

# Dumani Mail

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## Delhi HC upholds acquittal in 2006 special cell arms and explosives case; dismisses govt's appeal

New Delhi : The Delhi High Court has dismissed an appeal filed by the Government of NCT of Delhi challenging the acquittal of Muraif Qamar and Irshad Ali alias Deepak in a 2006 case involving the alleged recovery of arms, ammunition and explosives by the Delhi Police Special Cell. The Court held that the prosecution failed to establish the respondents' guilt beyond a reasonable doubt and found no infirmity in the trial court's acquittal judgment.

A Division Bench of Justice Prathiba M Singh and Justice Madhu Jain, by judgment dated May 29,

2026, upheld the December 22, 2016, acquittal recorded by the trial court and observed that the prosecution's case lacked credibility. The Court noted that several crucial investigative steps that could have established the authenticity of the alleged recovery were not taken.

The High Court observed that the Central Bureau of Investigation's closure report contained an analysis of the respondents' call detail records, indicating that their mobile phones had been switched off from December 2005. The Court noted that if the Special Cell possessed material

contradicting the CBI's findings, it ought to have produced the same during the trial. The Bench also noted that independent witnesses interviewed by the CBI at Mukarba Chowk were not examined during trial, and the persons allegedly supplying weapons to the accused were neither effectively investigated nor produced as witnesses.

The Court further found significant deficiencies in the prosecution's case, including the absence of independent public witnesses despite the alleged recovery taking place at a busy public location, failure to associate the bus driver and conductor with



the investigation, non-maintenance of records regarding private vehicles used in the raid, and the failure to obtain fingerprints from the allegedly recovered

weapons and explosives. The Bench held that these shortcomings undermined the credibility of the prosecution's version. Referring to settled

principles governing appeals against acquittal, the High Court reiterated that interference is warranted only when the trial court's view is perverse or wholly unsustainable. The Bench held that the trial court's assessment was a plausible view based on the evidence on record and therefore did not warrant appellate interference.

Accordingly, the Court dismissed the Government of NCT of Delhi's appeal, disposed of all pending applications, and ordered that the personal bonds, bail bonds and sureties furnished by the respondents stand discharged.

## Supreme Court invokes Article 142, issues strict timelines to curb delay in High Court judgments

New Delhi : The Supreme Court on Friday invoked its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and issued binding directions to all High Courts to curb delays in the pronouncement of judgments.

A bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant directed all High Courts to pronounce reserved judgments within three months. It ordered courts to deliver bail orders on the same day or, if reserved, on the next day. The Court also directed immediate communication of regular bail orders to trial courts and said that undertrial prisoners granted bail should be released the same day, subject to formalities.

All judgments once pronounced must be uploaded on High Court websites within 24 hours, the Court observed.

The Court further held that the date of pronouncement of the operative part of a judgment will be treated as the date of pronouncement of the judgment itself.

The Court said that the High Courts are the primary institutions where thousands of people flock to seek justice, and the timely delivery of judgments is essential. It clarified that the directions were not intended to cast aspersions on any individual judge or any institution. The judgment came in a case concerning long delays in the pronouncement and uploading of judgments, particularly in the Jharkhand High Court.

## Delhi HC refuses to restore Cockroach Janta Party's X account for now, asks Review Committee to examine blocking



New Delhi: The Delhi High Court refused to immediately restore the blocked X account of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). The account was blocked by the Centre on national security grounds.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke challenged the decision, arguing that only specific objectionable posts should remain blocked, not the entire account. Senior advocate Akhil Sibal sought interim relief and asked the court to review the blocking order. The court declined interim relief for now, saying the issue needs fuller examination after hearing the government's response. It directed the statutory Review Committee under the IT Blocking Rules, 2009, to examine the petitioner's grievances and place its decision on record. The Union Government, represented by Tushar Mehta, opposed the plea. The Centre has been given four weeks to file a detailed affidavit.

## Supreme Court directs all High Courts to pronounce judgment within 3 months of reserving order

New Delhi: The Supreme Court today directed all High Courts across the country to pronounce judgments within three months of reserving them. The Apex Court also noted that delays in the delivery of judgments can cause irreparable harm to litigants. Underlining that faster decisions are required in cases of personal liberty, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said that orders in bail applications should be pronounced the same day, and if they are reserved, they must be pronounced and uploaded the next day. Issuing a slew of directions, the top court said that the order of bail or sentence suspension should be communicated to the jail authorities as soon as it is pronounced, and the under-trial convict should be released, preferably the same day or at most the next day.

## India, China discuss border management, cross-border cooperation at WMCC meeting

New Delhi: India and China held the 35th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs in Beijing on May 27.

The Indian delegation was led by Joint Secretary (East Asia) Sujit Ghosh, while the Chinese side was headed by Hou Yanqi, Director General of the Boundary and Oceanic Affairs Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the discussions were constructive and forward looking. The two sides reviewed the situation in the India-China border areas and expressed satisfaction with the progress made in maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas, which has enabled progress towards gradual normalization of bilateral relations.

The two countries also discussed issues pertaining to delimitation, border management, mechanism building and cross-border cooperation. Indian side stressed on early meeting of the next Expert Level Mechanism on Trans-border Rivers.

India and China agreed to maintain regular exchanges and contacts at the diplomatic and military levels through mechanisms including those that were agreed as part of outcomes of 24th Special Representatives (SR) Talks.

The two sides also agreed to work together to make substantive preparation for the next meeting of the SR, to be held in China.

During the visit, Indian delegation leader Sujit Ghosh also met Liu Jinsong, Director General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and paid a courtesy call on Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Hong Lei.

## Delhi CM Rekha Gupta announces free bus travel for candidates

New Delhi: Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta on Friday announced that candidates reappearing for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) or NEET (UG) 2026 on June 21 will be allowed free travel in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses on production of a valid admit card.

In a post on X, she said the move aims to support candidates appearing for NEET (UG). "No student should face inconvenience on a day that holds such importance for their future. My best wishes to all NEET aspirants. May

their hard work and determination lead them to success," she wrote.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) cancelled NEET (UG) 2026 on May 12, nine days after 2.27 million students sat for the examination across 551 cities, after central agencies confirmed that the question paper had been compromised. Questions had been available on the phones of some as early as May 1, two days before the exam. It was the second time in two years that the NEET (UG) came under a cloud.

## 2 Delhi men stab teenager 4 times, throw him in drain; he survives: Police

New Delhi: A 26-year-old man was arrested for stabbing a minor boy and throwing him into a drain in west Delhi's Paschim Vihar area last week, Delhi Police's crime branch said on Friday.

The accused threw him into a drain at Meera Bagh assuming him dead and with the intention to hide the body.

Police said the two persons, one remains absconding, planned to kill the teenager over suspicions of the minor having a relationship with their sister. The arrested person, identified as Mandeep alias Monu, has a criminal record and was released from jail about two months ago, police said.

Deputy commissioner of police (Crime) Sanjeev Yadav said, "On May 19, the Paschim Vihar East police station received a call regarding a person who had been stabbed multiple times, causing his organs to protrude. The injured person, a minor boy, was found severely injured in a drain at Meera Bagh." He was rushed to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial hospital in a semi-unconscious condition. Before losing consciousness, the minor boy told police that he was stabbed by Shivam and Monu. The minor boy is recovering at the hospital.

A case of attempt to murder was registered, and teams were formed to arrest the alleged attackers. On Thursday, the DCP said, the crime branch's anti-human trafficking unit (AHTU) arrested 26-year-old suspect Mandeep alias Monu, a resident of Uttam Nagar West, from near Bakkarwala Mor in southwest Delhi. Monu was found previously involved in three cases of robbery and assault.

"Monu told the crime branch officials that his cousin, Shivam, told him that one boy was in a relationship with his sister and he wanted to kill him. The two began looking for the perfect opportunity to kill the teenager. On May 18, they spotted him on Arya Samaj Road in Uttar Nagar. They persuaded him to come with them to have a talk, the DCP said.



## IMD issues red alert for thunderstorms, rainfall conditions over Delhi, Haryana, and Chandigarh

New Delhi: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for thunderstorms and rainfall conditions today over parts of Delhi, Haryana, and Chandigarh. Rain lashed over various areas of the National Capital last night, bringing relief from humidity and intense heat waves.

According to the Weather Agency, Bihar, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are likely to experience thunder squalls today with wind speeds



reaching gusting to 80 kilometres per hour. Similar weather conditions will also prevail over Chhattisgarh, Gangetic West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and Karnataka. Heavy rainfall is expected during the day over Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kerala, Mahe, Bihar, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Uttarakhand and West Uttar Pradesh.

Heat wave conditions are likely to persist today in parts of Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Rajasthan and Vidarbha. According to the Met Department, hot and humid weather conditions are likely over Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal.

# Hauz Khas fire: AC malfunction suspected, says DCP after retired IAS officer's death

New Delhi : A malfunction in the air conditioner unit at the home of 80 year old retired IAS officer Dhanendra Kumar in Huaz Khas has been identified as the cause of the blast that led to a fire and his death. South Delhi Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Anant Mittal, said that a fire broke out at a residence in Hauz Khas on the night of May 27, after which two injured persons were rushed to the hospital, one of whom later died.

"At approximately 11:18 pm on May 27, Hauz Khas Police Station received

a call reporting a fire at a residence. Acting immediately upon this information, our team rushed to the scene. It was found that two injured individuals had already been transported to a hospital in a PCR vehicle, and the admission process was underway. Officers who reached the spot attempted to extinguish the fire using water from nearby sources. Shortly thereafter, the fire brigade arrived, and the blaze was brought under control," DCP Mittal said.

He added that the

injured were identified at the hospital, including Dhanendra Kumar, a retired IAS officer of the 1968 batch, who had served in various senior positions in the Government of India and the Government of Haryana.

"Based on preliminary information, it appears that a malfunction occurred in the AC unit installed in his room, resulting in smoke emission and a fire. It is suspected that he collapsed inside the room due to asphyxiation caused by smoke. At the time, family members and domestic staff were present in the house and managed to



bring him out. He was initially unconscious while

being taken to the hospital and later succumbed to his

injuries," the DCP said.

He further said that an



FIR has been registered in connection with the incident under charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder, in view of the suspected electrical malfunction.

"Our primary objective is to conduct a thorough investigation. An electrical inspection of the premises, which has not yet been conducted, will be carried out soon, after which we will be able to submit our final report," he added.

DCP Mittal also said that one of the deceased's sons, who resides abroad, was present at the house for a family function at

the time of the incident.

"He and his wife were in the drawing room when they detected a peculiar smell. They immediately evacuated his mother, who is wheelchair-bound, to safety. They then went back inside to rescue the deceased but were confronted with dense smoke. By that time, police and PCR teams had arrived and immediately provided assistance. The PCR team transported the victim to the hospital, and shortly thereafter, the fire brigade also reached the spot," he said.

# Allegations of Corruption Surface in Newly Formed Rengali NAC, Questions Raised Over Administrative Transparency.

Sambalpur/Rengali, 29/05  
(By Ramakanta Biswal)

The newly constituted Rengali Notified Area Council (NAC) in Sambalpur district, which was expected to usher in improved urban administration and civic services, has come under a cloud of controversy even in its initial phase. Allegations related to irregularities in the appointment of sanitation workers have triggered concern among local residents, though the veracity of the claims remains subject to official investigation.

According to reports, around 35 local men and women were verbally

engaged nearly one-and-a-half months ago for sanitation work under the Rengali NAC through a Kalahandi-based agency named "Sriram Security Agency." The recruitment process was allegedly handled by agency employee Ashish Sahu, while Satya Bag was assigned supervisory responsibilities.

The controversy escalated after a meeting held on May 27, during which 17 sanitation workers were reportedly removed from service on grounds of poor performance. Following the alleged

termination, discontent among workers intensified, bringing the recruitment process under public scrutiny.

Meanwhile, discussions in the locality suggest that Rengali BDO and NAC nodal officer Pritam Kumar Tanti had entrusted local resident Gajindra Sandha with oversight responsibilities related to the sanitation work. Sandha is also said to have acknowledged his involvement in the matter.

More serious allegations have emerged regarding the issuance of appointment letters. Several sanitation workers have alleged that they were asked to pay Rs 20,000



each in exchange for receiving appointment letters. The workers claimed that the money was allegedly sought through Gajindra Sandha. Significantly, reports indicate that Sandha has not

completely denied the allegations, further fuelling public speculation.

The incident has raised wider concerns over transparency and accountability in the

functioning of the newly formed civic body. Residents argue that if such allegations emerge at the very beginning of the NAC's functioning, it could undermine public trust in the institution in the long

run.

Urban local bodies are expected to function with transparency and responsibility, particularly in matters involving employment and public services. Allegations of monetary demands in exchange for jobs, if proven true, could seriously damage the credibility of the administration.

