

## PM Modi To Virtually Interact With CMs On West Asia Crisis

### Coffee Table News Network

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with Chief Ministers on Friday evening through video conferencing on the ongoing West Asia conflicts to review preparedness and plans of states, sources said. The virtual meeting will focus on ensuring synergy of efforts in the spirit of 'Team India', they added. However, Chief Ministers of those states going to the assembly polls will not be part of the meeting due to the Model Code

of Conduct in force, sources said. There will be a separate meeting with the chief secretaries of these states, which will be held through the Cabinet Secretariat. The Centre on Wednesday assured the opposition parties that more ships are coming through the Strait of Hormuz and there is no cause for concern. At an all-party meeting on the West Asia crisis, the Centre told the opposition leaders that India is on top of geopolitics and there is enough energy security. The leaders were also told how the ongoing

situation would affect the country and the measures that the government was taking to deal with the fallout of the Iran war. Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the government responded comprehensively to the queries and has answered all the questions asked by them. The minister added that many members wanted to know the details of the gas and petroleum supply through the Strait of Hormuz, and they were all satisfied that India secured four ships already. "All the opposition



colleagues have said that in this hour of crisis, whatever decision the government takes, will be supported unitedly by everyone. I believe that whatever was demanded by the opposition on such information being given was provided

adequately today," he added. The meeting was attended by the Union ministers, who form part of the Cabinet Committee on Security, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Tariq Anwar and Mukul Wasnik of the Congress, Dharmendra Yadav of the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Sasmit Patra of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) were among those who attended the meeting. "I think the opposition party has displayed maturity in expressing at the end of the meeting, that in any challenging situation, they will stand with the steps taken by the government... The opposition members were satisfied with the effort made by the government," Rijiju

said. However, Anwar said an attempt was made to seek clarification from the government, but the meeting was unsatisfactory. "It has been our longstanding demand that this issue be debated in both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha under Rules 193 and 170. Only then will people feel satisfied. The reality is that a conflict is already underway. Pakistan, which is smaller than us and weaker in every respect, is today acting as a mediator and playing that role, while we remain silent spectators," he

added. CPI(M) MP John Brittas said the government assured on the measures taken by it, and it's talking to all countries and wishes the war ends soon. Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh said they raised concerns about people standing in line for gas cylinders and fuel, which is creating confusion and panic among the people. "The government's stance was that we are producing 60% of LPG domestically, and there will be no shortage of gas. We also have reserves of oil," he added.

## 'Misuse of influence is grave offence': CM Devendra Fadnavis

### Coffee Table News Network

MUMBAI: Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday put the spotlight on Nashik-based astrologer Ashok Kharat, urging citizens to come forward with any information about him as a serious probe unfolds into allegations of sexual exploitation and fraud. Addressing the state Assembly, Fadnavis said the

government would not tolerate any form of deception, directly naming Kharat while appealing for public cooperation in the investigation. Kharat, who is associated with a temple trust in Sinnar, has been accused of repeatedly sexually assaulting a 35-year-old woman between 2022 and 2025 under the pretext of spiritual guidance. Police have alleged that he used intimidation and manipulation to continue the



abuse. The chief minister reiterated that the matter is being monitored at the highest level and assured that no accused would be spared, stressing

that protecting the dignity of women remains a top priority. He also said efforts are underway to encourage more victims to come forward, with some

already responding. He maintained that misuse of influence to exploit women is a grave offence and assured strict punishment for those found guilty. Kharat was earlier in police custody, and a Nashik court has extended it until March 29 to allow further investigation. Authorities have also pointed to fraud-related allegations against him, even as they continue to widen the probe.

## Nepal's Newly Elected Parliament Is Sworn In Months After A Youth-Led Revolt

### Coffee Table News Network

Kathmandu: Nepal's newly elected members of parliament were sworn in on Thursday, with nearly two-thirds of them from a political party that is less than four years old. The 275 members of the House of Representatives, the powerful lower chamber of parliament, will be in their positions for the next five years. The election — the country's first since last year's youth-led revolt — was won by the Rastriya Swatantra Party, or RSP, led by rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah. Shah is expected to be chosen as the leader by the elected members from his party later on Thursday and formally inform President Ram Chandra Poudel. The president will then appoint Shah as the prime minister of Nepal. Shah is scheduled to take the oath of office on Friday. The



RSP won 125 directly elected seats plus a further 57 through proportional representation, giving it a total of 182 seats in the 275-member House of Representatives. The Nepali Congress party came second, with 38 seats. In Nepal, voters directly elect 165 members to the House of Representatives. The remaining 110 seats are allocated through a proportional representation system, under which political parties are assigned seats based on their share of the vote. Shah, who is the RSP's prime ministerial candidate, won the 2022 Kathmandu mayoral race. He emerged as a leading figure in the 2025 uprising that

ousting former Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli. The RSP, which was founded in 2022, gained huge support in the parliamentary election, posing a strong challenge to two long-dominant parties — the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). Last year's protests against corruption and poor governance were triggered by a social media ban before snowballing into a popular revolt against the government. Dozens of people were killed and hundreds more injured when protesters attacked government buildings, and police opened fire on them.

