism on Wall Street, with US markets hovering near record highs as progress in Iran-US talks lifts investor sentiment. Minutes into the trade, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 201.97 points or 0.41%, S&P 500 also rose over 0.56%, while Nasdaq was up 0.67%. The gains come after both benchmark indices closed at fresh record highs on Thursday, supported in part by a post-earnings surge in Alphabet Inc. Investor sentiment was buoyed by reports that Iran had responded to US on Thursday through Pakistan. Iran send its amendments to the agreement to US. The development pushed oil prices lower, easing concerns around inflation and input costs, key overhangs for global markets in recent weeks. Market participants are also parsing corporate earnings as the busiest week of the reporting season draws to a close. Apple Inc. rose over 3% after the



iPhone maker issued a stronger-than-expected revenue growth outlook, adding further support to the technology-driven rally. Apple Inc., Salesforce Inc. gained nearly 4%, while Microsoft Corp., NVIDIA Corp and Boeing Co. were up nearly 1%. On the other hand, Home Depot Inc., Amazon.com Inc. and Walt Disney among the losers for the day. As the US market opened, spot gold fell 0.6% to \$4,587.98 an ounce. Even as stocks rose, crude prices fell with the West Texas trading 2.3% lower at \$102.64 per barrel. Brent crude futures also rose 4.92% to \$104.53.

The Bloomberg Dollar Index was little changed, with the British Pound rising 0.1% at \$1.3624 and the Japanese yen was at 156.64 per dollar. Yesterday, the three major U.S. stock indexes jumped on the final trading day of April, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq setting intraday and closing records, as investors digested a flurry of earnings reports. The Nasdaq rose more than 15% for the month, while the S&P 500 was up more than 10% and the Dow added more than 7%. The indexes logged their largest monthly percentage gains since April 2020, November 2020, and

November 2024, respectively. After the close Thursday, Apple (AAPL) reported better-than-expected quarterly results and issued a rosy outlook, and shares jumped 4%. In other notable post-earnings moves, Roblox (RBLX) shares plummeted 17%; Clorox (CLX) dropped 8.5%; oil giants Chevron (CVX) and Exxon Mobil (XOM) fell about 1% each; Reddit (RDDT) surged 9%; and Estée Lauder (EL) was up 6%. Following an Axios report that Iran had sent Pakistani mediators a response to U.S. peace agreement draft amendments, West Texas Intermediate futures, the U.S. crude oil benchmark, declined 4.9% to \$99.85 a barrel, while front-month contracts of Brent crude, the global benchmark, slipped 3% to \$107. The 10-year Treasury yield, which influences interest rates on mortgages and other consumer loans, fell below 4.35% from near 4.38% at Thursday's close. Gold futures rose 0.8% to \$4,665 an ounce.

ROYAL ENFIELD SALES UP 31 PC AT 1,13,164 UNITS IN APRIL

New Delhi: Mid-size motorcycle maker Royal Enfield on Friday, May 1, reported a 31 per cent rise in total sales at 1,13,164 units in April 2026 as compared to 86,559 units sold in the same month last year. Domestic sales were at 1,04,129 units as against 76,002 units in April 2025, up 37 per cent, Royal Enfield, a part of Eicher Motors group, said in a statement. However, exports were down 14 per cent at 9,035 units last month as compared to 10,557 units in April 2025, it added.



"We have started the new financial year with strong momentum, setting the tone for an exciting and important year ahead. April 2026 was special for us as we took our first step into electric mobility with the launch of the Flying Flea C6 - which has received an overwhelmingly encouraging response," Eicher Motors Ltd Managing Director and Royal Enfield CEO, B

Govindarajan said. Internationally, he said, "Our key markets continue to perform well, driven by successful new launches, industry accolades and a growing rider community." With a robust pipeline of new products and brand initiatives, Govindarajan said, "We are confident of maintaining the growth trajectory through the year." However, exports were down 14 per cent at

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BERGER PAINTS TO HIKE PRICES BY 35% FROM MAY 5 AS INPUT COSTS SURGE

India's paint sector is bracing for yet another round of price increases, as rising input costs driven by global supply disruptions and geopolitical tensions continue to squeeze margins. Berger Paints has told NDTV Profit that it will implement a fresh round of price hikes of 3-5% effective May 5, 2026, as manufacturers pass on higher costs linked to crude-based raw materials. The move comes amid persistent geopolitical uncertainty, including the Iran conflict, which has pushed up prices of key inputs. The company said it remains confident on the demand front, noting that consumption trends are improving and the market is expected to absorb the latest round of increases. This marks the third round of price hikes by Berger Paints in just over a month. The company had earlier rolled out a second increase of 5-10% effective April 9, following an initial hike on March 30 across premium



and luxury emulsions. The pace of revisions highlights the sharp escalation in cost pressures faced by the sector. Across the industry, other major players are also expected to follow suit. According to sources, companies such as Asian Paints, Kansai Nerolac Paints, Birla Opus, and AkzoNobel India are likely to raise prices by up to 5% from May 5, marking their third coordinated round of hikes since late March. Asian Paints has already undertaken multiple revisions in April, increasing prices by 6-8% in two phases—first on

April 10 across emulsions, enamels and wood finishes, followed by another hike on April 21. A report by Nomura suggests the company could implement an additional 3-5% increase from May 5. The primary driver behind these hikes remains the surge in raw material costs. Nearly 40-50% of paint production expenses are linked to crude oil derivatives such as solvents, monomers and resins. Volatility in global oil markets—exacerbated by geopolitical tensions—continues to translate directly into higher manufacturing costs.