Responding to the issue, Rengali BDO and NAC nodal officer Pritam Kumar Tanti stated that sanitation workers had complained about money being demanded for appointment letters. He said the agency

concerned would be called for an inquiry and appropriate action would be taken after verification of the allegations. Tanti further stated that the agency could even be replaced if any wrongdoing is established, adding that priority would be given to the overall development of Rengali NAC.

On the other hand, agency employee Ashish Sahu has denied allegations of demanding money from workers. The incident has prompted demands for a fair and impartial inquiry by the district administration to establish the truth and ensure accountability.

## VSSUT Student Ekata Priyadarshini Secures All India Rank 1 in GATE Examination

Sambalpur, May 29(DMS) : In a remarkable academic achievement, Ekata Priyadarshini, a final-year student of the Chemical Engineering Department at Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology, has secured All India Rank 1 in this year's prestigious national-level GATE examination.

Her exceptional success has brought pride to Odisha as well as the university, earning widespread appreciation from the academic community.



Following the announcement of the results, a wave of celebration swept across the VSSUT

campus among faculty members, staff, and students.

At a time when many students are increasingly inclined towards Computer Science and IT-related fields, Ekata's outstanding performance in a core engineering discipline has emerged as a source of inspiration for aspiring engineers across the state.

Speaking about her achievement, Ekata credited her parents, teachers, and consistent hard work for the success. She expressed her

desire to contribute to nation-building by joining a reputed public sector undertaking (PSU) in the future.

Several dignitaries, academicians, and well-wishers have congratulated Ekata Priyadarshini for her extraordinary accomplishment, which has once again highlighted the academic excellence of Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology on the national stage.

## Odisha Clerical Association's Triennial Conference Marred by Election Row

Puri: The triennial conference and election of the Odisha Clerical Association was held over two days, on May 26 and 27, at the Gopabandhu Ayurveda College premises on VIP Road in Puri. However, the event ended amid widespread dissatisfaction and allegations of an undemocratic election process.

Prior to the conference, district presidents, secretaries and clerical representatives from various districts across the state had repeatedly demanded that the formation of the new state committee be conducted through a transparent, democratic and constitutionally compliant election process.

According to allegations raised by several members present at the conference, the existing state committee, which has been in office for a prolonged period, did not conduct any formal election

*Hundreds of members present at the venue strongly opposed the move and expressed resentment over what they described as a unilateral and non-transparent decision. They alleged that the process was against democratic traditions, the constitutional values of the association and the rights of its members.*

process on May 27. Members alleged that without seeking the opinion of general members or obtaining the consent of district-level representatives, the committee secretly finalised and announced names for key posts, including state president,

general secretary and other office-bearers among themselves.

Hundreds of members present at the venue strongly opposed the move and expressed resentment over what they described as a unilateral and non-transparent decision. They alleged that the process was against democratic traditions, the constitutional values of the association and the rights of its members.

Sources said that towards the concluding phase of the meeting, several members also indicated their intention to move a no-confidence motion against the self-declared committee.

Following the announcement, many members gathered at the Ayurveda College premises and lodged both written and verbal protests, demanding that fresh elections for the new state committee be

conducted at the earliest in a fair, transparent and legally valid manner.

The protesting members further stated that they would submit written representations to the state government and the Home Department, seeking intervention in the matter.

Members also demanded that until a duly elected committee is formed through a constitutionally valid process, the present self-declared committee should not be granted official recognition by the government and the newly announced office-bearers should be cancelled. The developments have triggered serious debate within the association over democratic practices, organisational transparency and the fundamental rights of members. Notably, members pointed out that a similar process had allegedly been followed during the formation of the previous committee three years ago.

## Minor girl rapist gets 20 years in jail

Keonjhar: Today, Keonjhar special POCSO judge Monalisa Mohanty, while hearing the rape case of an 11-year-old minor girl, sentenced Ajay Kumar Naik (30) to 20 years rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 2,000. For non payment

of fine, the court sentenced him to two years more in jail. The court ordered the district legal service authority to pay compassionate assistance Rs 10 lac to the victim, under victim compensation act in this incident.

According to the special public prosecutor

(pocso) Sanjay Paikary based on all the evidence and witness statement, the court has imposed this sentence under Section 6 of the POCSO Act.

According to the public prosecutor, on July 8, 2022, when the minor girl from Ghatgaon police station area was returning in the evening after having a wedding feast

with her family members, the accused Ajay picked her up and raped her near a pond and fled. The victim was rescued by her family members in bleeding state. After the family members filed a complaint at Ghatgaon police station, a case was registered and arrested him.

## Farmers' Meeting & Soil Testing Card Distribution Organized at Nuagarh Gram Panchayat

Paradip (DMC), 29/5 :- A Farmers' Meeting along with distribution of Soil Testing Cards was organized on Friday at the Gram Panchayat Office, Nuagarh under Kujang Block of Jagatsinghpur District. The programme witnessed active participation of local farmers and agricultural officials.

The programme was conducted in the presence of Debendra Kumar Rout, Sarpanch, Nuagarh Gram Panchayat, J.K. Jena, Officer (Administration), Kulamani Majhi, Principal, CORDET, B. Panda,



Deputy Field Manager and Madan Prusty of IFDC. Around 50 farmers participated in the programme and interacted with the officials regarding

scientific farming practices and balanced fertilizer application. During the last two days, a total of 100 soil samples were tested and Soil Testing Cards were

distributed to the respective farmers. The participants were sensitized on the importance of soil testing for maintaining crop health and improving crop

productivity.

Detailed discussions were also held on the judicious use of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs based on soil test recommendations. The officials highlighted the usage and benefits of IFDC's Nano Fertilizers and encouraged farmers to adopt modern and sustainable agricultural practices for better yield and soil conservation.

The programme concluded with appreciation from the farmers for the initiative and technical guidance provided by the organizing team.

## Political leaders changing Political party- Workers in problem

Jagatsinghpur, Prominent leaders of Jagatsinghpur changing Political party for their own benefit but workers and followers are in problem. Specially the standing MLA and MP of Jagatsinghpur district are successful to achieve their goal by changing Political party. At present other prominent leaders also changing party for better interest. But the workers and followers of frontline leaders are in distress condition.

The present MLA of Tirtol ( SC ) seat Dr. Ramakanta Bhoi was originally in

BJP and contested for MLA in BJP ticket. Later on due to internal dispute he left BJP and joined in BJD. He won as BJD supported MLA in 2024. But he was blamed for cross voting in Rajyasabha Election and suspended from BJD. He may change party in near future as alleged by his followers. Similarly BJD supported MLA Sarada Prasad Jena of Balikuda-Erasama Constituency was originally from Congress Organisation and four time winner of Zilla Parisad as

Congress leader. Latter on he change party and joined in BJD. In 2024 he won as BJD supported MLA from Balikuda-Erasama Constituency. Present BJP supported MLA of Jagatsinghpur Amarendra Das was a strong youth leader of BJD. But he failed to get BJD ticket in 2024 and suddenly joined in BJP and own from Jagatsinghpur Constituency.

Besides three standing MLA of Jagatsinghpur the only MP seat went in favour of BJP in 2024 and Bibhu Prasad Tarai won in 2024.

## River polluted and Farmland damaged after Slurry pipeline burst in Keonjhar Village

Nareish Chandra Pattanayak Keonjhar : A large area of farmland and Aradei River, the lifeline of Sadar block residents, has been destroyed and polluted due to the burst of the iron ore slurry pipeline and leakage of slurry of ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel Company passing through Jogimotha village in Keonjhar Sadar Block. However, the farmers have not received any compensation so far. Additionally, because the scattered iron ore was not cleaned properly, rain washed it away, polluting the nearby Ardei river and surrounding land, dissatisfaction exists in the village.

It was revealed that the iron ore slurry pipeline burst on the night of 23 Jaury 2026, Iron ore

slurry flooded about 1 acre of farmland, destroying it and mixing with the Ardei river flowing near the site of occurrence. This has caused extensive environmental damage. Even after four months of the slurry leaking into the river and fields, no action has been taken against the company for the environmental damage. Iron ore chunks have fallen on the farmland and destroyed the crops. While it is said that the company has compensated the farmers, many affected farmers, including Sanjay Kumar Barik and Tuna Munda of Yogmith village, have complained that they have not received any compensation. Even now, chunks of iron ore lie in the



farmland and have not been cleaned properly so far. As a result, they are washed away in the rain and mix with other farmlands and the river. Consequently, local farmers fear this may affect their future farming. After the incident, two company officials visited the spot and said compensation would be

provided, but the farmers have not received any compensation yet. Iron ore fell in the crematorium of Mishalal Pani village, but it has not been cleaned, said Duryodhan Munda of Yogmith village. Similarly, since the river has not been cleaned, the river is being polluted and the aquatic life

living here is being affected. Similarly, since it has fallen on the farmland and fields, the domestic animals are at risk of being affected, say the locals. The river water is polluted, and aquatic life such as fish, frogs, snakes, crabs, and kochia are dying, while the locals are worried that cattle, buffalo, and forest

animals are getting sick after drinking the polluted water. In this regard, the regional officer of the State Pollution Control Board, Ing Prashant Kar, has asked the company authorities to clean the place completely.

When Sadar Tehsildar Subhendu Kumar Sahu asked, those who have Record of Right (ROR) identifying the affected land have received compensation. But Sanjay Barik said that I have an ROR in my name but I haven't received any help from the company. The company representatives who came here assured compensation payment but did not return to pay it.

The iron ore slurry pipeline burst and leakage of slurry, polluting the Ardei River, which made the color of the water red for 15 days.

The villagers complained that the company took no action to clean the area and river.

It is worth noting that iron ore dust is transported from the iron ore beneficiation plant in Dubuna, Joda block mixed with water, to the pellet plant in Paradip, 253 km away, through a slurry pipe. Iron ore fines have been transported through the slurry pipe line since 2014. However, since 12 years, this old pipe line has repeatedly burst at various places, resulting in red water mixed with iron ore pellets entering the river and fields. As a result, the rivers and farmlands are being polluted, and the residents are expressing concern and demanding the

administration to take steps in this regard.

It has been alleged that such incidents are happening because the slurry pipeline leaks frequently and its health checks are not performed properly. During the summer season, especially from February to June, using river water to transport iron ore lumps in slurry has been banned. Similarly, despite the restrictions, the company is using river water throughout the year instead of using water by constructing rainwater harvesting projects. Due to this water problems are being seen and the rivers are becoming polluted. Hence, environmentalists demanded an inquiry by a technical team to protect the environment and humanity.

# Repeated Incidents at VIMSAR Trigger Public Outrage Against Government Failure.

Sambalpur, May 29(DMS) Amid growing public anger over repeated medical mishaps, alleged negligence, and concerns regarding patient safety at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), a delegation led by Progressive Sambalpur convenor Sanjit Mohanty on Thursday submitted a memorandum demanding justice for Sanket Sahu and an impartial investigation into recent incidents at the hospital.

The delegation visited the Sambalpur District Collector's office and met Additional District Magistrate Sudhanshu Kumar Bhoi, submitting a

memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister of Odisha. Family members of deceased patient Sanket Sahu, including his mother, sister, and brother, were also present and demanded justice over the alleged medical negligence at VIMSAR.

According to the delegation, Sanket Sahu passed away after battling for life for 12 days, raising serious concerns over patient safety, accountability, and the quality of healthcare services at the premier western Odisha medical institution.

The representatives alleged that several disturbing incidents have surfaced in recent weeks, including cases

where patients undergoing minor surgeries reportedly suffered damage to internal organs such as the liver, kidneys, and lungs. Allegations of deaths and critically ill patients being shifted to private ICUs have further intensified public concern.

They also highlighted reports of the deaths of seven mothers within a short span in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department, which they claimed has severely shaken public trust in the healthcare system.

The delegation stated that despite VIMSAR being the primary healthcare institution for lakhs of people in western Odisha, the



hospital continues to suffer from an acute shortage of doctors, vacant specialist posts, weak healthcare infrastructure, and administrative mismanagement. They alleged that the inaction of the state government and health department has become a matter of grave concern.

Progressive Sambalpur demanded:

Justice for Sanket Sahu  
A transparent and impartial inquiry into the incidents

Formation of an independent investigation team comprising senior doctors from outside VIMSAR

Strict action against those found guilty of negligence or misconduct

Immediate filling of vacant doctor posts

Strengthening of patient safety mechanisms and hospital infrastructure

Prominent members present in the delegation included trade union leaders, social activists, farmer representatives, and youth leaders such as Gokul Meher, Saroj Mohanty, Alekhika Pani, and several others.

Sanket Sahu's mother Kajal Sahu and sister Silonjali Sahu also appealed for strict action against those responsible for the alleged negligence.