## C M Fadnavis warns of strict action against black marketing of petrol and diesel

### Coffee Table News Network

Nagpur: Rumors that a petrol 'lockdown' will be imposed in the state in the wake of the sudden increase in crowd at petrol pumps are spreading widely on social media. However, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has firmly rejected all these rumors and clarified that there is no fuel shortage in the state. He has appealed to the citizens not to panic and buy petrol and diesel. "The central government has said that there is sufficient stock of petrol and diesel. The supply of petrol and diesel

required every month is regularly available with the government. Despite repeated information from the central government that the fuel stock is sufficient, in some places citizens have tried to stock up on excess petrol by unnecessarily crowding. This 'panic buying' increases the possibility of creating an artificial shortage," the Chief Minister said. The sudden increase in demand puts pressure on the supply system and this creates problems in some places. However, it is a wrong trend for people to queue at petrol pumps when there is no



shortage of petrol and diesel. Therefore, the Chief Minister appealed to the citizens to be patient and not believe in rumors. Along with this, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis also warned about the black marketing of petrol and diesel. He clarified that

if black marketing of petrol or diesel is found to be taking place anywhere, strict action will be taken against the concerned. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis also said that the administration is keeping a close eye on such cases. Meanwhile,

he also gave important information about the stock of fertilizers. It has been reported that the consumption of DAP fertilizer in the state has increased by 70 percent. He said that this increase was also due to panic buying. However, he assured that the required stock of fertilizers will be available this year too, like every year. The Chief Minister also warned of strict action against suppliers who try to create artificial shortages by stockpiling fertilizers. He said that the government is taking care that the farmers are not inconvenienced in any way.

## Tehran Rejects Trump's 15-Point Peace Plan, Issues Five Conditions To End War

### Coffee Table News Network

Iran on Wednesday rejected the 15-point ceasefire proposal by the United States aimed at ending the ongoing war, saying it will decide the timing and terms of any ceasefire, according to Iranian state media. Citing an unidentified senior official, Iran's English-language broadcaster Press TV reported that Tehran had responded negatively to the US peace plan. "Iran has responded negatively to an American proposal aimed at ending the ongoing imposed war," the official said, adding



that the conflict would end only on Iran's terms. "No negotiations will be held prior to that... The end of the war will occur when Iran decides it should end, not when Trump envisions its conclusion," the official stated. According to Press TV, the official also laid out five key conditions for ending the war. These include a complete halt to what Iran

described as "aggression and assassinations", as well as firm guarantees to ensure that hostilities are not resumed in the future. Tehran is also seeking clearly defined compensation for war damages and reparations. The conditions further call for a complete end to the conflict across all fronts, including among allied groups in the

region. In addition, Iran insists that its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz must be recognised, describing control over the strategic waterway as a "natural and legal right" and a guarantee of compliance by the opposing side. The official said these demands go beyond points previously raised during talks in Geneva, held shortly before the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28. Press TV also reported that Iran has conveyed to intermediaries that any ceasefire would depend on full acceptance of these conditions.

## Iran Diwan supplies fuel to India, capacity shortage overcomes, 10 ships leave for India

### Coffee Table News Network

Pune: The confusion created among the citizens due to increased crowding at petrol pumps in the city and closure of some pumps has now been clarified. According to Ali Daruwala, a member of the core committee of the Petrol Association, this situation is not due to shortage but due to technical and financial reasons. Many petrol pump operators faced difficulties due to sudden credit withdrawal. It is not because of shortage of petrol, but because some pump owners do not have the necessary money to purchase fuel in advance. The pumps of those pump operators who could not make advance payments are the ones



who are currently closed, Ali Daruwala has clarified. "The price of petrol will not increase by a single rupee," he explained, reassuring the citizens. He also said that there is such a large stock available in the country that there will be less space to store it. However, due to the fear of lockdown, citizens are storing more petrol than required. As there is a rush to buy 10 litres of petrol instead of one or two litres, there is unnecessary crowding at the pumps. "The

citizens should not crowd the pumps and should not stock up on excess petrol," he has appealed. "The current situation is only due to rumors, and in reality there is no shortage of fuel," Ali Daruwala explained. Meanwhile, "a positive and very good news has come to the fore. A meeting was held between the Foreign Minister of Iran and the Foreign Minister of India at 12:30 pm today. After that, Iran has allowed five countries of the world, including India, to transport fuel. All

tankers bound for India will reach safely in the next 8 to 9 days. About 100 ships have left for India to supply petrol, diesel, LPG, CNG and LNG to India. This supply will reach the country in the next 9 to 10 days," Ali Daruwala informed. In addition, "Since the government is losing about Rs 50 per liter on fuel, fuel is currently being supplied only by taking advance payment. Also, the stalled work of the PNG pipeline will be completed from tomorrow. Overall, there is sufficient fuel stock available in India, and the situation will be completely normal in the next 10 to 12 days. Therefore, citizens should not panic and should exercise restraint," appealed Ali Daruwala.

## Gan Gaur Festival Celebrated with Fervour in Chennai



**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Chennai : The traditional Rajasthani festival Gan Gaur was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Maheshwari Bhavan in Sahukarpet, Chennai. The festival, dedicated to Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, witnessed active participation from members of the local community. A series of religious and cultural programmes were organised on the occasion. Prominent citizens including Gopal Daga, Bansilal Bihani, Radheshyam Mundada, Vinod

Dwarkani, Gwaldas Mohta, Pannaal Bihani, Inder Rathi, Mahesh Damani, Sushil Jhanwar and Krishna Kumar Rathi were present. Ritual worship was performed, followed by distribution of prasad among devotees. Several attendees expressed deep faith, stating that prayers offered during Gan Gaur are believed to fulfil wishes. Gan Gaur, one of Rajasthan's major festivals, begins a day after Holi and continues for 16 to 18 days. The main Pooja is observed on Chaitra Shukla Tiritiya. The festival symbolises the divine union of Lord Shiva and

Goddess Parvati. Married women pray for the long life of their husbands, while unmarried girls seek blessings for a suitable life partner. Traditional rituals include worship of clay idols of Gauri and Isar, singing of folk songs, and cultural performances such as Ghoomar dance. The celebrations conclude with a ceremonial immersion of idols in water bodies. The festival is also known for its vibrant attire, folk traditions and the popular Rajasthani sweet Ghewar, adding to the festive spirit.