Gokula Education Foundation (Medical) Launches RISM, a Globally Aligned STEM and Management University Focused on AI, Aerospace and Future-Ready Skills

Bengaluru, 2026: In a decisive move to bridge academia with real-world relevance and future skills, the Gokula Education Foundation (Medical), which manages the Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences, Ramaiah Medical College, and the Ramaiah Memorial Hospital has now partnered with University at Albany, State University of New York, a premier public research university, to launch Ramaiah Institute of Science and Management (RISM), a deemed-to-be university in Bangalore. Envisioned as a next-generation STEM and Management institution, RISM will deliver globally benchmarked, industry-aligned education with a strong emphasis on research and real-world application preparing students for a rapidly evolving global landscape. The university will commence its first academic session in August 2026. Building on over six decades of excellence in education, research, and healthcare, the Gokula Education Foundation (Medical) is extending its experience through RISM, reimagining higher education with a global-first, industry-aligned approach. The university will offer



undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes across the engineering, business, and science disciplines, with the initial programmes including B. Tech in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence, Aerospace Engineering, and Electrical Sciences, alongside BBA and MBA programmes. Its academic model is anchored in a co-created curriculum developed with industry and academic partners, integrating interdisciplinary

learning, industry-sponsored Centres of Excellence, and hands-on exposure through internships, live projects, and capstone assignments to build real-world capabilities. At RISM, "Relevance" will be designed into the foundation through an integrated business and management-led approach across programs. Each course will embed real industry exposure from the outset, ensuring learning stays applied and outcome driven.

Students will also engage with 'Mentor Professors,' 'Professors of Practice from amongst senior industry leaders embedded within each department in formal faculty roles, a first-of-its-kind model. Complementing this, translational research anchors the university's academic framework, shaping both curriculum design and tangible impact. With this integrated approach, RISM aims to build a learning ecosystem where industry context, academic rigor, and translational research converge seamlessly. Speaking on the launch, Mr. Gurucharan Gollerkeri, Executive Director and Chief Strategy Officer, Gokula Education Foundation (Medical) said, "We are operating in a fast-changing, deeply interconnected global environment where the boundaries between disciplines, industries, and geographies are rapidly dissolving. Traditional education models are no longer sufficient to prepare students for this new reality. With RISM, we are addressing this shift by building an ecosystem that integrates technology, business, and applied learning in a way that mirrors how the real-world functions and is evolving."

Israel releases all but two activists in Greece after intercepting Gaza aid flotilla

All but two pro-Palestinian activists detained by Israeli forces after their flotilla headed for Gaza was intercepted in international waters have now been released in Greece. On Thursday, around 175 activists aboard 22 boats carrying aid were seized near the island of Crete. The organisers of the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) denounced the action as "piracy", saying members were seized unlawfully more than 965km (600 miles) from Gaza, which is under an Israeli naval blockade. Israel's foreign ministry called the flotilla a "PR stunt". All the detained activists have disembarked in Crete, apart from two men who are being brought to Israel "for questioning", according to the Israeli government. Israel's foreign ministry said that one of the men, Saif Abu Keshk, was "suspected of affiliation with a terrorist organisation" and the other, Thiago Ávila, was "suspected of illegal activity". Both men remain in Israeli



custody. The Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) called for the immediate release of Abu Keshk and Ávila. The group said: "We demand that all governments do all they can to pressure the Israeli regime to release all the illegal abductees." It confirmed that all other members of the captured flotilla boats had been released on the Greek island

of Crete. Israel said about 175 people had been detained, while the GSF previously said "over 180 civilians from around the world have been directly attacked". Greek authorities had been preparing to receive people from the flotilla since the early hours of Friday morning. The group - men and women of various nationalities, including some

Greeks and Australians - is being transported by naval vessel to the southern coast of Crete, where they are expected to arrive at Atherinolakkos. Buses are waiting to take them onward. According to sources who spoke to the BBC, their final destination is Heraklion, where they are expected to be temporarily accommodated

before arrangements are made for their return to their home countries. On Thursday, the Greek foreign ministry said it had offered "diplomatic assistance" by agreeing to host the passengers and ensure their safe return home. The United States backed Israel's decision to intercept the boats, with State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott calling the aid flotilla a "meaningless political stunt". The flotilla set sail two weeks ago, with a total of 58 vessels joining from Spain, France and Italy, aiming to break Israel's blockade of Gaza. The remaining 36 boats were close to Crete's southern coast on Friday. The GSF said that Israeli naval forces had "intercepted, boarded, and systematically disabled and destroyed various boats" in the flotilla during a "violent raid in international waters" north-west of Crete on Thursday. "After detaining participants, smashing an engine and jamming commu-

nications, the [Israeli forces] retreated, kidnapping participants or intentionally leaving civilians stranded on powerless, broken vessels directly in the path of a massive approaching storm." Israel insists its actions comply with international law. The Israeli foreign ministry said that "due to the large numbers of vessels participating in the flotilla and the risk of escalation, and the need to prevent the breach of a lawful blockade, an early action was required". "The operation was carried out in international waters peacefully and without any casualties. An initial inspection of the vessels revealed materials that appear to be drugs and contrabands," it added. The ministry accused the flotilla's organisers of "joining hands" with the Palestinian armed group Hamas "with the aim of sabotaging President Trump's [Gaza] peace plan transition to its second phase and intended to divert attention from Hamas's refusal to disarm".

BRITISH COUPLE JAILED IN IRAN: 'WE'RE LIKELY TO BE HERE FOR A LONG TIME'

Lindsay Foreman says she is keeping sane by reading, doing laps of the prison yard and, when she can, practising yoga. Exercise, she says, has always been her "salvation". But after 16 months in jail in Iran, Lindsay admits she is struggling. "I'm dealing with the realisation that we're likely to be here for a long time," she tells me over the phone from Iran's notorious Evin jail. Lindsay, a 53-year-old life coach, and her husband Craig, 52, were on a round-the-world motorcycle trip when they were arrested on suspicion of espionage in January 2025 - charges they adamantly deny. "We're wasting our lives in here! After living through the recent war in Iran, the pair, from East Sussex, are now facing the painful reality of a 10-year prison sentence handed down against them in February. "I just feel that we're wasting our lives in here and rotting away," Craig says. "We are innocent people. We have committed no offence." He makes a plea to the govern-

ment: "Just take action. Speak out. Get us out. It seems to me we're sitting here like sitting ducks." The pair are speaking to the media together, via separate phones, for the first time since their incarceration. They are being kept in different cells within the same prison. After months of being unable to communicate with others, their son, Joe Bennett, now gets regular phone calls from his mother and step-father. They are patched through to them from payphones in Evin prison via the Foreign Office, which has described their incarceration as "appalling" and "unjustifiable". Conversations are not easy. The lines drop out regularly and calls are monitored. Every couple of minutes a recording in Farsi interrupts, saying: "This call is from Evin prison and the caller is a prisoner." "It's very frustrating, but these phone calls are a lifeline for them and for us," says Joe, who allowed us to speak to his parents when they called in.