## Vedanta Aluminium supports 7th State Yogasana Championship in Rayagada, promoting wellness among Odisha's youth

Rayagada, May 28, 2026: Reinforcing its commitment towards holistic community well-being and youth development, Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest aluminium producer, supported the 7th State Yogasana Championship 2026, organised by the Yogasana Sports Association of Odisha (YSAO) at the Biju Patnaik Indoor Stadium, Rayagada, from May 21 to 26, 2026.

The championship brought together nearly 350 athletes from across Odisha, competing across junior, senior and veteran categories in a diverse range of Yogasana disciplines including

traditional, artistic and rhythmic performances, along with specialised balance and flexibility events. The event celebrated physical fitness, discipline and holistic well-being while providing a platform for athletes to showcase their talent and dedication.

Several eminent dignitaries attended the championship including Chief Guest Shri Nabin Chandra Naik, Additional District Magistrate (ADM), Rayagada, and Special Guest Shri Appal Swami Kadraka, Hon'ble MLA, Rayagada. Other distinguished guests included Shri Yella Venkata Raman, PAITDA Rayagada;

Shri Bhajan Lal Majhi, District Education Officer; CA Dibakara Harichandan, State President, YSAO; Shri Manoj Kumar Mukharji, General Secretary, YSAO; Prof. Dr. Dusmant Kumar Mohanty; Dr. Alok Kumar Swain, Competition Director; and Shri Nrusingha Kumar Bahinipati, President, YSAR.

Speaking on the occasion, General Secretary of Yogasana Sports Association of Odisha, Mr. Manoj Kumar Mukharjee said, "We appreciate Vedanta Aluminium's support towards initiatives that promote wellness, sports and community engagement

across Odisha. Yoga is deeply rooted in India's cultural heritage, and such platforms play an important role in inspiring healthier lifestyles, encouraging discipline, confidence and overall well-being among youth."

Vedanta Aluminium actively supports initiatives across sports, wellness, education and culture as part of its larger commitment to community development in Odisha, and has successfully produced national-level archery champions through its Sports Training Initiative in Kalahandi. The company's support to the State Yogasana Championship also

aligns with the spirit of the upcoming International Day of Yoga, encouraging greater awareness around physical and mental well-being through traditional practices.

Through its community development initiatives, Vedanta Aluminium continues to drive impactful interventions across Odisha in the areas of education, healthcare, sustainable livelihoods, women empowerment, sports promotion and rural infrastructure development, contributing towards inclusive and long-term socio-economic growth within the state.

## Higher Education Department Begins AEDP Admission for 2026-27

Bhubaneswar\*29th May, 2026 : The Higher Education Department has issued the notification for admission into undergraduate programmes for the academic session 2026-27. In this context, the admission process for the Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programme (AEDP) has also commenced. "Students can apply for the Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programme through the SAMS portal till 10th June, 2026." The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places special emphasis on skill development and enhancing employment opportunities for students. In line with this objective, the Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programme is playing a significant role in integrating academic learning with industry exposure. "For the academic year

2026-27, AEDP is being offered in 11 subjects, namely Commerce, Home Science, Economics, History, English, Zoology, Mathematics, Library Science, Chemistry, Geology and Botany. Students can enroll in these programmes after completing their +2 education. "The Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programme will provide students with industry experience alongside academic education and help create better employment opportunities for them." The Higher Education Department has informed that students enrolled in the AEDP will be provided with a one-year apprenticeship opportunity during the third year of the course. The programme also includes a provision for payment of stipend during the apprenticeship period.

## NHAI clears ₹58-crore repair plan for 30-year-old sewage pipeline beneath Sohna Road stretch

Gurugram: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has approved the repair of the 30-year-old master sewage pipeline running underneath the Sohna Road's Rajiv Chowk-Sheeshpal Vihar stretch, officials said.

NHAI officials said that a tender for the ₹58-crore Cured In Place Pipe (CIPP) project will be floated within the next three months.

On May 6, a portion of the stretch near Subash Chowk caved in after the pipeline collapsed, prompting authorities to barricade one of the lanes of the main carriageway. This was the sixth cave-in on the same stretch over the past three years due to the debilitated condition of the sewer line.

Yogesh Tilak, project director, NHAI (Rewari PIU) said: "The proposal has been approved. Now we will get the proposed sewer line designed, following which a tender will be floated for the repair. While NHAI will get the line designed, the repair will be carried out under the Gurugram

Metropolitan Development Authority's (GMDA's) supervision, which will also take over the pipeline once the project completes," he said, adding that the designing and tendering process can take around three months.

Tilak said that while the project could take about a year from the date of appointing a contractor, the interim repair of the damaged pipeline and the main carriageway is being taken up. "After the May 6 cave-in, the damaged portion of the road and sewer line was barricaded. The contract for repairing the damage has been awarded and the contractor has started to mobilise the dewatering pumps. The repair will be completed in about a month," he said.

According to GMDA officials, the master pipeline, laid by the Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran (HSPV) around 30 years ago, has deteriorated in the past three years. The sewer line runs about 20 feet below the highway and carries sewage water from sectors 45 to 51 to the Behrampur sewage treatment plant.

## Fire at business complex in Indrapuram; no casualties

Ghaziabad: A major incident was averted after a fire broke out at the Gaur Biz Business Park adjacent to the Gaur Green Avenue near National Highway -9 in Indrapuram late Wednesday night, said officials on Thursday, adding that it took 12 fire tenders to douse the blaze but no casualties were reported in the incident.

On April 29, Gaur Green Avenue residential high-rise that is located at the rear of

the business park, had witnessed a massive fire.

According to officials, the Wednesday night incident engulfed the three-storey building's façade on the outer side. "The building, housing commercial establishments and offices, was filled with smoke. The fire reached the upper floors from ground floor. The firemen had to break the doors' locks in the building to barge in," chief fire officer

(CFO) Rahul Pal told HT.

The fire tenders had reached the spot at 11.55, said officials.

Officials said that it took them over an hour to fully extinguish the fire.

"No loss of life or injury was reported. Only the security staff was present there. Rest of the offices were shut for the night. Initially, it is suspected that a short-circuit probably caused the fire," the CFO said, adding

that about a month ago, there was a massive fire at the adjacent Gaur Green Avenue high-rise.

Last month, the fire at the Gaur Green Avenue gutted eight flats and also caused considerable damage to four to six others. The fire had engulfed the flats located on the eighth to 13 floors.

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath also took cognizance of the incident and prompted the

district magistrate to order an inquiry that later highlighted flaws and also suggested rectification measures.

The department's official data shows a steady rise in fire incidents. The district recorded 921, 1,103, 1,068, 1,607, and 1,437 fire incidents in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively, while 843 fire incidents were recorded between January 1 and May 27 this year.

## 21-year-old man from Baghpat found shot dead in Loni

Ghaziabad: A body of a 21-year-old man was found with several gunshot wounds near Bantla canal in Loni on Wednesday night, and the Ghaziabad police registered a first information report (FIR) for murder on Thursday, said officials.

A team of officials visited the spot after some locals informed police that a body was lying there, they said.

According to police, the man was identified from his personal documents as a resident of Baghpat and later his family was informed.

"The body had three to four gunshot injuries on the chest. It was sent for autopsy. After his family arrived, an FIR under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita section 103(1) for murder was registered at the Loni police station against two suspect brothers," Siddharth Gautam, assistant commissioner of police (ACP) Loni circle, told HT.

In the FIR, a cousin of the deceased mentioned a past dispute with a neighbouring family over their daughter. These two suspects are her brothers, officials said.

"Though no case was lodged over the past dispute, but the two brothers had threatened my cousin. It is suspected that the two shot and murdered my brother. Involvement of more people is also possible in the case and thus it should be investigated," states the FIR, seen by HT as registered at the Loni police station.

## Emergency road along Noida airport runway to be ready before June 15: YEIDA

GREATER NOIDA: The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) will construct an emergency road along a Noida International Airport (NIA) runway and will complete it before the commercial operations begin on June 15, an official said on Thursday.

"A special emergency access road will be built at NIA to deal with any untoward incident, disaster, or emergency situation. This 140-metre-long and 7-metre-wide road will be built in the eastern direction of the runway and will be connected

to the 30-metre cargo road," Shailendra Bhatia, additional chief executive officer (CEO) of YEIDA, told to media.

"The construction work is about to start, and will be completed before flight operations begin," added Bhatia, who is also the nodal officer for the NIA.

He said that, under international standards, alternate emergency access routes are built at major airports so that runways and sensitive areas can be reached more quickly. "Such roads become even more

necessary as the number of passengers and flights is rising," said Bhatia.

According to officials, land acquisition for the road in Dastampur village has already been completed, and compensation has been distributed.

Meanwhile, construction of a 10.75-kilometre-long, 30-metre-wide cargo road is underway, with 8.25 km completed. It will be connected to the 60-metre road running parallel to the Yamuna Expressway and connect the expressway with the cargo hub.

## Strong winds, rain likely to bring mercury down in Gurugram

Gurugram: Gurugram received 'very light' to 'light' rainfall at isolated places on Thursday, bringing partial relief from heatwave conditions that persisted over the past two weeks.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), several parts of the city, including Golf Course Road, Cyber City, Dwarka Expressway corridor and Delhi-Mumbai highway, reported drizzle around 6:30 pm.

Average rainfall of 2.25 mm was recorded during initial hours, however, IMD forecast rainfall likely to continue throughout the night on Thursday.

IMD officials said the weather

activity was caused by two weather systems along with surface heat over the plains. An active western disturbance combined with moist easterly winds led to the forming of thunderclouds, storms and lightning, they added.

MeT department on Thursday afternoon issued a 'red alert', warning residents to stay indoors due to thunderstorm, along with lightning and gusty winds with speed of 70 to 80-kmph.

Rainfall of up to 3.5 mm was recorded at three automatic weather stations till 7:45 pm on Thursday. Wind speed also increased from 10 kmph at

5:30 pm to 25 kmph at 7:30 pm on the Delhi-Gurugram Expressway.

According to IMD's latest forecast, Gurugram is likely to receive moderate to heavy rainfall till Saturday. An 'orange' alert has also been issued, warning residents of continued thunderstorm, lightning and strong winds. "The two days of rainfall is likely to bring temperature down by 6-8°C till June 1," a senior IMD official said.

The city recorded a maximum temperature of 43.4°C on Thursday. Heatwave conditions started on May 14 when the mercury levels reached 37.6°C before soaring to a season's highest of 44°C on May 20.

## World No Tobacco Day Awareness Program Held in Noida

Noida: An awareness program was organized on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day at the community radio station Salam Namaste of IMS, Sector-62, Noida. The initiative aimed to spread awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco and encourage people to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Station Head Varsha Chhabaria said that the campaign focused on motivating citizens to stay away from tobacco consumption and promote better health practices in society.

Dr. Shweta Khurana, Head of the Tobacco Control Cell, informed that the awareness drive was conducted under the health series "Sehat Sahi Laabh Kai" in collaboration with Smart NGO. The campaign highlighted the health risks associated with tobacco use and emphasized the importance of preventive measures and community awareness.

## Farmers' Union Protests Against Exam Irregularities, Demands Action

Noida: Members of the Bharatiya Kisan Union Manch staged a protest at the Collectorate against alleged irregularities in examinations across the country, including the NEET paper leak, cancellation of the SSC examination in Uttar Pradesh, and discrepancies in CBSE answer sheet evaluation. The organization also submitted a memorandum addressed to the President of India. National President Vimal Tyagi alleged that the current government is repeatedly playing with the future of students and youth. He said that instead of providing employment opportunities, the youth are facing hardships and uncertainty.

General Secretary Manvinder Bhati said that several students were pushed towards extreme steps, including suicide, due to the NEET paper leak controversy, calling the situation extremely unfortunate. The organization demanded that if the NEET examination is conducted again, students should be provided free transportation to examination centres along with proper arrangements for accommodation and food by the government. The Bharatiya Kisan Union Manch also demanded the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the issue.

## Stray Dog Attack Sparks Safety Concerns in Greater Noida Society

Greater Noida: A stray dog allegedly bit a security guard at JKG Palm Court Society in Greater Noida West on Friday, raising concerns among residents over safety issues within the residential complex. Society resident Himani Dixit has urged the administration and concerned authorities to intervene immediately and address the growing problem of stray dogs in the area. According to her, the situation has become increasingly unsafe for children, women, and elderly residents over the past few months. She stated that residents have repeatedly faced difficulties due to the aggressive behavior of stray dogs in the society premises.

## Karnataka Change

THE resignation of Siddaramaiah as Karnataka Chief Minister has cleared the way for the elevation of his deputy, DK Shivakumar. Siddaramaiah (77), who completed three years of his current tenure last week, has stated that he stepped down at the behest of the Congress high command. The protests across the state by his supporters show that the transition cannot be treated as a routine change in leadership. Siddaramaiah's exit appears to validate speculation about a rotational power-sharing arrangement following the Congress victory in the May 2023 Assembly elections. Though never officially acknowledged, the understanding seems to have shaped the party's internal dynamics in Karnataka.