## Sharad Pawar awarded Double Maharashtra Kesari Harshvardhan Sadgir

financial assistance of Rs 12 lakhs

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Mumbai: Wrestler Harshvardhan Sadgir, who has won the honor of Double Maharashtra Kesari, recently met senior leader Sharad Pawar. On this occasion, Pawar advised Harshvardhan not to give up wrestling, but to follow the training of Guru Kakasaheb Pawar. Harshvardhan Sadgir also responded positively to this. After expressing his feelings in anger that he will not play wrestling, he does not even need a job, all levels are supporting Harshvardhan. The determination not to give up wrestling has become stronger, as



Maharashtra Kesari Harshvardhan Sadgir was provided with financial assistance of Rs 12 lakh for senior level training by the country's senior leader Sharad Pawar, such sentiments have been expressed on the Instagram page of Kusti Mallavidya. This assistance is not just financial assistance, but a great encouragement

to traditional wrestling in Maharashtra. It has also been said on the Kusti Mallavidya account that this amount will be valuable for quality training, diet, fitness and competitive preparation required to perform strongly at the international level. This honor received for Harshal Sadgir's determination and hard work is

inspiring for young wrestlers and it is believed that with the right guidance, support and consistent hard work, the soil of Maharashtra will once again be famous in the country and abroad. Harshvardhan Sadgir made a strong comeback by winning a double title in the 68th Maharashtra Kesari Competition in

Wagholi. The journey that started from the difficult situation in the village is now heading towards the Olympics through financial difficulties, the struggle for a job and the success that he has achieved by standing up again. Harshvardhan defeated his own wrestler Mahendra Gaikwad in the final match. Even if either of them had won, the silver mace would have gone to Kaka Pawar's team. Because both Harshvardhan and Mahendra are Kaka Pawar's disciples. Harshvardhan from Nashik has won the wrestling and won the honor of becoming the seventh Maharashtra Kesari of Maharashtra

## MP Nilesh Lanke Urges Strengthening of AYUSH Sector in Parliament

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Ahilyanagar : Member of Parliament Nilesh Lanke has called for strengthening and expanding the AYUSH sector across the country, while actively participating in a meeting of the advisory committee of the Ministry of AYUSH. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the nationwide expansion of traditional systems of medicine, including Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy, as well as improving their accessibility in rural and remote areas. Lanke



highlighted public expectations, existing challenges and limitations in AYUSH services, stressing the need for necessary reforms. He particularly emphasised the importance of strengthening healthcare facilities in rural areas through wider

utilisation of AYUSH services, availability of trained manpower and effective implementation of government schemes. Responding to the issues raised, Union AYUSH Minister Prataprao Jadhav presented an overview of various schemes being implemented by the ministry and

outlined strategic initiatives aimed at expanding the AYUSH sector. "Strengthening the AYUSH sector will significantly boost the country's overall healthcare system. It is my responsibility to firmly raise public health-related issues in Parliament and committees," Lanke said. He further stated that the support and trust of the people enable him to take their concerns directly to the central government, and reaffirmed his commitment to consistently work on public welfare issues in the future.

## No Comparison Between Dabholkar and Fadnavis, Says Harshvardhan Sapkal

Urges Supriya Sule to Withdraw Statement

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Mumbai : Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee President Harshvardhan Sapkal has strongly criticised the remarks made by NCP MP Supriya Sule, stating that any comparison between Narendra Dabholkar and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis is "misleading and unacceptable." Reacting sharply, Sapkal said that the ideological legacy and paths of Dabholkar and Fadnavis are fundamentally different and cannot be equated. He



demanded that Sule withdraw her statement, calling it "provocative and misleading." Sapkal further stated that Dr. Narendra Dabholkar dedicated his life to eradicating superstition and promoting rational thinking in society, and was martyred while carrying

forward that mission. He described Dabholkar's legacy as rooted in the progressive ideals of social reformers and principles of truth, non-violence, and scientific temper. In contrast, Sapkal alleged that Fadnavis represents a different ideological path,

accusing him of promoting regressive ideas and deviating from progressive values. He claimed that the two figures stand on entirely different ideological foundations and their comparison is inappropriate. Expressing disappointment over Sule's remarks, Sapkal said she should remain mindful of the progressive legacy associated with her political background. He reiterated his demand for a clarification and withdrawal of her statement.

## Devotional celebration of Shri Ram Navami in Shirdi,

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Shirdi (Ahilyanagar): The main day of the three-day Shri Ram Navami festival celebrated by the Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan was celebrated today in a very devotional and enthusiastic atmosphere. Thousands of devotees participated in the Shri Ram Navami festival organized by the Sai Baba Sansthan and enjoyed the birth



anniversary of Lord Ram. Birth ceremony held in traditional manner: The birth ceremony of Balaram was held in a traditional manner by the Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan in a

silver cradle at the Sai Baba Samadhi Shatabdi Mandap. Chanting Jai Shri Ram, devotees celebrated the arrival of Lord Ram by showering flowers and garlands. The

entire Shirdi area was filled with the name of Sai Ram due to this ceremony. A kirtana based on the story of Ram was organized from 10 am to 12 pm. In this, an effective description of the incident from the Ramayana was given. Then, at 12 noon, the birth anniversary was celebrated by placing the silver idol of Balarama in a cradle.