MISSING OSCAR FOUND AFTER ACADEMY AWARD WINNER BLOCKED FROM TAKING IT ON FLIGHT



An Oscar that went missing after its winner was forced to check the golden statuette at a New York airport has been found, the airline involved has told the BBC. Pavel Talankin said he had the Academy Award in his carry-on bag for a flight to Germany on Wednesday, but airport security stopped him at John F Kennedy International Airport because they said the award could be used as a weapon. When he landed in Germany, the Oscar for his documentary Mr Nobody Against Putin was gone. "The Oscar statue has now been located and is safely in our care in Frankfurt," Lufthansa said, adding that the airline was in direct contact with the guest to arrange the statue's return "as quickly as possible". "We sincerely regret the inconvenience caused and have apologised to the owner. The careful and secure handling of our guests' belongings is of the utmost importance to us. "An internal review of the circumstances is ongoing." The BBC has contacted the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and the US Transportation Security

Administration (TSA), which handles airport security and stopped Talankin from bringing his Oscar in his on-flight bag. The documentary's co-director David Borenstein told the BBC he was relieved the statuette had been found after the "big kerfuffle". "They just found this flimsy box and told him to put it in there... everyone was kind of saying, 'this is an Oscar, why are you doing this?'" "It was a big scene," he said, with the documentary's executive producer Robin Hessman on the phone "yelling at TSA saying, 'you can't do this'". Hessman told the BBC that she was on speaker phone with Talankin and TSA to help because Talankin does not speak fluent English. She said he had flown multiple times with his Oscar and also his Bafta, both of which he had won this year, across the US and on international flights, and never had any issues bringing his Oscar aboard. "This wouldn't have happened to Leonardo DiCaprio," she said. The BBC has viewed video of Lufthansa staff using tape and bubble wrap to pack the Oscar into a box.

MYANMAR EX-LEADER AUNG SAN SUU KYI MOVED TO HOUSE ARREST, MILITARY SAYS

The detained former Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved to house arrest, the country's state media has reported. The 80-year-old Nobel laureate has been held in detention - probably in a military prison in the capital Nay Pyi Taw - since she was removed from office in a military coup in 2021. A statement by military leader Min Aung Hlaing, who led the coup, said he had "commuted her remaining sentence to be served at the designated residence". Aung San Suu Kyi came to power in 2015 after Myanmar's then rulers introduced democratic reforms. Before that, she spent decades of military rule as a pro-democracy activist, and was previously held for more than 15



years under house arrest. State media broadcast a picture of her sitting with two uniformed personnel. Her son Kim Aris said he was sceptical about the announcement and that he had not even have proof that she was alive. He said the picture was "meaningless" as it was taken in 2022. "I hope this is true. I still haven't seen any real evidence to show that she has been moved.

BILLIONS OF MEALS AT RISK DUE TO IRAN WAR, SAYS FERTILISER BOSS

The interruption to supplies of fertiliser and its key ingredients due to the war in Iran could cost up to 10 billion meals a week globally and will hit poorest countries hardest, according to the boss of one of the world's biggest fertiliser producers. Svein Tore Holsether, chief executive of Yara, told the BBC that hostilities in the Gulf, which have blocked shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, are jeopardising global food production. Reduced crop yields as a result of lower fertiliser use could lead to a bidding war for food, he warned. He urged European nations to consider carefully the impact of a price war on the "most vulnerable" in other countries. Although the UK is very unlikely to face food shortages, the increased



costs facing food producers are expected to start showing up on weekly food bills in the next few months. "We're up to half a million tons of nitrogen fertiliser not being produced in the world right now because of the situation we are in," Holsether said. "What does that mean for food production? I would get up to 10 billion meals that will not be produced every week as a result of the lack of

where there is already under-fertilisation, such as several countries in sub-Saharan Africa, could see an even larger impact on crop yields, he added, saying "significant drops" there were possible. Planting seasons vary across the world. In the UK it is peak planting season, while in Asia farmers are getting started. The consequences of fertiliser shortages in Asia will not appear in food prices until the end of the year, when harvests that should have been planted this spring come in smaller than they should, or not at all, according to analysts. Professor Paul Teng, a senior fellow in food security in Singapore, said some countries might have enough fertiliser for the immediate planting season "but if the crisis drags on any longer.

HEGSETH SAYS CLOCK PAUSED ON DEADLINE TO SEEK APPROVAL FOR IRAN WAR

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has argued that the clock has paused on a deadline for the Trump administration to seek approval from Congress for the US-Israeli war with Iran. Hegseth was responding to questions from members of the Senate, or upper chamber, on Thursday. Friday is the 60th day since Trump formally notified Congress of the strikes against Iran on 2 March. US law requires a president to "terminate any use of United States Armed Forces" within 60 days of such a notification - unless Congress allows a continuation. A senior administration official said hostilities

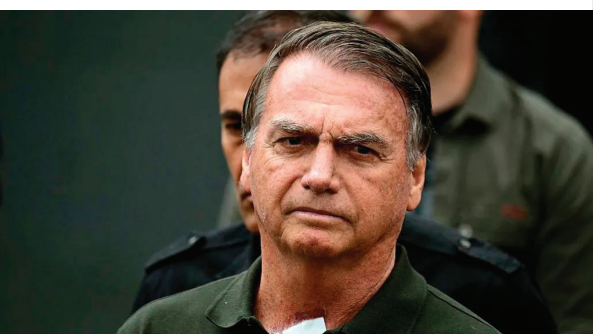


with Iran had "terminated", emphasising that a ceasefire had been in effect since early April. Despite the ceasefire, the two sides have not yet reached a longer-term deal via talks. Meanwhile, the key Strait of Hormuz waterway is still effectively closed - causing

economic impacts around the world. Answering questions from senators on Thursday, Hegseth said: "We are in a ceasefire right now, which our understanding means the 60-day clock pauses or stops in a ceasefire." The questioner, Democratic Senator Tim

Kaine, responded: "I do not believe the statute would support that. I think the 60 days runs maybe tomorrow, and it's going to pose a really important legal question for the administration there." The relevant piece of US law, the decades-old War Powers Resolution, makes certain requirements of a president "within sixty calendar days" of their use of US armed forces within a combat. It requires them to end the use of those forces unless Congress makes a formal declaration of war or allows the president an extension, up to 30 days in length, for the "prompt removal" of troops.