It's apparent that the 64-year-old Shivakumar could wait no more for the coveted post. The onus would now be on him to prioritise good governance over the next two years and prepare the party for the 2028 poll battle. A big challenge for the Congress is to retain the support of backward classes, minorities and Dalits — communities which have remained loyal to Siddaramaiah. The outgoing CM's reluctance to accept a central role has made the situation more complicated.

Notably, the Congress had persisted with Bhupesh Baghel as Chhattisgarh CM (2018-23) despite the sustained pressure exerted by his colleague and rival, TS Singh Deo. In Punjab, the party eased out Capt Amarinder Singh from the top post barely five months before the 2022 Assembly elections. The drastic step, aimed at countering anti-incumbency, could not save the Congress from finishing a distant second in the polls. Karnataka is central to the grand old party's southern scheme of things, considering that the BJP is a significant player in the state. The Congress top brass needs to ensure that its gamble strengthens the state party unit rather than sharpening the differences between the camps led by Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah.

## Minerals Pact

THE critical minerals framework, backed by nearly \$20 billion in public and private investment, is a key initiative by the Quad, which is struggling to stay relevant amid a bipolar world order. The member nations — India, the US, Japan and Australia — have signalled that the pursuit of strategic resources is no



longer merely economic — it is deeply geopolitical and security-driven. The latest pact is prompted by China's overwhelming dominance in rare earths and critical minerals — resources vital for electric vehicles, semiconductors, batteries, drones and advanced defence systems. With China accounting for nearly 70 per cent of global rare earth mining and possessing significant processing capacity, many nations have become vulnerable to supply disruptions and export controls.

As India makes a push for clean energy, digital manufacturing and defence modernisation, access to reliable supplies of lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth elements has become a strategic necessity. The separate India-US agreement on mining, processing, recycling and investment demonstrates New Delhi's intention to reduce dependence on China while integrating itself into trusted global supply chains.

Importantly, the initiative is not limited to resource extraction. It includes financing mechanisms, export credit support, recycling technologies, geological mapping and cooperation against unfair trade practices. Indeed, critical minerals require an entire ecosystem, not isolated mining projects. The Quad's broader agenda — covering maritime security, energy resilience and Indo-Pacific infrastructure — indicates that it is evolving into a more concrete coalition. China's criticism of "exclusive groupings" and "bloc confrontation" is not surprising. Yet Beijing's own use of export curbs has energised the very counterbalancing alliance it opposes. The Quad's challenge now is to implement the ambitious agreement on critical minerals. Large investments, regulatory coordination and sustainable mining practices will determine whether this framework becomes a viable counter to Chinese hegemony.

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# A Book that Lingers in the Mind

Prasanna Mishra

Bhaskar Parichha's book 'ODISHA: 500 Years of Turmoil, Mayhem and Subjugation' is not a conventional history book. It is at once a narrative of political decline, a meditation on civilizational endurance and an emotional inquiry into Odisha's historical memory. The work attempts to traverse nearly five centuries — from the fall of the Gajapati Empire to the making of modern Odisha — while asking a deeply unsettling question: how did a region once associated with military strength, maritime contact and cultural confidence descend into prolonged political fragility and subordination?

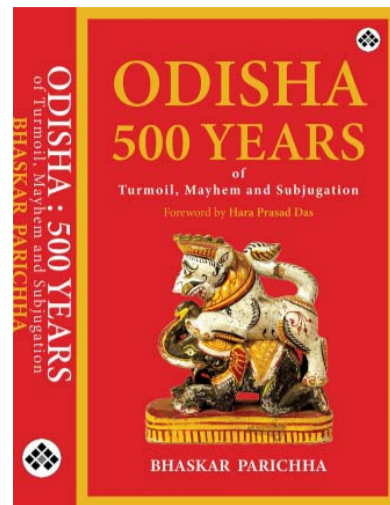
The book deserves attention not merely because it narrates Odisha's past, but because it attempts to recover a wounded civilizational consciousness that contemporary Odias often sense emotionally but rarely articulate historically.

The title itself establishes the emotional grammar of the work. The words turmoil, mayhem and subjugation are not neutral historical categories; they reveal the author's interpretive lens. Parichha views Odisha's last five centuries less as a sequence of dynastic changes and more as a prolonged experience of destabilization.

Mainstream Indian historiography has often treated Odisha peripherally — remembered for Jagannath, temple architecture or occasional rebellions, but rarely examined as a civilization confronting repeated political disruptions. The book seeks to correct this silence.

Particularly striking is the recurring concern surrounding the Jagannath Temple. The movement of the deities during periods of danger becomes in the narrative a metaphor for Odisha itself — displaced politically but struggling to preserve its sacred center.

This is one of the book's profound strengths. Parichha recognizes that Odisha's continuity cannot be understood



merely through political history. Jagannath culture served as an emotional and civilizational anchor during periods when political sovereignty was lost.

A fuller examination of administrative accommodation, regional alliances, and social continuities under Mughal rule might have added nuance. Medieval India was rarely a simple binary between conqueror and victim.

Still, the emotional truth conveyed by the author remains significant: Odisha experienced repeated invasions not merely as territorial losses, but as assaults upon collective confidence.

Perhaps the most intellectually suggestive aspect of the book is the recurring role of Lord Jagannath throughout the narrative. The temple is not treated as only a religious institution. It emerges instead as the enduring axis of Odia identity.

This insight gives the book philosophical depth.

Political regimes changed repeatedly — Afghans, Mughals, Marathas and British all exercised control over Odisha at different times — yet Jagannath remained the emotional center around which society reorganized itself. The author implicitly argues that Odisha survived culturally because it possessed

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a spiritual center stronger than transient political authority.

Maratha phase was historically significant. It represented a period when Odisha was neither fully autonomous nor yet absorbed into colonial structures. Revenue systems, temple administration, and military arrangements during this era influenced later developments considerably. A deeper engagement with how Maratha administration altered Odisha's economy and political culture would have enriched the work substantially.

Parichha writes with journalistic fluency and narrative ease. The prose remains lucid throughout, making the book accessible even to readers unfamiliar with Odisha's historical chronology.

This readability is one of the book's greatest strengths. History here does not feel imprisoned within academic language. The narrative breathes with urgency and emotional involvement.

Yet accessibility sometimes comes at the cost of analytical depth. Certain themes are introduced suggestively but not fully developed. Scholars seeking detailed historiographical engagement may therefore find the work interpretively uneven.

But such criticism should remain proportionate. The author's objective is clearly broader public historical consciousness rather than specialized

academic intervention.

What finally gives the book its enduring significance is the deeper question it asks beneath the historical narrative.

Can a civilization survive politically through cultural resilience alone?

Odisha repeatedly lost political sovereignty, economic strength, and administrative control. Yet it retained language, ritual continuity, sacred geography, and collective memory. The book suggests that civilizations do not survive merely through armies or empires; they survive through institutions of meaning.

At the same time, the narrative carries a warning. Cultural resilience without political and economic vitality may preserve identity, but it cannot prevent prolonged subordination.

ODISHA: 500 Years of Turmoil, Mayhem and Subjugation is more than a historical chronicle. It is an attempt to reclaim Odisha's memory from neglect and fragmentation. The book may not satisfy every academic expectation in terms of analytical rigor or historiographical sophistication, but it achieves something equally important: it makes Odisha's past emotionally alive.

Parichha compels readers to confront not only what happened to Odisha, but why historical memory matters at all.

The work reminds us that societies decline when they lose political cohesion, strategic clarity, and collective purpose. But it also reminds us that cultural depth can sustain a civilization through centuries of adversity.

In that sense, the book is not merely about the past. It is also about the anxieties and aspirations of present-day Odisha — a society still attempting to reconcile historical greatness with contemporary uncertainty.

And perhaps that is why the book lingers in the mind long after it is finished!

(The writer is a former IAS officer)

## Bengal Elections: Dawn of Political Binary

Sarat Kumar Mishra

Now that the BJP has won the West Bengal elections by trampling TMC, the moot question arises who are the men and what are the factors behind a landslide victory. The BJP Tsunami in W.B is a watershed moment in Indian political arena. After, 75 yrs of birth of Jansangh, the initial Avtar of BJP, a befitting tribute by the party has been paid to Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the founding father.

It took long years to achieve this feat which was considered almost impossible in a pluralist state. The astounding victory of BJP and the decimation of TMC flabbergasted many journalists and political pundits as they grapple for decoding the under current which they could not sense or see. Reasons are many but some are genuinely extraordinary but still rarely discussed. Men behind the show and Bangladesh happenings constitute the soul of extraordinary reasons.

The frontal face is the men forming the core in the strategy room and the workers themselves at all levels depending on their status and reach. They left no stone unturned to script a new chapter in the political history of the cultural capital of India. Narendra Modi, the mass leader and a great communicator was the poster boy behind whom people rallied.

Amit Saha, the strategist par-excellent addressed a number of rallies and worked 16 hrs a day to minutely look after the candidate selection and campaign management to leave no weak links or a vacuum. Yogi Adityanath and Hemanta Bishwa Sharma, the firebrand CMs addressed many rallies and contributed immensely in Hindu vote consolidation.

Subhendu Adhikari, effectively countered Mamata's propaganda, 'outsiders cannot protect Bengali pride and self respect'. He successfully flared up the gruesome rape incident at R.G Kar medical college, exploitation of women at Sandeshkhali, riot of Murshidabad, forcing Hindus to leave their ancestral place to create a havoc in Hindu minds to think about their vulnerability in TMC rule. Deteriorating law and order, women feeling unsafe in the state, a partisan bureaucracy and police administration steadily antagonised sentiment of the women against the TMC.

As Hindus felt strangled, repressed and neglected in their own land, they easily aligned and found sense



in what BJP propagated. The trio, Sunil Bansal Bhupinder Yadav and Biplab Deb tirelessly worked behind the scenes. Bansal was the master strategist in booth management and vote consolidation. Both Yadav and Deb worked shoulder to shoulder to minutely plan the place, time and date of visit of BJP stalwarts and their rallies paving the road of success.

The grass root workers were real heroes who cared not for their lives and withstood the TMC onslaught to dispel the fear factor among the Hindus and get their united support in favour of BJP. The role of the RSS cannot be ignored. More than 1.65 lakhs family meetings, 12,500 Kamal Mela or Nukkad Sabhas at different places were conducted in 2-3 months to drive home the point, why the people should vote BJP to power. The relentless efforts made by these people, the sweat they perspired, the pressure and threat they absorbed culminated in 4th May results as a staggering 207 seats went to the saffron kitty.

An important catalytic agent found its lineage in Bangladesh where the radicalised youths orchestrated the ouster of Sheikh Hasina's Govt and with blessings of the USA, Md Yunus took over the interim rein. He did not control the fundamentalists and the radicals who went on spilling venom against India. These people in Bangladesh perpetrated atrocities on Hindus and endangered their lives and properties.

Heartbreaking stories, images of arson and riots bearing testimony to the plight of Hindus poured in to perturb all and particularly Hindus in W.B. The bigot clerics easily brainwashed the disenchanted youths to spread anti-India feelings with the ulterior motive of

bashing the Hindus in Bangladesh. BJP framed narratives of Hindu vulnerability, their dim and grim future where intolerant Muslim outnumber them.

The story does not end there as thousands of Bangladeshi Muslims illegally infiltrate into West Bengal through porous border. TMC workers help them to legalize their stay and enlist their names in voter list. In return, the TMC solicited their unflinching support and en bloc voting. In the grab of secular identity, the demographic change is deliberately overlooked by TMC to inflate its vote bank.

The internal turmoil in Bangladesh and attacks on Hindus naturally invoked the memory of historical trauma of religious persecution. One may argue that the BJP took advantage of the situation to evoke a political spark through emotional appeal to awake the people to act against the demographic shifts before it became too late.

The germinating thoughts of religious binary were bolstered by an atrocious incident in Bangladesh. Dipu Das, an ordinary garment worker was lynched and burnt alive by ascribing blasphemy. This heinous and horrendous act hit straight into the hearts of all Hindus in general and those in W.B in particular. This shook many hearts and the seething discontent against what was happening in the border country got a spark to ignite.

A massive but peaceful gathering of thousands of Hindus accompanied by Sadhus erupted and the crowd marched on the streets of Kolkata to meet the Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh to register their protest against the dastardly act. The West Bengal police brutally lathi charged the gathering including the women. These images of police action went viral to

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create further anger in Hindus.