## Funds are needed for Melghat! High Court slams government for citing 'beloved sister'

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Mumbai: The High Court on Wednesday slammed the state government for not providing adequate financial provisions for tribal areas compared to welfare schemes. The problem of infant mortality and maternal mortality due to malnutrition has persisted in tribal areas like Melghat for decades. Despite the High Court's repeated directions for the past three and a half decades, this problem has not gone away. Still, there is a shortage of hospitals and medical facilities. So if the state government has funds to provide financial assistance to people (Ladki Bhain) even when they are not working, then it should also be for tribal areas,' the Bombay High Court said on Wednesday. The next hearing was held before a bench of Justice Ravindra Ghuge and Justice Abhay Mantri on the petitions filed by Dr. Rajendra Barma and others on the problem of malnutrition and



infant mortality in Melghat and other tribal areas. Then, 'The government has decided to build a general hospital with three hundred beds in Dharani instead of the current 50. Therefore, this will be the first time that there will be two hospitals in the same district. Apart from that, other measures are also being taken,' informed the bench by government lawyer Bhupesh Samant. Then, 'The High Court had said in 2001 itself that there should be a hospital with more beds in Dharani. Today we are in 2026. Now the government says it will build a hospital with more beds. Only God knows when it will actually start. I myself have been coming to Mumbai from Nagpur for this hearing for the last

three decades to raise the issue of child deaths in tribal areas. The High Court itself may have given at least a hundred directions regarding this issue, but this is the situation. The government itself announced in the session that 32,000 deaths have occurred in tribal areas in the last two years due to malnutrition and lack of necessary medical facilities,' Adv. J. T. Gilda, on behalf of the petitioner, brought to the attention of the bench. Although the decision to build a three-hundred-bed hospital has actually been taken now, it should have been taken long ago. This problem has been going on for the last three and a half decades. Now tell me exactly when that hospital will be

completed. How many times should the court issue an order? The Supreme Court also recently stated that most of the cases in contempt of court are against the government.', the bench expressed its disapproval. So, 'Not all is well with the current 50-bed hospital.' The dearness allowance of the officers increases in percentage. However, now it seems that the government has increased the amount of bananas and eggs in the nutritional diet of tribal children by two rupees and made a provision of only eight rupees. The government has money to provide funds for 'beloved sisters', but not for those children? Gilda raised this question. Then, 'If the government has funds to provide financial assistance to people without doing any work, then there must be funds for hospitals and medical facilities in tribal areas,' the bench said harsh words to the government.

## Neelam Gorhe's order cancelled, Tushar Doshi's suspension not there

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Satara: Superintendent of Police Tushar Doshi appeared at his police headquarters today and was seen to have started his daily work. During the legislative session, Deputy Speaker Neelam Gorhe had ordered the suspension of Tushar Doshi. However, on the last day of the session, Speaker Ram Shinde cancelled the order of the Deputy Speaker and ordered an inquiry into the post of Satara Zilla Parishad President. Therefore, the question of whether Tushar Doshi was suspended or not was unanswered. However, as Tushar Doshi appeared in his office today, it is clear



that he was not suspended. Minister Shambhuraj Desai and Minister Makarand Patil were jostled by the police while taking two NCP members to the Zilla Parishad hall during the election for the post of Zilla Parishad President. After the chaos that ensued,

Minister Shambhuraj Desai had demanded in the Legislative Council that Satara Superintendent of Police Tushar Doshi and some of his officers be suspended. After this demand, Deputy Speaker Neelam Gorhe had also directed the suspension of Tushar

Doshi in the House. However, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that an inquiry would be conducted into this matter. He also said that the legal side needs to be examined regarding the powers of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Table President. In addition, on the last day of the session, Speaker Ram Shinde cancelled the order given by Neelam Gorhe. After this sequence of events, Superintendent of Police Tushar Doshi appeared at the police headquarters today after two days. Therefore, it is clear that the suspension action against him was withdrawn or he was not suspended at all.

## Wicket-breaking game, former minister's involvement in removing Jirwala from ministerial post; Vadettiwar's serious allegations

### Coffee Table

News Network

Nagpur: While the case related to Bhondubaba Ashok Kharat in Nashik is in the news, the alleged viral video related to NCP leader and state cabinet minister Narhari Jirwal has created a big stir in political circles. Now Congress legislative group leader Vijay Vadettiwar has made serious allegations and targeted the ruling party. He has alleged that political competition and internal competition for positions are the reasons behind this entire matter.

Speaking to reporters in Nagpur, Vijay Vadettiwar said, "Currently, only those who are not wanted are being targeted. Everyone is trying to get someone else's place. When one minister loses his wicket, another is ready, and a third is standing in line to remove him. That is why such cases are happening." Speaking further, Vadettiwar said, "Information is coming to light that the relevant incident took place in the government hostel. If the government hostel has been misused in this way,



then it is very serious. Such behavior while holding such a position is not at all appropriate. In this context, the Chief Minister can answer whether he takes Jirwal's wicket or keeps him back in the team," Vadettiwar said. Criticizing the alleged video being

circulated, Congress state president Harshvardhan Sapkal has demanded that Narhari Jirwal be removed from the cabinet. "The offensive video of Minister Narhari Jirwal going viral on social media is not just an incident, but a blatant example of

moral degradation in state politics. Such obscene and immoral behavior by a responsible public representative, who is trusted by the public and responsible for taxpayers' money, is extremely outrageous and condemnable. This is not only a violation of personal boundaries, but also a stain on the morality of public life, so the Chief Minister should immediately remove Jirwal from the ministerial post without any delay," Sapkal has demanded.