Brazil's Congress approves plan to drastically cut Bolsonaro's jail term

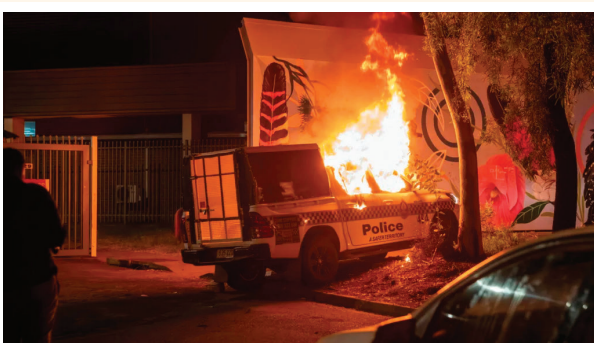


Brazil's Congress has overturned a veto of a bill that would dramatically reduce former president Jair Bolsonaro's prison sentence for plotting a coup after he lost the last election. Last year Bolsonaro was sentenced to 27 years in jail for his attempt to cling to power after losing the 2022 elections to Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Lula had tried to block a subsequent push by the conservative-majority Congress to reduce Bolsonaro's term to just over two years, but in a tense session on Thursday lawmakers overrode his veto of a law changing how prison sentences are calculated. The law could still be challenged in the Supreme Court. Bolsonaro, 71, was in March allowed to temporarily be placed under house arrest due to ill health. The former army captain, who served one term as president from 2019 to 2022, had known of plans to assassinate Lula and his vice-presidential running mate, Geraldo Alckmin, Supreme Court justices said as he was found guilty in September. Without the backing of the senior leaders of the country's armed forces, the conspiracy

failed and Lula was sworn in without incident on 1 January 2023. After Lula's veto was defeated, several lawmakers loudly chanted freedom and Flavio Bolsonaro - the name of the imprisoned ex-leader's eldest son who has aspirations for the office once held by his father. "I thank the deputies and senators for this very special birthday present," Flavio Bolsonaro, a Brazilian senator, posted on X regarding the veto override that coincided with his 45th birthday. More than two thirds of Congress voted to pass the legislation which proposes reducing sentences for individuals convicted of coup-related acts. It's the second blow to the left-wing government from Brazilian lawmakers this week and for Lula, who is campaigning for a fourth term. The day before the veto was overturned, the Senate rejected Lula's candidate for a Supreme Court justice, Jorge Messias. It was the first time in decades that the president's picks for a seat on the top court has been rejected, and it marked momentum for the younger Bolsonaro, who is tied with Lula in the polls.

VIOLENCE IN AUSTRALIAN TOWN AFTER ARREST OF MAN OVER GIRL'S MURDER

There has been violence outside an Australian hospital where a man suspected of murdering a five-year-old girl was being treated, as police said they were "coming for" anyone who may have helped him. Jefferson Lewis was arrested late on Thursday night local time in Alice Springs, after being seen by members of the local community and reportedly attacked. Video shows dozens of people gathering outside the town's hospital, some throwing projectiles, with police using tear gas. The body of the girl, who is identified only as Kumanjayi Little Baby for cultural reasons, was discovered earlier on Thursday. She had last been seen on Saturday, when she was put to bed at an Aboriginal town camp near Alice Springs just

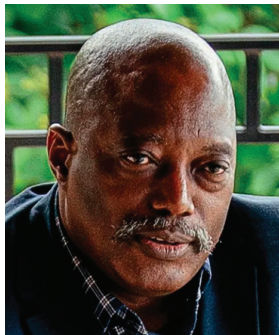


before midnight. Australia's national broadcaster, the ABC, reported that some in the crowd outside the hospital yelled that Lewis needed to face "payback" and accused the police of protecting him. "Payback" is term for traditional punishment under Aboriginal customary law in Central Australia - usually carried out by elders to try and achieve harmony

between Indigenous families and groups. But at a press conference Michael Little an Alyawarre man and Alice Springs local said that traditional payback was "carefully constructed and carried out" rather than seeking quick revenge. "Bringing the word 'payback' into this scenario just fuels violence," he said, "There's a system set up here, where there is a person in cus-

tody and the Western rules will deal with that person." Video from the scene shows crowds throwing items towards police and items being thrown. Several police vehicles appear to have been damaged. Northern Territory Police Commissioner Martin Dole said in an update on Friday morning Lewis had been subjected to a "sustained attack" and was unconscious when police arrived and arrested him. Dole said about 200 people turned on police and paramedics as they responded to reports Lewis was being assaulted. Several people including members of the emergency services were injured, and at least one person had been arrested for attempting to set fire to a police vehicle with more arrests expected.

US imposes sanctions on DR Congo ex-President Kabila alleging rebel support



The US has imposed sweeping sanctions on former Democratic Republic of Congo President Joseph Kabila, accusing him of backing the M23 rebel group. Washington alleges he provided financial support, encouraged defections from the Congolese army and even "sought to launch attacks" on the military from outside the

country. The 54-year-old ex-president, who led DR Congo for 18 years from 2001, has not responded to a BBC request for comment. The US said these latest sanctions were part of a wider effort to support last year's peace deal between neighbours DR Congo and Rwanda that it brokered. Washington also says Rwanda supports the M23 and sanctioned some of its army's leading commanders in March. Kigali denies backing the rebels, despite overwhelming evidence, and says its military presence in the region is a defensive measure against threats posed by armed groups in DR Congo to Rwanda's security.