Their conviction of Muslim appeasement by TMC Govt got petrified to alienate millions of Hindus from Mamta and consolidate in favour of BJP. The party latched onto the opportunity and its Yuva Morcha president Arun Shaw raised a serious question before the public urging them to visualise the irony that the TMC Govt neck deep in Muslim appeasement did not allow a protest against a ghastly act.

Subhendu Adhikari with five delegates called on the Dy High Commissioner and raised strong objections to religious persecution of Bangladesh Hindus. By launching a scathing attack on Mamta Govt he expressed concern and apprehensions about the hidden agenda of Mamta Raj. The Hindus aligned themselves with this narrative imagining a dreaded future for them in TMC Raj.

In addition, the Matua magic, SIR by the ECI and tactical deployment of more than 2.40 lacs of central forces played pivotal roles for which the tectonic shift took shape in a pluralist society giving way to Hindu-Muslim electoral binary to be reflected in election result.

(The writer is a former banker)

## Delhi CM Offers Free Bus Ride To Students Taking NEET-UG 2026 Re-Test On June 21

New Delhi, 29/5: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday promised free travel in DTC buses for all students appearing in the NEET-UG 2026 retest on June 21. Showing a valid admit card for an exam centre will allow the students to travel in public transport buses for free, said an official. In a message on X, the Chief Minister said, "To support candidates appearing for NEET (UG) 2026 on June 21, the Delhi government will provide free travel in all DTC buses upon presentation of a valid admit card." "No student should face inconvenience on a day that holds such importance for their future. My best wishes to all NEET aspirants. May their hard work and determination lead them to success," said the Chief Minister. The National Eligibility



cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate 2026, or the qualifying exam to join an MBBS course held earlier on May 3, was cancelled by the National Testing Agency over allegations of irregularities. The CBI is investigating the matter. In another

development, the Delhi Chief Minister warned officials that there is no place for negligence and issued directions to improve public facilities at the sub-registrar's office in Rohini. After a surprise visit to the office, the Chief Minister said,

"Government offices are centres for public convenience. It is our responsibility to provide citizens with a respectable, clean, and well-organised environment." In a message on X about her visit, she said, "Instructions have been given to address all shortcomings on a priority basis and ensure concrete improvements in the arrangements. There is no place for negligence." She said, "Today, an unannounced inspection was conducted at Ambedkar Bhawan, Rohini, of the e-Sabha Registrar Office of the Revenue Department, VI-A (Model Town, Pitampura) and VI-C (Rohini). During the inspection, several shortcomings were found in cleanliness, toilets, lighting arrangements, seating facilities, and other citizen amenities."

## Union Health Secretary Unveils App For Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions

New Delhi, 29/5: Reaffirming the Central government's fight against tobacco and nicotine addiction, Union Health and Family Welfare Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava on Friday launched the pilot version of the Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI) Application. The Health Secretary said that the ToFEI app is a digital initiative aimed at strengthening implementation and monitoring of tobacco-free norms across schools and colleges in the country. Speaking at an event to mark World No Tobacco Day 2026, Srivastava said that the ToFEI app is a digital initiative aimed at strengthening implementation and monitoring of tobacco-free norms across schools and colleges in the country. Srivastava stated that this year's theme for World No Tobacco Day, "Unmasking the Appeal - Countering Nicotine and

Tobacco Addiction", is especially relevant in the context of protecting young people and future generations from the harmful effects of tobacco and nicotine addiction. The national event was organised under the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), said a statement. Srivastava said the app is designed to facilitate self-assessment and reporting by educational institutions and monitoring of compliance with ToFEI guidelines. It will help implementation of tobacco control signage requirements; prohibition of sale of tobacco products within 100 yards of educational institutions; awareness and sensitisation activities for students and teachers; and strengthening enforcement of tobacco-free campus measures, she said. The digital platform is expected to support states/UTs, educational institutions, and programme

officials through standardised monitoring, reporting, and compliance assessment mechanisms, thereby enhancing accountability and promoting healthier, tobacco-free environments for children and adolescents, said the statement. The pilot implementation of the application in three states — Rajasthan, Meghalaya, and Maharashtra — will help assess operational feasibility, strengthen implementation and reporting mechanisms, and inform future scale-up of the platform across the country, it said. On the occasion, the Ministry also released the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Sample Collection of Tobacco Products, aimed at strengthening surveillance, regulatory compliance and quality assurance related to tobacco products.

## Delhi High Court Upholds TRAI's 12-Minute Cap On TV Advertisements

New Delhi, 29/5: The Delhi High Court on Friday upheld the validity of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) regulations capping television advertisements at 12 minutes per clock hour. A division bench of Justices Anil Kshetrapal and Amit Mahajan dismissed a batch of petitions filed by general entertainment, news, and regional broadcasters challenging Rule 7(11) of the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994, and Regulation 3 of the Standards of Quality of Service (Duration of Advertisements in Television Channels) Regulations, 2012. Observing that television viewers cannot skip or fast-forward advertisements in the same manner as users of digital platforms, the Delhi High Court said excessive or uneven advertising directly impairs consumers' right to a fair viewing experience.

## ED Attaches Unitech Golf & Country Club Assets Worth Rs 634 Crore In Noida

New Delhi, 29/5: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached properties worth Rs 634.12 crore linked to the Unitech Golf & Country Club (UGCC) project in Noida under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), an official statement said on Friday. The attachment order was issued on Wednesday, May 27, by the ED's Headquarters Investigation Unit (HIU), and it pertains to the UGCC project spread across Sectors 96, 97 and 98 in Noida. According to ED, the assets were identified as "proceeds of crime" allegedly generated through the diversion of funds collected from homebuyers and financial institutions. The attached assets include leasehold rights over around 347.83 acres of land as well as equity shareholdings held through consortium and Special Purpose Company (SPC)



structures involving M/s Sungrace Products (India) Pvt Ltd of the Uflex Group and M/s CIG Infrastructure Pvt Ltd. The ED said the current fair market value of the attached assets linked to the UGCC project is estimated at around Rs 8,115 crore. The money laundering probe is based on 76 FIRs registered by Delhi Police and the CBI against Unitech Limited, its promoters, directors

and others under various sections of the IPC and the Prevention of Corruption Act on charges including cheating, criminal conspiracy and diversion of homebuyers' funds. According to ED, the investigation revealed that Unitech had received Rs 16,075.89 crore from homebuyers, investors and financial institutions, of which nearly Rs 7,794.35 crore was allegedly diverted for non-

mandated purposes. The agency further alleged that M/s Sungrace Products (India) Pvt Ltd and M/s CIG Infrastructure Pvt Ltd derived and continued to retain substantial economic interests in the UGCC project without making corresponding financial contributions towards the acquisition or development of the project. So far, the ED has attached 1,296 movable and immovable properties worth Rs 2,281.07 crore in the broader Unitech case. The agency said one main charge sheet (prosecution complaint) and two supplementary charge sheets have already been filed before the Special PMLA Court in Delhi, while further investigation is underway. The ED said it remains committed to securing and restituting proceeds of crime to innocent victims and lawful claimants in a transparent and expeditious manner.

## US Delegation To Visit India Next Week To Advance Trade Talks: MEA

New Delhi, 29/5: A United States trade team is expected to visit India next week to take forward ongoing negotiations between the two countries, with both sides maintaining positive and constructive engagement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India and the US had earlier held discussions in April when an Indian trade team visited the United States, adding that the next round of talks will continue during the upcoming visit. We had a trade team that visited the United States in the month of April, if I am not mistaken. We are now expecting a team from the United States to visit India next week, where the negotiations will be taken forward," Jaiswal said. He added that so far the engagement between the two sides has been "positive and constructive" and said more details would be shared later. The MEA, however, did not provide further details on the agenda of the upcoming discussions but indicated that trade negotiations between the two sides are progressing in a constructive manner. Responding to a query on a viral video allegedly showing racism against Indians in the United States, Jaiswal said he had not seen the specific post but reiterated India's position on such issues. "I have not seen the post. However, racism of any kind, anywhere, is unacceptable," he said. Meanwhile, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gorr, speaking at an event in New Delhi, said no partnership is better placed than India and the US to leverage new opportunities, including in the technology domain, adding that the India-US relationship is a defining partnership of the 21st century. Earlier in May, the government had said that the US trade team, led by the chief negotiator, will visit India from June 1-4 to finalise details of an interim agreement and take forward negotiations under the broader bilateral trade agreement covering areas such as market access, non-tariff measures, customs and trade facilitation, investment promotion and economic security alignment.

## PM Modi himself monitoring NEET-UG paper leak issue: Centre informs Supreme Court

New Delhi, 29/5: The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Centre - Ministry of Education, to file a separate affidavit detailing the devising of a mechanism by which the process of conducting and concluding NEET examinations would be institutionalised by the NTA on a year-to-year basis. A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said that the affidavit must explain how institutional memory and expertise would be developed within the National Testing Agency (NTA) through the deployment of specialised personnel and a broad-based composition of experts. The Court observed that the endeavour must be to ensure that the NTA "possesses the necessary physical as well as intellectual wherewithal to prevent the recurrence of incidents such as the NEET examination controversies of 2024 and 2026". The affidavit has been directed to be filed within six weeks. During the hearing, the Court noted the response (affidavits) filed by the NTA and the Chairman of the High Powered Committee, Dr K Radhakrishnan. Notably, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, informed the Court that "the Prime Minister himself is monitoring the issue." The bench, however, questioned how the alleged failure occurred despite regular monitoring and meetings by the High Powered Committee. "Have you been having regular meetings? How did this failure occur despite all the monitoring?" the Court asked. Dr K Radhakrishnan and



counsel representing the NTA, responded that the High Powered Committee had made around 60 recommendations, many of which had already been implemented. The Court was informed that certain procedural reforms are still pending and would be implemented before the rescheduled NEET-UG examination. Justice Narasimha, however, expressed concern over the effectiveness of the monitoring mechanism. "Then there is something wrong with the original recommendations, or there has not been effective monitoring. How did this occur?" the bench observed. The Court also raised concerns regarding accountability within the NTA system. "Accountability has not been put in place. Accountability would be effective only when you identify on whose shoulders the responsibility lies," the bench observed. The Court further remarked that "diffused obligation" ultimately results in responsibility being shifted generally towards the government. Stressing the need for institutional reforms, the bench

observed, "Institutional reforms, not individuals. Irrespective of people coming or going, there must be something that evolves within the system." The Court also highlighted the emotional impact of repeated examination controversies on students and families. "It is actually very traumatic. Not just for students but for families. There is an investment of years of study and emotions," the bench observed. The Court further remarked that India has created "world-class institutions" such as the UPSC and said similar institutional strength and credibility must be developed within the NTA. In its order, the Court recorded that pursuant to its earlier directions, the Director of the NTA has filed an affidavit indicating the manner in which the recommendations of the High Powered Committee were being implemented in relation to the conduct of NEET-UG 2026. The Court also noted that Dr K Radhakrishnan, who heads the steering committee, had filed a separate affidavit detailing the future course of action.

## Rahul Gandhi Seeks Judicial Inquiry Into CBSE's Contract With Firm For OSM

New Delhi, 29/5: Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday made fresh allegations of discrepancies in the CBSE's process for awarding a contract for the On-screen Marking Scheme (OSM), seeking a judicial inquiry into the decision to pick an allegedly ineligible EdTech company for the task. Sharing a news clipping on social media, Gandhi countered attacks on him by BJP Ministers for raising the issue and questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence and "inaction against the Education Minister". In the post, which came a day after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan owned up responsibility for the glitches in the CBSE evaluation system for Class 12, the Congress leader made the insinuation that the contract for OSM was not awarded. Accusing the government of showing unnecessary haste to implement the OSM system from this year, Gandhi alleged that a company



called COEMPT was awarded the contract instead of TCS and several terms were diluted to favour the former. "Pradhan ji and CBSE say 'due process was followed'. That is not an answer; that is not accountability. The question is whether the contract was honestly awarded to the best company which could do the job correctly. The futures of 18.5 lakh

children were handed to a company that could only qualify after the rules were bent for it," said Gandhi. "To the BJP Ministers attacking me for asking questions - I have, from day one, demanded an independent judicial probe. Expand it from CBSE to every contract awarded to COEMPT. Our youth deserve the truth," said Gandhi. The Central

Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Union Education Minister have admitted glitches in the case of some students and promised to improve the system. The case of a Class 12 student who was mistakenly sent another candidate's Physics answer sheet sparked a nationwide debate on transparency and fairness in digital evaluation, raising wider concerns about systemic reliability. In his defence, the CBSE on Wednesday rejected Gandhi's allegations of impropriety over its contract with a particular education technology firm. "It is erroneous, misleading, and not based on facts," the CBSE posted on social media platform X. "CBSE has followed the General Financial Rules protocols scrupulously in awarding the contract to the agency. CBSE floated the RFP for Digital Evaluation of Answer Books for Board Exams 2026 on the Central Public Procurement portal on August 28, 2025, and awarded the contract to the qualified bidder," it stated.