### Coffee Table

News Network

Kolhapur: Senior historical researcher Dr. Jaisingrao Pawar passed away. He passed away on Thursday morning. He breathed his last at the age of 85. Dr. Jaisingrao Pawar was known as a staunch supporter of the thoughts of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj. Jaisingrao Pawar wrote more than 25 historical books like Maharani Tarabai, Senapati Santaji Ghorpade, Maratheshahicha Magova, Rajarshi Shahu Smarak Granth. Dr. Jaisingrao Pawar's health had been unwell for the past few days. He had been undergoing treatment in the hospital for about a month and a half due to a lung infection. He breathed his last in Kolhapur on Thursday morning. With his death, feelings are being expressed that a historian of the



Maratha Empire has been lost. Dr. Jaisingrao Pawar was born on December 30, 1941, in Tadsar in Sangli district. Dr. Jaisingrao Pawar earned his MA and PhD degrees from Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He taught in colleges for more than three decades. He was known as a student-loving professor. His 20 serial books were in the syllabus for students up to MA. Under the guidance of the first Vice Chancellor of Shivaji University and historical researcher Dr. Appasaheb Pawar, Dr. Jaisingrao started his research

career in 1964. Dr. Jaisingrao Pawar worked hard throughout his life to make the work and policies of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj known to the society. He played an important role in introducing the work of the Karveer founder Tara Rani, who is a part of history, through his biography. He did the work of doing justice to the character of Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj out of gratitude. Dr. Pawar also wrote an important essay on Dadoji Konddev. Panchganga Tiri, the autobiography of Dr. Jaisingrao Pawar, was especially famous.

## Teacher's bike hit by dumper while leaving college; died on the spot after being run over

### Coffee Table

News Network

Satara: In two separate accidents that took place in Karad and Malkapur on Wednesday night, a professor and a vegetable vendor were killed on the spot, while three women including a 13-year-old girl were seriously injured. While she was going towards the Karad bus stand in the evening after leaving college, Prof. Sushma Ananda Kirtane was killed on the spot when a speeding dumper hit her bike and ran over her. In Malkapur, a speeding car hit her bike and entered the vegetable market. The vegetable vendor died on the spot and three women were injured after being crushed by the car. According to the information given by the police, Sushma Ananda Kirtane, a professor in the Botany Department at Yashwantrao Chavan Science College in Karad, was heading towards the bus stand on her bike around 6 pm after leaving college on Wednesday. At that time, the dumper hit her bike from behind. After hitting her, the dumper carried her along with the bike for ten to twelve feet, killing her on the spot.

She was a senior professor in the college. She had obtained her PhD a few days ago. On the other hand, a woman named Usha Balu Rowdale (Res. Malkapur, Tal. Karad) was crushed to death by a speeding car that entered the vegetable market in Malkapur. She was a vegetable seller. In this accident, three women, Rupali Maruti Patil (age 37, Res. Kale, Tal. Karad), Deepali Sachin Hulwan (age 38) and Gyanada Sachin Hulwan (age 13, currently Res. Malkapur, originally Res. Yedemachchindra, Tal. Walwa, Dist. Sangli), were also seriously injured and are undergoing treatment at Krishna Hospital. It was learned from the scene that the car that entered the vegetable market was being driven by a woman. After hitting the bike, the woman lost control and the speeding car entered the vegetable market. A major disaster was averted as the car stopped after hitting the building after hitting the women. Both the accidents have been registered at the Karad city police station and the police are investigating further.

## A 24-year-old youth died in Solapur after getting electrocuted while hoisting saffron on the welcome arch.

### Coffee Table

News Network

Solapur: An unfortunate incident has come to light in a busy square in Solapur city. A young man died on the spot after getting electrocuted while hoisting a saffron flag on the welcome arch. The family is in mourning after the unfortunate end of the family's breadwinner. A 24-year-old youth died of electrocution in an accident that took place on Wednesday evening on Swagatnagar Road in the Kumtha Naka area. The name of the deceased youth, who lives in Bharatnagar, is Ketan Ramesh Patole. After this incident, there is a lot of grief in the area. Ketan Patole's mother was devastated by the unfortunate death of the young boy. A pavilion was erected on the road at Yashwant Society,



Swagatnagar, for the program to be held on Thursday. A welcome arch was also erected in front of the pavilion. Ketan Patole had climbed up to hoist the flag on this arch. A steel pipe was attached to the cloth used for the flag. There was a high-voltage electric wire next to this arch, which was about 20 to 25 feet high. The steel pipe attached to the cloth used for the flag and the electric wire right next to the arch came into contact and everything was over in an instant. Ketan fell from a height of about 20 feet after receiving a strong electric shock. The youth around him were shocked to see

this thrilling incident. Ketan's cousin Umesh Patole had immediately admitted Ketan to the government hospital for treatment. However, the doctors declared him dead after the examination. The sudden departure of the young man, the breadwinner of the house, has caused a mountain of grief for the mother. Ketan's mother had lost her innocence due to such an unfortunate death of a young boy. The crowd of friends and relatives in the hospital area, the tears in their eyes, and the outcry were the only things that spoke volumes about the severity of the incident.