IPL 2026: Rajasthan Royals sets a target of 225/6 for Delhi Capitals

Riyan Parag scored 90 off 50 balls as Rajasthan Royals posted 225 for 6 after opting to bat against Delhi Capitals in their IPL 2026 game at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, Jaipur, tonight. Yashasvi Jaiswal was dismissed by Mitchell Starc in the first over of the RR innings, while Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was bowled by Kyle Jamieson in the following over. Parag and Dhruv Jurel (42 off 30) then joined hands to bail RR out of trouble, stitching together a 102-run partnership. Parag took his innings deep but missed his maiden century by 10 runs. Donovan Ferreira played a fiery cameo (47 off 14), taking Rajasthan to a massive total. Mitchell Starc was the pick of the bowlers with figures of 3 for 40. Rajasthan Royals captain Riyan Parag ended a nine-game drought for a half-century in the IPL on Friday, achieving the milestone in 33 balls during the match



against Delhi Capitals in Jaipur. Parag, who scored just 117 runs in 9 prior IPL 2026 matches, led his team's charge with a crucial century-plus partnership with Dhruv Jurel. After completing his half-century, Parag gave a muted celebration while looking towards the RR dugout, which got up on its feet to acknowledge their

captain's knock. Parag missed out on his maiden IPL century by 10 runs as he was dismissed on 90 (50) by Mitchell Starc in the 17th over. This knock comes as a huge relief for Parag, who was in the news earlier this week after stirring up a huge controversy in RR's previous match. Parag was caught vaping in the dressing room

during the fixture against Punjab Kings in Mullanpur on Tuesday. The footage went viral instantly, sparking debates over player discipline and the legality of such devices under Indian law. He was fined 25 per cent of his match-fee and handed a demerit point for his act. A press statement from the IPL said, "Riyan Parag, Captain,

Rajasthan Royals, has been fined 25% of his match fee and has also accumulated one Demerit Point for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code of Conduct for Players and Team Officials during Match No. 40 of the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Punjab Kings." "Riyan was found to have breached Article 2.21 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which relates to "conduct that brings the game into disrepute." The incident occurred during the second innings when Riyan was seen using a vape inside the dressing room," the statement added. Riyan admitted to the offence and accepted the sanction imposed by the Match Referee, Amit Sharma. The BCCI is also exploring other options to initiate proceedings for stringent action against the erring team, its officials and player/s to ensure that the reputation of IPL remains intact.

Timberwolves eliminate Nuggets to set up Spurs tie



The Minnesota Timberwolves will face the San Antonio Spurs in the Western Conference semi-finals of the NBA playoffs after eliminating the Denver Nuggets. The Timberwolves won game six 110-98 to win the best-of-seven series 4-2. In a tight contest, the Timberwolves led 57-50 before Denver's Nikola Jokic scored 14 points in the third quarter to set up a close finish. Jokic, voted the NBA's Most Valuable Player on three occasions, ended the game with 28 points and 10 assists, but his performance was overshadowed by his involvement in an altercation with Timberwolves' Jaylen Clark.

"YOU'LL BE ON FLOOR": DID HEINRICH KLAASEN WARN FAN FOR RECORDING HIS FAMILY?

A video of Sunrisers Hyderabad overseas star Heinrich Klaasen allegedly warning a fan for recording him as well as his family without their permission has gone viral on social media. In the video that has been shared multiple times on social media, Klaasen was seen threatening someone and asking them to stop recording. Although the face of the player was not visible in the video, the internet was convinced that it was the wicket-keeper batter from South Africa. He said that the person recording on his phone will be on the floor if he did not stop. "Don't do it, sorry. Listen to me very carefully, don't do it, okay," he said. "I said to you no. Please leave," Klaasen was heard saying in the video. When



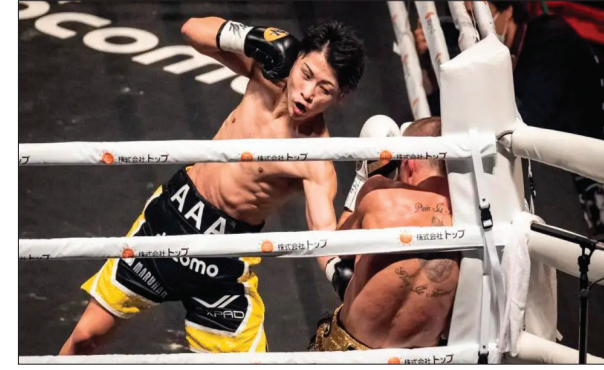
the fan continued to film and said that SRH played well, the cricketer responded - "Thank you very much, but don't take a photo. If I turn around and you take a photo of me and my family, I promise you will be on the floor, okay." Earlier, former South Africa fast bowler Dale Steyn heaped praise on Sunrisers Hyderabad's middle-order

batter Heinrich Klaasen for his scintillating knock against Mumbai Indians and pointed out that the batter is "still right up there as an Orange Cap contender" despite coming out to bat in the middle order. After openers Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head added 129 runs for the first wicket, Klaasen thrashed an unbeaten 65 off

30, while Salil Arora smoked 30 not out off ten balls to hand SRH the fourth-highest successful chase in the IPL and their fifth straight win of the season. Steyn pointed out that Klaasen's numbers are even more impressive considering he does not open the batting and often comes in after the top order has already faced a significant portion of the innings. "The numbers are just insane because he's competing with the guys at the top of the order, the opening batters. If you look at the opening batters from Sunrisers Hyderabad in particular, they get off to incredible starts and do the bulk of the run-scoring. He comes out later and yet; he's still right up there as an Orange Cap contender. It's an exceptional