## Govt Notifies Two New Special Economic Zones In Puducherry

New Delhi, 29/5: The Union government has notified two new Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Puducherry as part of the continued push towards strengthening the country's industrial base, expanding exports, and deepening self-reliance in strategic sectors, according to an official statement issued on Friday. The proposals were approved by the Board of Approval for SEZs under the Department of Commerce at a meeting held on Thursday. These approvals constitute a major milestone for Puducherry's industrial

and export-led growth strategy and are expected to expand opportunities for investment, manufacturing, and high-quality employment, the statement said. Out of these two SEZs, one IT/ITES SEZ will be developed by M/s Oulgaret Municipality at Thattanchavady village in Oulgaret Taluk. This will be the first SEZ in India to be developed by an Urban Local Body such as a municipality. The SEZ will come across an area of 8.623 hectare with a proposed investment of RS 725 crore. It is

expected to create as many as 3,500 direct and indirect jobs. The other, a Multi-Sector SEZ, will be developed by M/s Pondicherry Industrial Promotion Development and Investment Corporation (PIPDIC) at Karasur village in Villianur Taluk. "The SEZ with a proposed investment of Rs 1,250 crore will be built on an area of 86.2457 hectare. It is expected to create employment for 5,000 people both in the direct and indirect categories," the statement noted.

# NSA Doval Visits Russia's National Space Centre In Moscow, Interacts With ISS Crew

Moscow, 29/5: National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval on Friday visited Russia's National Space Centre in Moscow along with the country's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov. At the space centre named after the world's first female cosmonaut, Vera Tereshkova, NSA Doval also spoke live with the Russian crew on the International Space Station (ISS). According to the Russian state space cooperation Roscosmos, NSA Doval and Manturov toured the space technology exhibit, including models of the world's most powerful four-chamber liquid rocket engine and the base module of the Russian Orbital Station (ROS). "Representatives from the two countries then visited the Roscosmos Joint Industry Information Center (JIIC). It was created to monitor and analyze large volumes of data related to the rocket and space industry and will also house the management of the future ROS," Roscosmos



stated. NSA Doval and Manturov then spoke live with the Russian ISS crew — Sergei Kud-Sverchkov, Andrey Fedyaev, and Sergey Mikayev. The cosmonauts spoke about their spacewalk on May 27. Videos of NSA Doval having a close look at the official car of Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, the first human to journey into space in 1961, also

went viral on social media. NSA Doval and Manturov also held a meeting on India-Russia space cooperation during their visit to the space centre. The National Security Advisor is visiting Moscow to attend the two-day first International Security Forum and the 14th Meeting of High Representatives for Security Matters hosted by Secretary of

the Security Council of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu. On Thursday, while addressing the gathering of NSAs and security chiefs of several countries, NSA Doval stated that there cannot be any double standards in the fight against terrorism and responsible nations have to evaluate their choices in deciding whether they support

sponsors of terrorism or counter them with decisive action. He also called for special attention to the situation in West Asia, asserting that it is essential to ensure the safe and uninterrupted movement of trade through international waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea. "During the deliberations, the NSA stated that there cannot be double standards in the fight against terrorism. Responsible nations have to evaluate their choices and decide whether they support sponsors of terrorism or counter them with decisive action," the Indian Embassy in Russia posted on X while highlighting NSA Doval's comments at the forum. NSA Doval also met Shoigu on the sidelines of the forum on Thursday. "They reviewed ongoing cooperation in defence, security, energy and economic ties. The two sides also exchanged views on the upcoming BRICS NSA meeting in New Delhi," the Indian Embassy stated. NSA Doval will also have more bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the Forum, later on Friday.

# India-Bound Oil Tanker Crosses Strait Of Hormuz

New York, 29/5: An oil tanker carrying sorely needed petroleum for India has cleared the Strait of Hormuz, according to several sites that track maritime traffic. The Nissos Keros is on its way to Vishakhapatnam and is expected to reach its destination on June 3, according to multiple sites. The ship, flying under the Marshall Islands flag, left Shajrah on May 21 and was reported at 6 am Indian Standard Time on Friday in the Northern Arabian Sea off the west coast of India. Iran's news agency IRNA reported on Thursday that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) Navy allowed 23 commercial vessels, including oil tankers and container ships, to pass through the Strait of Hormuz in the previous 24-hour period. It said that according to the Iranian military, "all transits were conducted following formal coordination with IRGC naval authorities". It was unclear whether the ships had to pay a fee to pass through the Strait. Iran, which has said it would require payments to cross the Strait, announced earlier this month that it was setting up an agency, the Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA), to regulate maritime traffic in the area. The United Nations has declared it illegal to levy fees for sailing through international waters. The US has demanded that Iran restore free navigation through the Strait, which Tehran has mined and attacked ships on it after the US joined Israel in bombing Iran in February. Free navigation through the Strait is a major issue holding up a deal to end the Iran war. "The Strait is going to be open to everybody", US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday. Iran's action has put a chokehold on 20 per cent of the world's gas and oil that go through it, creating a global energy and economic crisis. Out of the blue, Trump threatened on Wednesday to blow up Oman, which is across the Strait from Iran, if it made an arrangement with Tehran to collect fees to transit it. Aukevisser, which keeps a roster of ship information, lists Nissos Keros's owner as Arethusa Shipping Corporation and the operator as Kyklades Maritime Corporation.

# IMF Worried As Pakistan's Military Takes Over Economic Powers: Report

New Delhi, 29/5: Behind Pakistan's negotiations for new bailout packages from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a silent yet highly consequential power struggle is unfolding between the IMF and the Pakistani military over control of the country's key economic power structures, according to an article published by Pressenza International Press Agency. State-owned enterprises, energy facilities, mines, ports and banks are facing a confrontation between two competing models of economic governance. On one side stands the military-driven logic of speed and rapid investment agreements and on the other, a more institutional and rules-based approach that the IMF seeks to impose through mechanisms of accountability and transparency, states the article by Dimitra Staiku. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) lies at the heart of this strategy. Officially, the SIFC is presented as a tool designed to reduce bureaucracy and facilitate investment procedures. In practice, however, it has evolved into a powerful economic instrument of the Pakistani

military, allowing senior military officials to act as key intermediaries between the state and foreign investors. Through the SIFC, fast-track approvals, regulatory exemptions, and special investment privileges are granted in ways that often bypass the country's traditional political and administrative institutions, the article points out. The fact that Pakistan's military chief Asim Munir is openly carrying out negotiations with foreign countries such as the US in areas such as mining of precious metals and critical minerals appears to support the argument of the report. The growing influence of the Pakistani military over economic management is not entirely new. Yet, during 2025 and 2026, this influence appears to be entering a qualitatively different phase. The military has promoted the narrative that only a centralised and "disciplined" mechanism could ensure the rapid implementation of major investments and preserve economic stability. For many critics, however, this logic gradually reinforces a model of economic governance in which military influence expands far beyond its

traditional role. The significance of this process becomes even greater because of the geopolitical value of the economic networks and infrastructure involved in these agreements. China and the Gulf states have emerged as the principal investors behind many of the planned partnerships, strengthening their presence in sectors of strategic importance for Pakistan's future economy. Concerns intensified when a series of investment initiatives in sectors such as energy, logistics, mining, and infrastructure began advancing through special fast-track procedures under SIFC supervision. International analysts, along with segments of Pakistan's opposition, argued that the growing use of military mechanisms in economic decision-making is creating a system of limited political accountability, in which civilian institutions and parliamentary bodies play an increasingly marginal role, the article points out. For the IMF, however, the central issue is not the need to attract investments but the manner in which those investments are implemented. The IMF views military-controlled or military-influenced economic systems as lacking sufficient transparency, political oversight, and institutional accountability.

# Bangladesh Faces Budget Challenge Amid Rising Debt Servicing Burden: Report

New Delhi, 29/5: As the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reclassified Bangladesh from a low risk to a moderate risk country in its debt sustainability analysis, a report has said that mounting repayment obligations are emerging as one of the biggest challenges for the BNP-led government in its first budget preparation. The report published in The Daily Star highlighted that the IMF's downgrade reflected "deteriorating metrics across debt volume, debt servicing relative to GDP, exports, and revenue earnings". The crisis is pressing due to the rapid speed at which debt servicing — the combined cost of repaying principal and paying interest — is rising, it said. The IMF projected that debt service costs covering principal and interest on loans would rise to \$30.59 billion in FY26 from \$26.63 billion in FY25 and to \$33.84 billion in FY27. The IMF noted that Bangladesh's public debt reached \$188.79 billion or about 41 per cent of GDP in fiscal 2024-25, up from 39 per cent a year earlier. "The elevated debt service-to-revenue ratio, including interest payments,



poses significant rollover risks over the medium term," it said. Bangladesh used to finance a portion of development expenditure through revenue surplus, but the country has been financing even the operational budget through borrowing in recent years, according to the report. "The deterioration has been rapid since fiscal year 2022-23, when actual revenue fell Tk 463 crore

(Bangladeshi currency) short of what was needed just to cover operating expenditure. The gap was plugged through borrowing," it said. In FY24, the shortfall went up to Tk 3,630 crore and in the next fiscal the entire Annual Development Programme (ADP), the primary fiscal instrument for financing public sector development, had to be financed through loans. Much

of the pressure stems from earlier non concessional foreign borrowing with higher interest rates and shorter grace periods, and from large infrastructure projects financed by loans but failing to grow revenue collection. The IMF also warned that heavy reliance on bank borrowing could out private-sector credit, adding pressure to an already strained financial system.

# US Rejects Central Bank Digital Currency Push

Washington, 29/5: The Trump administration has ruled out the creation of a US central bank digital currency (CBDC), with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent arguing that government-issued digital money could become a tool for tracking financial activity and threatening personal freedoms. At a White House briefing, Bessent said the administration's position on a digital dollar was unequivocal. "This administration has been very clear there will be no central bank digital currency," he told reporters. Bessent suggested that a CBDC could open the door to greater government oversight of private financial transactions. "I think that would be the first step toward tracking," he said. The remarks place the United States firmly in the camp of countries that are sceptical about government-issued digital currencies, even as central banks around the world continue to explore or test digital versions of their national currencies. Instead of supporting a digital dollar, Bessent said the administration favours a regulatory framework designed to encourage private-sector digital



assets and stablecoins under US oversight. "We've passed stablecoin legislation with bipartisan support, and the CLARITY Act is now up on the Hill, and I think it has bipartisan support," he said. The Treasury Secretary argued that bringing digital asset activity under US regulation would provide stronger safeguards than allowing the industry to develop primarily outside American jurisdiction. "The

most important thing we can do is to make digital assets come into the United States, make the US the home," Bessent said. "Our regulation, our best practices are what will ensure good standards for these." He criticised what he described as poorly regulated activity in offshore digital asset markets. "When you look at digital assets, all the nonsense that happens, all the things you read

about, that's because it's the wild, wild west offshore," he said. "So, we've got to bring it onshore." Responding to a question, he urged the Congress to bring in legislation aimed at creating a clearer regulatory framework for digital assets, arguing that certainty would encourage innovation while improving consumer protections.

# Trump Imposed Toughest Russia Oil Sanctions: Bessent

Washington, 29/5: US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent defended the Trump administration's record on Russia sanctions, arguing that it has imposed tougher measures on Moscow's oil sector than any previous US government despite continuing criticism over Washington's approach to the war in Ukraine. At a White House briefing, Bessent said the administration had taken unprecedented action against Russia's energy industry, including sanctions targeting two of the country's largest oil companies. "This administration has put the hardest sanctions on Russia of any country," Bessent said. Responding to a question about whether Washington was considering additional sanctions following recent Russian attacks on Kyiv, Bessent used the opportunity to contrast the administration's approach with that of its predecessor. "The Biden administration put on very, what I would call, mild sanctions because they were worried about gasoline prices going up into an election," he said. Bessent argued that the sanctions regime was



significantly strengthened before the transition of power and subsequently expanded under President Donald Trump. "Fast forward to October, and President Trump instructed me to sanction the two largest Russian oil companies, Lukoil and Rosneft, which we did," he said. "No other government has done that." "So, no one has done more sanctions than the Trump administration on Russian oil." The comments come amid renewed debate in Washington and Europe over whether economic pressure on Moscow should be intensified as the conflict in Ukraine

continues. While Bessent did not announce any new sanctions, his remarks suggested the administration believes its existing measures have already gone further than those adopted by many allies. The United States, European Union and other Western allies have imposed multiple rounds of sanctions on Russia since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, targeting banks, energy companies, defence industries and senior government officials. The effectiveness of those measures remains the subject of debate among policymakers and economists.