## Speeding car hits; Businessman cycling dies in horrific accident, young man's recklessness cost him his life!

### Coffee Table

News Network

Kalyan: The irresponsibility of a young boy in the Kalyan area has cost the life of a businessman cycling on the road. A shocking video of this incident has come to light and the accident has been captured on CCTV camera. Srinivas Tandale, a famous businessman from Kalyan area, has unfortunately died in this horrific accident. According to the information received, the young boy had taken the keys of his car from home and was leaving on the Ring Route Road in Kalyan. During this, he lost control of the car and around this time, this night, the businessman Srinivas Tandale, who was cycling on this road, was hit by this car. He died in this. This tragedy happened around 8 pm on Tuesday. Kalyan police have registered a case against the mother of the minor boy in this case. The Ring Road near Chandori in Kalyan has recently become a hotspot for accidents due to speeding drivers. The



stunts of the reckless drivers on this Ring Road are now directly endangering the lives of citizens and cyclists taking their morning walks. Angry reactions are being expressed after all these incidents. Cyclists in the cycling group in Kalyan are also expressing anger over this incident. Kalyan: The irresponsibility of a minor boy in the Kalyan area has cost the life of a businessman cycling on the road. A shocking video of this incident has come to light and the accident has been captured on CCTV camera. Srinivas Tandale, a famous businessman from Kalyan area, has unfortunately died in this horrific accident. According to the information received, the minor boy had taken the keys of his car from home and was leaving on the

Ring Route road in Kalyan. Meanwhile, he lost control of the car and this car hit businessman Srinivas Tandale, who was cycling on this road, around this night. He died in this. This horrific incident happened around 8 pm on Tuesday. Kalyan police have registered a case against the mother of the minor boy in this case. The Ring Road passing near Chandori in Kalyan has recently become a hotspot for accidents due to speeding drivers. The stunts of the reckless drivers on this Ring Road are now directly endangering the lives of citizens and cyclists taking their morning walks. Angry reactions are being expressed after all these incidents. The cyclists in the cycling group in Kalyan are also expressing anger about this incident.

## Firing at Police Commissionerate, life lost; On-duty jawan shoots himself

### Coffee Table

News Network

Amravati: A shocking incident has come to light in which Vijay Dilip Nagpure (age 35), a jawan of the (QRT) Quick Response Team working in the city police commissionerate, committed suicide on Wednesday morning. This incident has created a stir in the entire police department and is being expressed among his colleagues. According to the information received, Vijay Nagpure was on night duty on Tuesday night. After completing his duty, he committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with his own government pistol at the QRT office in the police commissionerate at around 9 am on



Wednesday morning. Upon receiving information about the incident, Police Commissioner Rakesh Ola, Deputy Commissioner of Police Ganesh Shinde, Sham Ghuge and senior officers immediately reached the spot. The incident was first noticed by QRT police officer Akash Dilip Ambarte. After he immediately informed the senior officers, the entire system was

shaken. A forensic team and dog squad have been called to the scene and an investigation has been initiated. The bullet in the pistol has been recovered from the scene. The body has been sent to the District General Hospital for autopsy for further investigation. Vijay Nagpure was originally a resident of Dhamangaon Katpur in Morshi taluka. He was currently living with his family in

Amravati city. He had joined the police department in the 2014 batch. He is survived by his family and his brother Shyam Nagpure is also working in the city police force. Meanwhile, the exact reason behind the suicide is not yet clear and the police department is conducting a thorough investigation into the case. This unfortunate incident has spread grief in the police force. It has

come to light that an unfortunate incident took place at a busy square in Solapur city. A young man died on the spot after getting electrocuted while hoisting a saffron flag on the welcome arch. The unfortunate end of the family's breadwinner has brought grief to the family. A 24-year-old youth died of electric shock in an accident that took place on Swagatnagar Road in Kumtha Naka area on Wednesday evening. The name of the deceased youth is Ketan Ramesh Patole, a resident of Bharatnagar. After this incident, there is a lot of grief in the area. Ketan Patole's mother was devastated by the unfortunate death of the young boy.

## Property tax exemption for houses up to 500 square feet in Pune

### Coffee Table

News Network

Pune: To promote women's ownership rights, the Pune Municipal Corporation has announced a 50 percent tax exemption on properties up to 500 square feet in the name of women in the city till March 31, 2026. However, small property owners who were hoping to get tax relief from the civic administration as promised by leaders in the 2026 municipal elections will have to wait a little longer. The Pune Municipal Corporation's standing committee, while announcing the budget recently, did not announce any blanket tax exemption for properties up to 500 square feet,



which is implemented in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) policy. Tax gift from Pune Municipal Corporation to women property owners. On the contrary, to promote women's ownership rights, the Pune Municipal Corporation has announced a 50% income tax exemption on properties up to 500 square feet in the name of women till March 31, 2026. Thus, the currency of

registering properties in the name of women may increase. The jurisdiction of Pune Municipal Corporation includes about 14.92 lakh properties and till February 19, 2026, the owners of about 11.10 lakh properties had paid tax of Rs 2,713.60 crore and now it has set a target of raising revenue of Rs 3,250 crore by March 31, 2026.