'I couldn't feel my legs' - what it's like to fight Inoue

It has been described as feeling like an electric shock. That is what it is like to be hit by the boxer known as 'the Monster'. One of the most feared punchers on the planet stands at 5ft 5in and weighs less than 9st. That man is Japan's Naoya Inoue. On Saturday the four-weight world champion and two-division undisputed king will attempt to defend his super-bantamweight titles against compatriot and three-division champion Juntō Nakatani at the Tokyo Dome. Inoue has stopped opponents 27 times in 32 wins and put foes down on the canvas on more than 45 occasions. Along with Oleksandr Usyk, he is one of the greatest fighters in the world. Speaking to those who have fought him, BBC Sport finds out what it is like to face Inoue. The fear factor Paul Butler was a two-



time world bantamweight champion and title challenger at super-flyweight before he faced Inoue in 2022. The Briton held the WBO title that Inoue wanted in his quest to become an undisputed champion at bantamweight. Butler took a deal to travel to Japan to face Inoue in his own backyard. He was preparing with trainer Joe Gallagher at home and the video research had him

winning. "I've got in my mind for 12 weeks, when he hits me it's going to feel like a train hit me," Butler says. "I've got Joe sending me sparring clips of Inoue. He's putting people over with 14oz gloves on and I'm thinking, 'wow, I wonder what he punches like with 8oz gloves on.'" When Butler stood with Inoue, he had renewed confidence because Inoue struggled with the weight cut. "I remember

having a face-to-face with him after the weigh-in and looking and thinking 'How on earth are you knocking people's spark out? Mate, you're tiny,'" said Butler. "Then he got in the ring the next day and he was massive. He had his back to me. I looked at his calves and I thought 'wow - the size of his legs.'" In 2020 Jason Moloney was offered the chance to face Inoue for the IBF and WBA bantamweight titles in a temporary venue known as 'The Bubble' at MGM Grand in Las Vegas. The Australian jumped at the chance. Moloney, who went on to become a WBO bantamweight champion in 2023, describes taking Inoue's best shots. "It's like a shocking power," he says. "You go into the fight - you know he's the Monster. You've seen his knockouts.

AFTER CSK, SHUBMAN GILL DOESN'T SPARE RCB ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The camaraderie between Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli is such that the duo can mock, sledge, and even grill each other on the field, without anyone minding it. As Shubman Gill's Gujarat Titans secured a convincing victory over the Virat Kohli-starring Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday, the bond between the duo was witnessed by fans on numerous occasions. However, it was a post on Instagram by Gill, after the conclusion of the match, that summed up the rapport between India's 'King' and 'Prince'. During the course of



the match, Kohli celebrated Gill's dismissal in an aggressive manner. Gill and Kohli were spotted in an engaging chat after the game, probably over the latter's confrontation with the fourth umpire regarding the controversial catch taken by GT's Jason

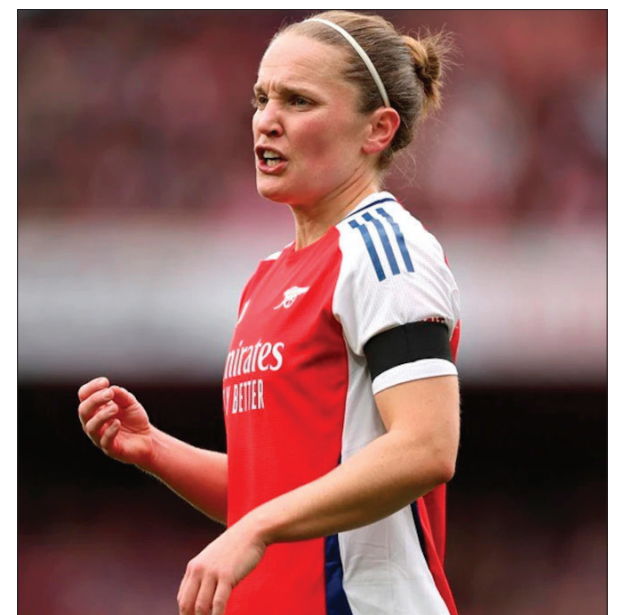
Holder. Taking to Instagram after the match, Gill mocked RCB over their 'Play Bold' tagline while sharing a picture of Kohli. "Play Hold @jasonholder98 Bold performance by team tonight," he captioned the post. After GT's win over CSK a few days ago, Gill had mocked the Rituraj Gaikwad-led franchise in a similar manner.

Former US Open Finalist Kei Nishikori To Retire From Tennis At The End Of This Year



Former world No. 4-ranked and 2014 U.S. Open finalist Kei Nishikori said Thursday on social media that he plans to retire at the end of this tennis season. The 36-year-old Nishikori missed the Australian Open in January with right shoulder pain and has been affected by injuries the last several years. He also missed last year's U.S. Open. Making his professional debut in 2007, Nishikori became the first Japanese player to advance to the final of a Grand Slam men's singles tournament at the 2014 Open in New York, which he lost in straight sets to Croatia's Marin Cilic. Nishikori, who won a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics after defeating Rafael Nadal in three sets, said in early April he was "barely hanging on," referring to his physical condition. "Looking back on everything up to this point, I can proudly say I gave it my all," Nishikori said on X. "I am truly happy to have walked this path."

COLLABORATION KEY TO DEVELOPING WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN INDIA, SAYS KIM LITTLE



Arsenal women's football team captain Kim Little believes that collaboration with global leagues can be a brilliant starting point for growing the women's game in India. The Indian women's football team are ranked 69th in the world right now and although the Indian Women's League (IWL) has been producing a number of talent, a lot remains to be achieved when it comes to the women's game. In a conversation with NDTV, Kim Little, who won the FA Women's Super League as well as the UEFA Women's Champions League with Arsenal, said that India should start making connections with big leagues around the world. "The one thing for me will be to not mimic but connect with the broader women's game across the globe. As a nation

that is maybe not that much developed in the women's game, I think it is useful to connect with countries like the United Kingdom, France, Germany and make connections as well networks. To receive advice or understand the kind of sports infrastructure that is needed is a very good point to start. Collaboration in any form with leagues such as the WSL where the game has grown will be key in my opinion," Kim Little said. The 2024-25 season was extremely special for Little as Arsenal won the UEFA Women's Champions League after beating FC Barcelona in the final. This year, Arsenal are once again playing in the semi-finals of the competition and Kim Little revealed how much that win meant for the history and confidence of the club.