## India Ranks Among Top Digital Economies, Strong In AI Performance: Report

New Delhi, 29/5: India has climbed to fifth place in global digital economy rankings and ranked fourth on the CHIPS-AI index, marking accelerating digital momentum in an increasingly competitive environment, a report said on Friday. The report from the ICRIER-Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (IPCIDE) said that the study among 71 countries, covering 96 per cent of global GDP, revealed that "India outpaced major developed economies, including Germany, France, Japan and Canada, in digital performance." India generated \$328 billion in digitally delivered trade AND hosts the world's second-largest AI talent pool, it said. In addition, the country represents roughly 50 per cent of BRICS digitally delivered services. The country ranked



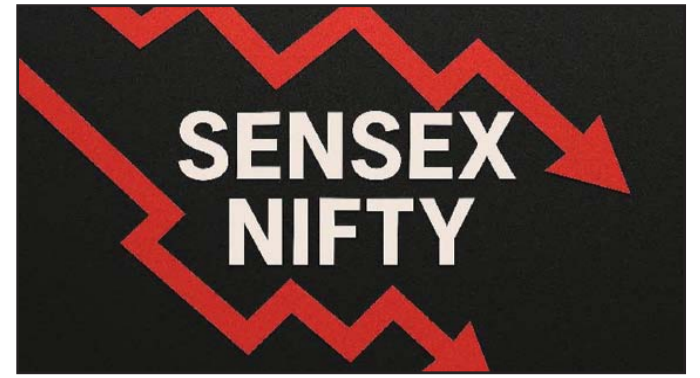
behind only the United States, China and Singapore in AI performance. Among the world's top five digital economies, three — China, Singapore and India — are now from the Indo-Pacific region, signalling the emergence of a tripolar digital order alongside the traditional North Atlantic pole. The report documented a fundamental shift in the global

digital landscape, with 72 per cent of AI users now in developing countries. India and China together accounted for nearly two-fifths of worldwide AI adoption. "India has built strong foundations through connectivity, entrepreneurship and digital public infrastructure. The next phase of growth depends on how effectively we leverage AI, deepen

innovation capabilities and strengthen digital trust," said Pramod Bhasin, Chairperson, ICRIER. India commands 26 per cent of global AI users but just 1 per cent of global private AI investment, reflecting a crucial gap. Moreover, the nation ranks second globally in AI talent after the United States but lacks comparable levels of long-term venture capital and computing infrastructure, reflecting both challenge and opportunity. India's long-term competitiveness depends on mobilising risk capital, expanding compute access, strengthening university-startup linkages and building AI commercialisation pathways, the report noted. While AI adoption spreads rapidly, advanced chips, compute infrastructure and large language models remain concentrated among a small group of countries and firms.

## Sensex Crashes 1,092 Points Amid US-Iran Uncertainty, Final Hour Sell-Off

Mumbai, 29/5: Indian equity benchmark indices ended sharply lower on Friday after a volatile trading session, as uncertainty surrounding a possible US-Iran understanding triggered heavy selling in the final hour of trade. The Sensex closed at 74,775.74, down 1,092.06 points or 1.44 per cent, while the Nifty settled at 23,547.75, declining 359.40 points or 1.50 per cent. The Nifty witnessed sharp swings during the session, touching an intra-day high of 24,002.80 before falling to a low of 23,484.75. Similarly, the Sensex climbed to 76,220.02 during the day but later plunged to an intra-day low of 74,589.11 as late-hour selling intensified. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that a sustained breakdown below the 23,500 zone could weaken the near-term structure and could extend downside pressure toward the 23,300–



23,200 region in the short term if selling persists. "On the upside, the 23,750–23,800 zone is now expected to act as an immediate resistance band, followed by stronger resistance near the 24,000 level," an analyst stated. In the broader markets, the Nifty MidCap 100 index fell 1.33 per cent and the Nifty SmallCap index slipped 0.85 per cent. Heavyweight stocks further dragged indices lower. Shares of Reliance Industries declined

more than 2.18 per cent, while ITC fell 1.71 per cent, offsetting gains in the technology sector. IT stocks, however, remained resilient during the session, with the Nifty IT index gaining more than 0.60 per cent. Market participants continued to favour technology counters amid the overnight rally in US tech stocks and weakness in the Indian rupee, which is expected to improve margins for export-oriented IT companies.

## Tesla Launches 2026 Model Y Premium RWD in India at Rs 50.89 Lakh

New Delhi, 29/5: Tesla has introduced the 2026 Model Y Premium Rear-Wheel Drive in India, expanding its electric vehicle lineup in the country as competition and consumer interest in premium EVs continue to rise. The new variant of the Tesla Model Y comes with upgraded design, technology and interior features, including an all-black interior, a larger 16-inch touchscreen and a new Zen Grey interior option. The company said the vehicle offers storage space of 2,138 litres, seats up to five passengers and delivers a driving range of up to 500 km on a single charge under WLTP standards. Priced at Rs 50.89 lakh, the Model Y Premium Rear-Wheel Drive will begin deliveries in India from July 2026. The launch comes as Tesla deepens its presence in India's growing electric mobility market and looks to make premium



EV ownership more accessible through financing and charging solutions. The company said customers can purchase the vehicle with EMIs starting at Rs 39,990 and a down payment of Rs 6 lakh. Tesla also highlighted the lower running and maintenance costs associated with EVs, stating that customers switching to the new Model Y Premium could save up to Rs 20,000 per month. The latest launch follows Tesla's introduction of the six-seater Tesla Model Y L in India last month. The Model Y L offers a range of up to 681 km and cargo space of up to 2,539 litres,

with prices starting at Rs 61.99 lakh. Commenting on the expansion, Isabel Fan, Senior Director at Tesla, said, "Tesla's mission is to build a world of amazing abundance. Tesla enables the use of electric vehicles by increasing the accessibility of Tesla technology and providing charging solutions around people's lifestyles." She added that the company will continue investing in India through expanded retail coverage, after-sales services and charging infrastructure to create a "seamless EV experience" for customers across the country.

## RBI Expands e-Rupee Pilots, Starts Tokenised Credit Deposit Trial

New Delhi, 29/5: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said that it has broadened its central bank digital currency (CBDC) pilots into government subsidy programmes and financial market instruments. The central bank launched a pilot for tokenised certificates of deposit through a platform Unified Markets Interface (UMI), according to RBI's annual report for FY26. The RBI said it had used CBDC in FY26 under direct benefit transfer schemes run by the Central and state governments. In Gujarat, Puducherry and Chandigarh, beneficiaries under the public distribution system received food subsidies through programmable CBDC, which could only be redeemed for eligible goods at fair price shops and designated merchants, the statement



noted. "The Reserve Bank developed the Unified Markets Interface (UMI), a multi-layer platform to facilitate tokenisation of financial assets while leveraging wholesale CBDC to enhance settlement efficiencies," the annual report said. The central bank said a pilot for the issuance and trading of certificates of deposit in tokenised form has

begun on the platform, with settlement taking place through wholesale CBDC. The pilot initiative aims to leverage emerging technologies such as tokenisation and distributed ledger technology in financial markets. On cross border initiatives, the central bank said it signed a memorandum of understanding on digital asset collaboration and held

discussions with the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS). Further, deliberations were done with the Central Bank of the UAE to operationalise a cross border CBDC pilot. The RBI joined Project Rialto and the second phase of Project Mandala, both led by the Bank for International Settlements Innovation Hub that focus on improving cross-border payments using CBDCs. The central bank plans to expand CBDC pilots to additional direct benefit transfer schemes and business applications. India has launched CBDC but the e-Rupee circulation is at a very small amount of Rs 1,016 crore till March 2025, and there is a need for further efforts in awareness, usability, and strategic partnerships with fintech applications are essential to boost their usage, a recent report said.

## Middle East War Leads To 3.4 Pc Fall In Global Air Passenger Demand In April

New Delhi, 29/5: Global air passenger demand fell 3.4 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in April 2026 — marking a sharp slowdown primarily driven by the impact of the ongoing war in the Middle East, according to data released by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) on Friday. Total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPK), declined 3.4 per cent compared to April 2025, while total capacity, measured in available seat kilometers (ASK), dropped 2.9 per cent. Global load factor stood at 83.1 per cent, down 0.4 percentage points from the year-ago period. IATA said the downturn was largely caused by a steep collapse in travel demand for Middle Eastern carriers. Excluding the Middle East region, global passenger demand would have recorded a 1.2 per cent increase during the month. "Total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPK), was down 3.4 per cent compared to April 2025," IATA said. "Total capacity, measured in available seat kilometers (ASK), decreased 2.9 per cent year-on-year. The load factor was 83.1 per cent (-0.4 ppt compared to April 2025)," it added. International passenger traffic fell 5.3 per cent year-on-year in April, with capacity declining 5.1 per cent. However, excluding Middle Eastern airlines, international demand grew 1.9 per cent.

## Colgate-Palmolive India Raises Toothpaste Prices By Up To 5 Pc Amid Rising Input Costs

New Delhi, 29/5: FMCG major Colgate-Palmolive India has raised prices of toothpaste packs in May, with hikes ranging between 4 and 5 per cent, a report said on Friday. NDTV Profit reported, citing industry sources, that rising raw material and packaging costs have prompted the company to increase prices across popular variants such as Colgate Dental Cream and Max Fresh. Among the key revisions, the price of the Colgate Dental Cream 200g + 100g + toothbrush pack has been increased by Rs 8 to Rs 208, according to the report. In addition, the 200g Colgate Dental Cream pack has become costlier by Rs 5, taking its price to Rs 135, it added. Similarly, the FMCG firm raised the price of the Colgate



Dental Cream 100g pack by Rs 3 to Rs 73, while simultaneously increasing grammage by around 10 per cent. Meanwhile, the Colgate Max Fresh Blue 70g + 15 per cent extra pack has seen a price increase

of Rs 4 and is now retailing at Rs 83. However, premium products of the toothpaste maker have witnessed steeper hikes, with the Visible White Purple 200g + 20 per cent extra pack becoming

costlier by Rs 17, taking its maximum retail price (MRP) to Rs 395. Distributors indicated that lower-MRP packs are unlikely to witness immediate revisions as those categories remain highly price-sensitive and cater largely to mass-market consumers. The latest round of price hikes comes at a time when FMCG companies continue to battle persistent inflationary pressures across commodities, packaging materials and logistics costs. Notably, toothpaste remains the largest revenue contributor for the company, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of its overall revenue, the report said. Shares of Colgate-Palmolive India on Friday were trading largely flat at Rs 2,083 apiece on the NSE.

## Crude Oil Prices Slip 1 Pc Amid US-Iran Ceasefire Extension Reports

New Delhi, 29/5: Global crude oil prices fell 1 per cent in early trade on Friday as reports claim that the United States and Iran had agreed to a 60-day memorandum of understanding to extend the ceasefire. At 11:15 am, the international oil benchmark Brent crude traded at \$92.66 a barrel, down 1.12 per cent, while US West Texas Intermediate declined 1.18 per cent to \$87.86. Reports claim that the 60-day MoU would state shipping through the Strait of Hormuz would be unrestricted, according to US officials. In addition, it would require Iran to remove mines within 30 days and end toll collection from the Strait. US naval blockade would be lifted in proportion to the restoration of commercial shipping, the officials said, as per the report, adding that the deal had not yet received final approval from US President Donald Trump. Iran has also not confirmed its acceptance of the MoU. Oil markets saw a volatile session on Thursday after prices jumped due to US strikes on a military site in Bandar Abbas. However, markets remain keen on developments around the Strait of Hormuz, a key chokepoint for roughly a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas trade. Under the direction of the government, the public sector oil companies are currently absorbing losses on the sale of petrol, diesel, and LPG to the tune of Rs 550 crore per day as they have refrained from passing on the full increase in global prices to protect domestic consumers, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said earlier this week. The ministry said supplies of crude, petrol and diesel remained adequate but flagged localised shortages due to panic buying.

## India's Data Centre Stock Likely To Cross 3 GW By 2028: Report

New Delhi, 29/5: India's data centre (DC) stock is expected to cross 3 gigawatts (GW) by the end of calendar year 2028, driven by a robust demand from hyperscalers, accelerating artificial intelligence workloads, and the country's structural advantage as Asia Pacific's most DC development-friendly market, a report said on Friday. The report from CBRE said the total DC capacity in the country reached roughly 1,700 MW at the end of 2025 and that a supply addition of roughly 500 MW is expected in 2026. DC stock measures the total computing power infrastructure available across a country's all data centres. The

report placed India among APAC's leading markets, a significant elevation from its tag of high growth, due to expanding live capacity, deep investment pipeline, and an improving infrastructure ecosystem. India now stands alongside Japan, Australia, South Korea, Mainland China, and Malaysia in the top-tier category, it said. "The combination of a low-bottleneck development environment, a rapidly expanding digital economy, and aggressive hyperscaler commitments positions India as one of the most compelling DC markets globally," said Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO — India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE. As AI



workloads multiply and the demand base broadens beyond cloud to Neocloud, GCCs and enterprise users, the country's capacity trajectory is likely to remain steep well beyond 2028, he added. The report said that developmental road blocks such as power constraints, construction costs, shortage of skilled labour, and community & environmental risks are 'low' in India, making it the only major APAC market to achieve such a distinction. "This structural advantage is translating into tangible results on the ground. Mumbai continues to anchor national capacity at 800+ MW, with a further 750 MW under construction or committed," the report noted.