## Editorial...

## I can't bear it and I can't even explain it.

US President Donald Trump, who has thrown the entire world into a state of uncertainty by declaring an Iran-Israel war, now seems to be alone. Trump, who initially promised to annihilate Iran in this war, has now started saying that we will end this war in two to four days after seeing Iran's resistance. Even after eighteen days, there is no possibility of this war ending, on the contrary, Iran's resistance has increased and it has gained control over the water trade in the Strait of Hormuz, which has put not only Trump but also the entire world in a dilemma. Despite killing Iran's supreme leader and key associates in the attack and destroying many cities, Iran is not ready to back down, on the contrary, it has increased the scope of the war by targeting America's allies. Now, by appealing to other countries to participate in this war, America seems to have taken a step back. Iran has made a different move in this war and has closed the Strait of Hormuz and imposed an economic blockade on the world. Therefore, many countries that have kept themselves away from this war have been indirectly drawn into this war. The Strait of Hormuz is a very strategic sea waterway connecting the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. About 20 percent of the world's oil is transported through this narrow route. This route is the only route connecting the oil-producing countries of the Middle East to the world. A large amount of global sea oil is transported through this route. The closure of this route by Iran has started affecting the global oil price. The supply of gas and petroleum products has stopped, which has created an emergency-like situation in many countries. Many countries are being unnecessarily burdened by the crisis created by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. If we think of India alone, many industries have closed due to lack of gas. On the one hand, there is no work, and on the other hand, there is nothing to eat because the hotels are closed. After Iran banned ships from passing

through the Strait of Hormuz, US President Donald Trump proposed to his allies, including China, France, Japan, Britain, and South Korea, to conduct a joint naval patrol in the Strait of Hormuz to protect oil tankers. He also warned that if NATO countries do not cooperate, their security and mutual relations will be affected. Trump's threatening appeal does not seem to have had any effect on the allies for now. While Australia and Japan flatly rejected Trump's proposal for a joint patrol, Trump is furious as his European friends, including England and Germany, have also wondered what our role is in your war. He also gave a suggestive warning that the meeting with Xi Jinping may be postponed if China does not help secure the Strait of Hormuz. Overall, Iran has blocked the Strait of Hormuz and blocked Trump's nose. The consequences of this are already visible and it is time for them to ask for help from their allies. Trump's constant war rhetoric is now starting to bother his allies. As the atmosphere against this war is starting to form in the United States itself, Trump is facing a double dilemma. On the one hand, while Trump is pleading with his allies, Iran is allowing some countries like China and India to use its ships. Despite suffering immense losses in the war, Iran is seen responding to Trump and Netanyahu by making diplomatic compromises and refusing to surrender, which has increased the fear of prolonging the war. Trump, who used to brag that he had solved the India-Pakistan war, is seen struggling in the Iran-Israel war. Even the leader of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, for whom he did all this, is not ready to listen and even his allies have turned their backs. Trump is trapped in such a difficult situation. He has reached a state where he cannot bear it and cannot even explain it. It is worrying for humanity that the end of war is approaching its worst form, as it seems impossible to find a dignified solution to such a difficult situation.

## Oil &amp; gas crisis likely to hit economy

Coffee Table  
News Network

Predictions and projections may not turn out to be accurate. While promises of politicians mostly are found to falter, this may not be the same in case of professional economists who predict something based on some scientific calculations. In this connection, the West Asian crisis has complicated the situation in most countries of the Third World, including India, which is heavily dependent on oil and gas imports. It is a well-known fact that the world remains dependent on reliable oil and gas supplies, even though two-thirds of global spending in the energy sector now go to cleaner alternatives such as solar power. While oil now meets a smaller share of global energy needs than it earlier used to less than 30 per cent, according to the International Energy Agency the world uses almost twice as

much of the fuel as it did in the early 1970s. And natural gas used to heat homes and generate electricity, underpins much more of the economy than it used to. According to experts, the post-oil world is still a future proposition. The world can be said to be just in the middle stages of an energy transition as such change takes time. Meanwhile, a sustained rise in crude oil prices could widen India's current account deficit, push up inflation and affect economic growth, pointed out most economists. However, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman informed the Lok Sabha that the government does not expect inflation to rise substantially due to the recent spike in global crude prices. It hovers below \$100 per barrel presently from just below \$70 per barrel in end February. However, analysts believe that the price may eventually stabilise at around \$85 per barrel compared to



last year's average of \$69 per barrel though Fitch projected a few days back the global crude oil to average \$70 per barrel in 2026. According to SBI Research and many other studies, if the oil prices reach the \$120 mark per barrel, which at present appears quite unlikely, GDP growth may fall to around 6 per cent. One may mention here that before the continuation of the tensions in West Asia, may lead to food inflation. Up to \$100 per barrel, the impact on current account deficit, inflation and growth

is expected to be manageable but if it crosses that mark, the impact may be exponential, rightly stated Soumya Kanti Ghosh, the chief economic adviser of SBI. If that situation occurs, which may be ruled out at this juncture, Nashik Main INDIANOIL the country may face a problem situation and in the present atmosphere it remains to be seen how the RBI balances inflation management with currency stability. It is gratifying to note that Moody's Rating and its Indian affiliate, ICRA, stated that the

West Asian conflict should have limited near-term impact on India's banking system though real GDP growth would be 6.4 per cent of GDP. One may mention here that crude imports from Russia remained at the top of India's oil basket despite US warning New Delhi against purchases from Moscow for which an additional levy of 25 per cent was imposed. Indian oil purchases from Moscow picked up in 2023 after the Ukraine war, which went up to 1.5 to 2.1 million barrels a day. It is interesting to note that India never stopped sourcing crude from Russia despite President Trump linking the withdrawal of a 25 per cent penalty tariff in the proposed trade deal framework to New Delhi's purported pledge to halt such purchases. Much to the relief of India, the US recently announced a 30-day waiver to India to purchase Russian oil. It "removed a point of friction" that was

never in anyone's interest to sustain. The problem arises regarding gas imports. India may face serious disruptions in supply of fertilizers and raw materials in the next Kharif season, starting June, if the block-ade of the Strait of Hormuz continues due to the conflict in West Asia, according to insiders. Any reduction in the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to urea manufacturers in the coming weeks could impact production of the key soil nutrient ahead of the Kharif planting season. It would be prudent to evolve a long-term plan that needs to be evolved immediately, especially in the gas sector, and how much dependence can be eased not just on West Asia but also reducing imports as a whole. Even the post-oil scenario could further add momentum to increase production of clean energy in India in the coming years.