Salah 'Deserves Big Send-Off', Says Liverpool Boss Arne Slot



Arne Slot said Mohamed Salah "deserves a big send-off", confirming he expected the departing superstar to return from injury before the season is over. The Egypt forward, who will leave Anfield at the

end of the campaign, was forced off in last weekend's 3-1 win at home to Crystal Palace, prompting fears he may have played his final game for the Reds. An emotional Salah applauded the fans and was given a standing ovation as he made his way off the pitch. But Liverpool confirmed earlier this week that the 33-year-old had only suffered a "minor muscle injury" and was expected to return to action. Slot's men travel to face bitter rivals Manchester United on Sunday after three straight wins virtually sealed a place in next season's Champions League. "We expect him to be back in the final part of the season, but not for Sunday," Liverpool boss Slot said at his pre-match press conference on

Friday, describing the winger as a quick healer. "In all ways it's a big relief that his injury is minor, so that he's able to play for us, that he's able to play at the World Cup. "And if there's ever a player who deserves to get a big send-off, it's definitely Mo." Salah has scored 257 goals in 440 appearances since his arrival at Anfield in 2017, behind only Ian Rush and Roger Hunt in Liverpool's list of leading goalscorers. He had a public spat with Slot in December, declaring he had "no relationship" with the Dutchman after being dropped for three consecutive games, but quickly returned to the fold. Liverpool, whose Premier League title defence collapsed dramatically from late September, have four games remaining, start-

ing with their trip to face United. The Reds are fourth in the table, three points behind third-placed Manchester United but eight points clear of sixth-placed Brighton. The top five automatically qualify for next season's Champions League. "Right step" - Slot said qualifying for Europe's top club competition was vital after a turbulent season. "I wouldn't say a step forward, but it's the right step to make," he said. "We know how important it is to qualify for the Champions League, for any club, but definitely for our club." The manager was asked whether he had been judged harshly in the light of Liverpool's success last season, when they won the Premier League in his first campaign in charge. "That's for you guys to judge.

Ram Charan's Peddi Wraps Shoot, Set for June 4 Worldwide Release



Mega Power Star Ram Charan, Buchi Babu Sana, Venkata Satish Kilaru, Vriddhi Cinemas, Mythri Movie Makers, Sukumar Writings' Peddi Shoot Wrapped Up, Releasing Worldwide On June 4 Mega Power Star Ram Charan's upcoming rural action drama Peddi, directed by Buchi Babu Sana, wrapped up its entire shooting part. Backed by producer Venkata Satish Kilaru under Vriddhi Cinemas, and presented by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings, Peddi is being mounted on a massive scale. The makers have now surprised fans with a significant update. The movie will arrive in cinemas worldwide on June 4th. The release date poster erupts with raw

fury as Ram Charan stands drenched in blood, sweat, and dust, his face lifted in a primal roar. His tangled hair, wounded visage, and tattered shirt paint a vivid portrait of a man forged in chaos. The entire design radiates unfiltered aggression, making it clear that Peddi is gearing up for an explosive big-screen arrival. < The early-June slot places Peddi perfectly within the tail end of summer holidays, ensuring solid footfalls before the academic season begins. Trade circles are already viewing this date as a smart strategic move that gives the film a strong nationwide runway. The team has completed filming a lavish special number composed by AR Rahman on an extravagant set in Hyderabad, officially

wrapping up the production. This vibrant song is expected to be one of Peddi's standout highlights. Meanwhile, post-production work has already been progressing swiftly in parallel. Ram Charan went all out for the film, which was evident in the first two glimpses that showcased him in two completely different makeovers. He has also pushed himself further in the songs, delivering stand-out dance performances that elevate the film's appeal even more. The film boasts an impressive ensemble cast, with Janhvi Kapoor playing the female lead. Seasoned actors Shiva Rajkumar, Jagapathi Babu, Divyendu, and Boman Irani are set to deliver powerful performances in pivotal roles.

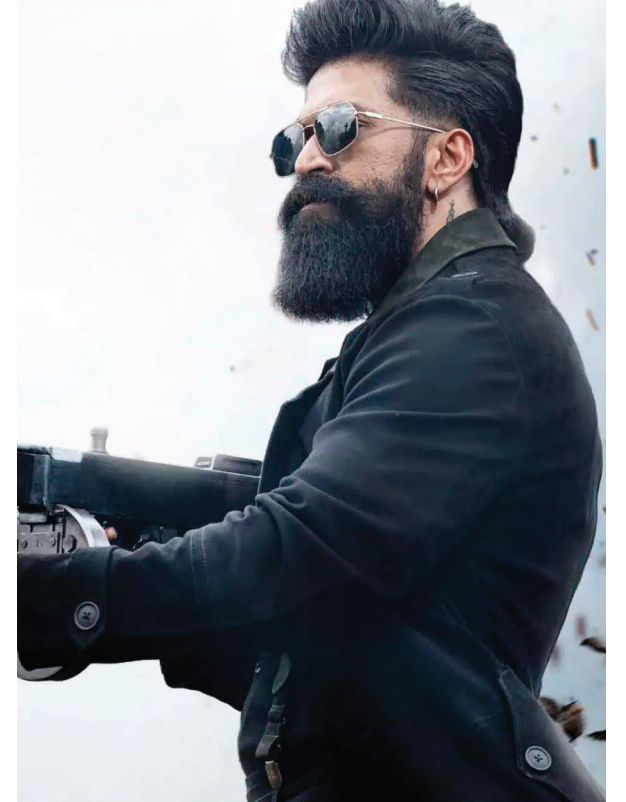
GOD OF MASSES NANDAMURI BLAKRISHNA, SENSATIONAL MAKER KORATALA SIVA'S #NBK112 ANNOUNCED



God of Masses Nandamuri Balakrishna, who is currently filming #NBK111, has officially announced his next venture. The project, #NBK112, brings him together with sensational filmmaker Koratala Siva. The combination itself ignites massive curiosity, as both are celebrated for crafting grand, larger-than-life mass entertainers. Koratala Siva, known for blending high-voltage action with socially relevant themes, has reportedly crafted a script that perfectly complements Balakrishna's commanding screen presence. The poster carries the striking line: "Power Meets Purpose, Mass Becomes A Movement."

Toxic's Worst Turmoil – Can Yash Reignite the Fire?