# Manoj Bajpayee opens up on childhood dream of acting and his new film 'Governor'

Bollywood actor Manoj Bajpayee opened up about his childhood dream of becoming an actor, his father's wish for him to pursue medicine and his upcoming film, 'Governor', which is inspired by the events surrounding the country's financial crisis of the 1990s. Directed by Chinmay Mandlekar, 'Governor' also stars Adah Sharma and Noushad Mohamed Kunju in the lead roles. The movie is set to be released on June 12. Talking about his upcoming film backed by producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah, Bajpayee said the project is based on India's economic crisis and inspired by former RBI Governor S Venkitaraman. "When our country was going through a financial crisis, in which there was a crisis related to payment balance, our foreign reserves were getting over, then, at that time, he was posted suddenly. He was not in any line. There is a person in the line. After this, when the RBI governor is going, he will become the next. There are 2-3 names, or immediately, he becomes the next. But, he was not in the line," Bajpayee said. He continued, "On the recommendation of Rajiv Gandhi (former Prime Minister), Chandra Shekhar ji (Former PM) ki government thi, yeh aaye the, and, at that time, Manmohan Singh was working as his parallel. And, his thinking, his whole strategy, was out of the box. Which, no one was thinking, and there was a big risk in it. He realised that, if we don't do this, then the matter will go wrong, our country will go bankrupt. So, he used his brain, he prepared the strategy, because of which a lot of things changed...." The actor explained that the film highlights the contribution of "unsung heroes" who work behind the scenes for the country. "We never talk about heroes, because they work behind the scenes, and the country works on their mind, strategy. It is high time that we talk about those unsung heroes who worked behind the scenes and saved us from a big problem," he said. The Family Man actor also spoke about the preparation that went into portraying the calm and composed bureaucratic character. "The need to work hard was that this man is a very silent person. He doesn't talk much. He



just works. Because numbers are on his mind. And to catch that mind, you need some information. So, nowadays, to do research, you have a lot of things. Earlier, we had to go to the library. And nowadays, on Google or AI, everything is available," he shared. Praising producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah, Bajpayee said, "Vipul's production is very supportive. They are always ready to give everything needed to make a good film." The actor revealed that the script impressed him because it balanced information and entertainment effectively. "I liked the script very much. First, you are talking about the economic crisis. Second, you have written it in a mainstream way. And the audience also understood everything. When I was studying, I was very bad in economics. I was very bad in mathematics. But I was understanding everything. And I was always thinking what is in the next page (in script), what is in the end, what is going to happen. Because I knew about this incident. But I did not know in detail. So, you get all the information. And at the same time, you get entertained. And your knowledge increases a lot," he shared. "I would like bureaucrats, IAS and IPS officers, judges, politicians and the general audience to watch it. There are many people working silently to keep the country on the right path," Bajpayee added. Speaking about his early years in Bihar, Bajpayee revealed that he knew from the age of nine that acting was his true calling, but societal perceptions at the time stopped him from openly expressing it. "Since I was 9 years old, I only wanted to become an actor. But I was very shy. I don't know how God gave me so much wisdom that I never told anyone that I wanted to become an actor," Bajpayee said. Reflecting on the atmosphere of the 1970s in Bihar, the actor said, "As soon as you said that you wanted to become an actor, people thought you had become a scoundrel. The whole society and family would get involved in breaking that dream." The ace star shared that his father wanted him to become a doctor, a dream he did not wish to disappoint emotionally, despite knowing it was not meant for him. "My father wanted me to become a doctor. So, I don't know why I was so attached to my father, emotionally, that I didn't want to disappoint him. But my mathematics and physics were very weak. Even then, he wanted me to fulfil his dream because he himself could not become a doctor," he said. The actor added that although he attended classes and school assemblies, his mind was always occupied with acting. "Every moment of my life was going into acting. But nobody could see it because I never showed it," he recalled.

Jackie Shroff returns to the silver screen in a heartwarming role that brings pure childhood fantasy back to Indian cinema. Released on May 29, 2026, the Manish Saini directorial project shifts focus away from the typical action blockbusters ruling the box office, offering instead a story dedicated entirely to young audiences. The plot centers on an 11-year-old boy named Dipu, played by Mihir Godbole, who moves to a new town. To impress his new schoolmates, Dipu invents a wild story claiming his aging grandfather is a secret saviour preparing for an extraterrestrial battle. Things take an amusing turn when two costumed men enter the scene, blurring the lines between fiction and reality for the local children. Historically, Indian cinema has rarely produced dedicated content for children, often blending family dramas with adult themes rather than focusing on pure youthful imagination. This project succeeds because it embraces a scrappy, comic-book style rather than trying to replicate high-budget Hollywood visual effects. The narrative relies heavily on the natural bond between grandparents and children, capitalising on the universal experience of listening to exaggerated bedtime stories. Jackie Shroff delivers an endearing performance, balancing heroic mystery with comedic moments, such as being terrified of a simple household lizard. The young supporting cast, including Shivansh Chorge and Jihan Hodar, keeps the energy high with authentic playground chemistry. Prateik Babbar, credited here as Prateik Smita Patil, delivers a charming performance as the central extraterrestrial figure, avoiding the usual sci-fi clichés. Memorable appearances by Bhagyashree Patwardhan and Durgesh Kumar add layers of humor to the unfolding drama. While the film runs under two hours, it occasionally struggles with pacing and an uneven shift toward environmental messaging in the later half. Older viewers looking for complex science fiction might find certain scenes repetitive. However, the production succeeds in its core mission by delivering a refreshing, innocent, and joyful cinematic experience.



## SPORTS

### Norway Chess: World Champion Gukesh Loses To Carlsen; Divya, Humpy Also Suffer Losses

Oslo, 29/5: Round 4 of Norway Chess delivered another exciting day of world-class chess in Oslo, featuring a decisive result in the highly anticipated encounter between World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and reigning World Champion Gukesh Dommaraju. Playing with the black pieces, Carlsen gradually outplayed Gukesh in a complex game. The position remained balanced for much of the struggle before the Norwegian star seized his opportunity in the middlegame. Under increasing pressure and time trouble, Gukesh was unable to hold the position, allowing Carlsen to convert his advantage and secure an important classical victory. The win gives Carlsen valuable points in the tournament standings as he seeks to recover from a slow start on home soil. The remaining two games in the open tournament ended in draws after hard-fought battles. Wesley So and Alireza Firouzja played a strategic encounter that neither player was able to break open, with the game eventually concluding peacefully. So later prevailed in the Armageddon game, securing the additional points. Vincent Keymer and Praggnanandhaa fought a



balanced contest that saw chances for both sides but ultimately ended in a draw. Praggnanandhaa went on to win the Armageddon game, earning valuable additional points. Following round four, Firouzja remains in the tournament lead, while Carlsen's victory significantly strengthens his position in the standings. The Norway Chess Women tournament featured three closely contested classical games, all of which ended in draws before being decided in Armageddon.

Koneru Humpy and Zhu Jiner drew their game after a tense struggle in which neither player could establish a lasting advantage. Zhu Jiner later won the Armageddon game to collect the additional points. World Champion Ju Wenjun and Bibisara Assaubayeva also ended their classical encounter in a draw. Assaubayeva enjoyed a slight advantage in several positions, but Ju defended accurately to hold the balance. Assaubayeva later prevailed in the Armageddon game, securing the additional

points. In the third matchup, Divya Deshmukh and Anna Muzychuk battled in a complex struggle. Divya held the advantage through much of the middlegame and pressed for victory, but Muzychuk defended resourcefully and the game ultimately ended in a draw. Muzychuk then won the Armageddon game, securing valuable points. Following round four, Assaubayeva continues to lead Norway Chess Women, while Anna Muzychuk, Divya Deshmukh and Zhu Jiner remain within striking distance.

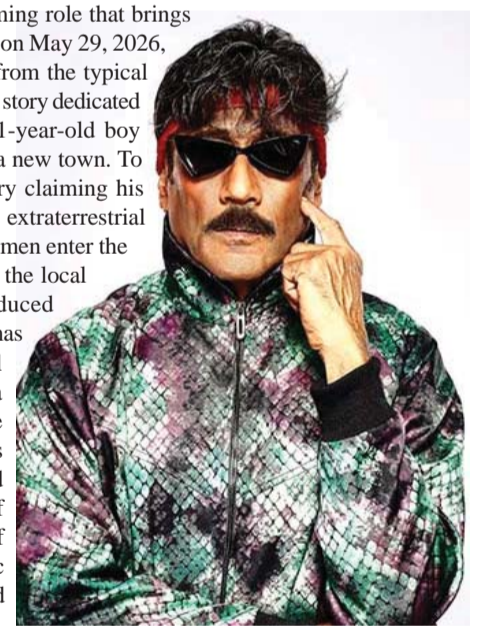
### BCCI Bans Smart Glasses Within 'PMOA' In IPL, Warns Of Strict Penalties

Mumbai, 29/5: The Board of Control for Cricket in India's Anti-Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) has strictly prohibited the possession and use of 'Smart Goggles' or sunglasses within the Players and Match Officials Area (PMOA). The directive comes after it was brought to the attention of the anti-corruption watchdog that certain companies have been marketing and selling high-tech smart eyewear to players and team support staff, which are equipped with advanced communication features. According to an internal BCCI/ACSU communication, these advanced wearable devices possess capabilities that pose a direct threat to the tournament's strict anti-corruption protocols. "Kindly note that these devices are equipped with advanced communication features, including live streaming, sending and receiving text messages, as well as audio and video calling capabilities through mobile data or Wi-Fi networks. Accordingly, under the

PMOA Minimum Standards, such goggles/glasses are classified both as an 'Audio/Video Recording Device' and a 'Communication Device'. 'It is hereby notified that the possession and/or use of 'Smart Goggles' is strictly prohibited within the Players and Match Officials Area (PMOA),' ACSU said in its directives issued to all IPL franchises. "All players and support staff are directed to deposit such devices with the Security Liaison Officer (SLO), along with their mobile phones and smartwatches, upon entering the PMOA on match days," the directive added. The ACSU has mandated strict surrender protocols for players and support staff entering PMOA and warned that any complacency or failure to hand over the smart eyewear will result in penalties. "Failure to deposit such devices shall be deemed a breach of the PMOA protocols and may result in penalties under the PMOA Minimum Standards for IPL 2026," it concluded.

### Jackie Shroff brings nostalgic charm to screens in this new children adventure

Jackie Shroff returns to the silver screen in a heartwarming role that brings pure childhood fantasy back to Indian cinema. Released on May 29, 2026, the Manish Saini directorial project shifts focus away from the typical action blockbusters ruling the box office, offering instead a story dedicated entirely to young audiences. The plot centers on an 11-year-old boy named Dipu, played by Mihir Godbole, who moves to a new town. To impress his new schoolmates, Dipu invents a wild story claiming his aging grandfather is a secret saviour preparing for an extraterrestrial battle. Things take an amusing turn when two costumed men enter the scene, blurring the lines between fiction and reality for the local children. Historically, Indian cinema has rarely produced dedicated content for children, often blending family dramas with adult themes rather than focusing on pure youthful imagination. This project succeeds because it embraces a scrappy, comic-book style rather than trying to replicate high-budget Hollywood visual effects. The narrative relies heavily on the natural bond between grandparents and children, capitalising on the universal experience of listening to exaggerated bedtime stories. Jackie Shroff delivers an endearing performance, balancing heroic mystery with comedic moments, such as being terrified of a simple household lizard. The young supporting cast, including Shivansh Chorge and Jihan Hodar, keeps the energy high with authentic playground chemistry. Prateik Babbar, credited here as Prateik Smita Patil, delivers a charming performance as the central extraterrestrial figure, avoiding the usual sci-fi clichés. Memorable appearances by Bhagyashree Patwardhan and Durgesh Kumar add layers of humor to the unfolding drama. While the film runs under two hours, it occasionally struggles with pacing and an uneven shift toward environmental messaging in the later half. Older viewers looking for complex science fiction might find certain scenes repetitive. However, the production succeeds in its core mission by delivering a refreshing, innocent, and joyful cinematic experience.



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