KGF star Yash's long delayed pan-India biggie 'Toxic' is yet to see the light of the day due to repeated postponements. The gangster drama is supposed to hit the screens on June 4 after getting pushed from March 19. But, the makers postponed it again indefinitely, leaving fans and trade circles disappointed. In fact, nothing went its way from the beginning as the production faced numerous challenges throughout the three year period. The promotional content sparked a few controversies and created some noise around the film all over the country. But, there has been no proper buzz that matched the scale of a pan-India project. Even when the team initially locked March 19 as the release date, there was no big hype for the film. Luckily, it got postponed in the last minute and escaped the Dhurandhar 2 storm at the box office. There was considerable criticism as the film backed out from the race out of fear. In the meantime, whatever little buzz the film has slowly started to fizzle out as the team could not come up with any exciting content to engage the audiences. Amid all this, they announced June 4 as the new date. Still, there is no momentum due to lack of any promotions. In another shocking development, the film has been postponed again, much to the frustration of moviegoers.



It could have been an ideal date, but lack of buzz might have prompted the team to opt for a different date. While they have not announced any new date, the buzz continues to fade away due to all the confusion and uncertainty over the release plans. Overall, it has now been nearly three years since the project was first announced. Due to the inordinate delay, the budget keeps mounting because of interest rates and other expenses. All these negative aspects will have a big blow on the box office outcome if the team fails to amplify the hype before its

release. Though Yash became a pan-India superstar with KGF 2, the current market scenario is quite different from what it was few years ago. Many big budget films are struggling to recoup their investment. So, Yash will need to do the magic with his stardom for Toxic to create more buzz all over so that the openings will be massive in all territories. It all now depends on how well both Yash and his team handle the crisis and move forward. At least they should plan some aggressive promotions to reignite the hype on the film.

MALAIKA ARORA IS BACK AND HOTTER THAN EVER



Malaika Arora is once again ruling the internet with her jaw-dropping new pictures. Dressed in a sharp dark denim co-ord set, a cropped jacket paired with wide-leg trousers, she looks effortlessly bold and stylish. Holding a luxury woven beige clutch, her golden-hour shoot proves she is truly in a league of her own. At 50, Malaika continues to defy age like nobody else in Bollywood. Her chiselled look, glow-

ing skin, and fierce confidence make her one of the most followed celebrities on social media. Fans simply cannot stop talking about how stunning she looks in every frame. On the personal front, Malaika has moved on from her relationship with actor Arjun Kapoor and is now reportedly linked to Harsh Mehta, a successful diamond merchant. Whether it is her fashion or her love life, Malaika always keeps everyone talking and guessing!

Thiruveer Unveils 'Saranamma Saranam' from Bhagavanthudu on International Labour Day

On the occasion of International Labour Day, Hero Thiruveer saluted the working class by releasing the song "Saranamma Saranam" from his upcoming film "Bhagavanthudu." "Bhagavanthudu" stars Thiruveer in the lead role, with Faria Abdullah as the heroine. Kannada actor Rishi will also be seen in a key role. The film is presented by Panasa Shankaraya Goud, and produced by successful producer Ravi Panasa under the banner of Ravi Panasa Film Corporation as Production No. 1. G.G. Vihari is making his directorial debut with this project. The movie is being made as a romantic period political action drama and is gearing up for release soon. Marking International Labour Day today, the makers released the song "Saranamma Saranam." The song is a tribute to the strength of labor. It has been composed with an inspiring tone by HI KP, while singer Kumara Vagdevi has rendered it with deep emotion. Speaking about the song, the makers of "Bhagavanthudu" said, "In our soil, every task begins in the presence of a mother goddess. Before ploughing the fields, we invoke Poleramma; while working on irrigation tanks, we remember Gangamma; and in times of hardship and happiness, we pray to Yellamma. These mother goddesses symbolize the



courage that stands with workers in every drop of their sweat. In our culture, no work begins or ends without seeking the blessings of these divine mothers. 'Saranamma Saranam' is our tribute to these goddesses and to all working communities. It echoes the heartbeat of laborers from the farmer holding the plough, to the blacksmith

with his hammer, to the potter turning the wheel. This song is dedicated to the hands that turn blood into sweat and create life from the soil, and to the tools carried by those hands. It stands as an anthem for the working communities of this country, a life song for those who respect and worship both labor and motherhood.

RHEA CHAKRABORTY WINS, IN COURT AND IN STYLE



Rhea Chakraborty just made headlines again, and this time, it is all good news. A Mumbai special court ordered the unfreezing of her family's bank accounts, which were locked by the Narcotics Control Bureau back in 2020. The court ruled that the NCB failed to follow proper legal procedures under the NDPS Act, making the freezing order legally invalid. Rhea looked every bit the victor she is, stunning in a sharp black blazer dress, bold red lips, and fierce confidence that speaks louder than any courtroom drama. After years of public scrutiny, media trials, and personal battles following Sushant Singh

Rajput's death, Rhea finally has legal relief. Her family's accounts across multiple banks, held by her mother and brother too, are now fully operational. This ruling marks a powerful turning point in a chapter that tested her beyond imagination. Now Rhea is firmly writing Chapter 2, and it is all about business and growth. She has been actively building her brand presence, exploring entrepreneurial ventures, and reclaiming her identity beyond controversy. With her frozen finances now free and her head held high, Rhea Chakraborty is not just surviving, she is building an empire, one bold step at a time!

Jaffer - Getup Srinu fight over casting! Getup Srinu walks out saying "Interview in the skin"!

An incident that took place in a recent personal interview given by popular actor Getup Srinu to journalist Zafar has now become a topic of discussion on social media. The interview, which took place in Mahadevapatnam, started as a fun conversation, but soon turned tense. The situation reportedly changed after Getup Srinu answered a question asked by Jaffer as part of an interview. Srinu responded by saying, "We are Kapulam" at some point, and Jaffer apparently objected to the comment. Jaffer responded by



saying, "You shouldn't talk like that," which reportedly led to an argument between the two. As the controversy escalated, Getup Srinu expressed

extreme impatience and said, "I will not do an interview in this situation," and left the interview midway. It is reported that this incident surprised even those present. After Getup Srinu left, Jaffer seems to have asked, "What did I ask wrong? Why are you getting so serious?" But what is the real question? What is the real reason for the dispute between the two? The matter is yet to be clarified. The truth is likely to come to light if the full video of this incident comes out. This news is currently going viral on social media.