## Why is Iran attacking Dubai?

Coffee Table  
News Network

In the ongoing conflict, Iran's intent is absolutely unequivocal. It does not want to bow to the United States or Israel. It aims to keep targeting countries in the Middle East that host American military bases. But Dubai has no American military base at all so why is Iran attacking a peaceful city like Dubai? This question is on everyone's mind these days, because Dubai is not merely a city, it is a modern-day 'city of Kubera', a symbol of immense wealth. Prosperity is embedded in every grain of this place. In numerical terms, people from nearly 200 countries live here. Last year, around two crore international tourists visited Dubai. Almost everyone aspires to visit it at least once. Speaking of this desire, I am reminded of a Pakistani film titled Chalo Dubai! It was made in 1979 by director Riaz Batalvi at a time when Dubai had been independent from Britain for only eight years. One can't help but wonder whether Batalvi possessed some prophetic instinct about the city's destiny, sensing that it would rise to become a beacon of unimaginable wealth and opportunity. History seems to vindicate him. Today, lakhs of Indians and Pakistanis call

Dubai home though, in a telling twist, the city has largely closed its doors to Pakistani visa seekers. The question is how did a place that, about half a century ago, was known for warring tribes, fishing, pearl diving and small-scale coastal trade, achieve such unprecedented development in just 50 years? You might be wondering why, while discussing Iranian attacks, I have shifted to talking about Dubai's remarkable growth. The truth is, this very rise is the reason behind the attacks and so it is



There has been a deep global trust in Dubai, that people are safe, businesses are secure and law and order is robust. Will the continued Iranian attacks shake this trust? essential to understand Dubai's ascent first. Whenever we talk about the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Dubai is the first name that comes to mind. But in reality, the UAE is a federation of seven emirates: Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Umm Al Quwain, Ajman, Fujairah and Ras



Al Khaimah. The capital of the UAE is Abu Dhabi. All of these gained independence from Britain on December 1, 1971. The very next day, all except Ras Al Khaimah formed a union. About two months later,

contributes only about one per cent to Dubai's gross domestic product (GDP), yet he created conditions that propelled the nation rapidly along the path of prosperity. The approach is crystal clear: Come here,

intermediaries. The diamond trade, once thriving in Belgium and Israel, now finds its major hub in Dubai. The United Arab Emirates, especially Dubai, offers something for everyone. Even cricket has found a firm footing here. Dubai continues to script an unparalleled story of astonishing construction and opulence, much like Europe once did. Landmarks such as Burj Khalifa, Palm Jumeirah, Dubai Marina, Jumeirah Lake Towers and Jumeirah Heights inspire awe. Palm Jumeirah, a man-made island, is particularly remarkable as it was constructed without the use of concrete or steel, using 120 million cubic metres of sand dredged from the sea. The Dubai Metro is another unique project. In essence, whatever Dubai envisioned, it brought into reality. To attract top global talent, it has consistently done what is necessary by even allowing certain social freedoms for expatriates, such as unmarried couples living together. This reflects the UAE's long-term, prag-

matic outlook. It has maintained friendly relations with all countries and built grand mosques while also respecting secular values, as seen in permitting a Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi. Now comes the central question: Why is Iran attacking the UAE, particularly Dubai? So far, Iran has launched more than 2,000 missiles and drones. Most have been intercepted, but several have struck Dubai. Explosions have occurred even at Dubai Airport, causing loss of life. The objective appears clear to shatter the perception of Dubai as a safe haven, spreading fear globally so that people and investors stay away. Will Iran succeed? Regardless of the outcome, its resolve seems firm: If you align with the United States, you will not be spared. But consider the plight of those living under a barrage of missiles - their lives must be in constant distress. But who really thinks about the ordinary people? When giants clash, it is the fields that get trampled. Today, institutions like the United Nations and all those that speak of peace seem increasingly ineffective. The old adage 'might is right' appears to be playing out. If the United States claims to be the leader of the world, it must also act like one. The author is the chairman, Editorial

## PM Modi told Trump to end war... India not a dalal nation (on Pak role): Govt

Coffee Table  
News Network

A day after US President Donald Trump called up Prime Minister Narendra Modi and discussed the situation in West Asia, the government Wednesday informed leaders of political parties that Modi made it clear to Trump that India "wants to see the war coming to an end" as it is "affecting everyone." When the Opposition leaders inquired if Pakistan's role as a mediator between the US and Iran was a setback for India, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was quoted as having said that this was not new as Pakistan had been playing that role since 1981. He was also quoted as having said that India cannot be "a dalal nation" running after countries and asking if its services were needed. Jaishankar, according to some present at the meeting, also



pointed out that if this was seen as a failure of India's foreign policy now, it was a failure earlier as well. The government also assured the Opposition that India had adequate stock of oil and gas and that there was no need for panic. With the war in West Asia and the government's response on various developments, including the assassination of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the sinking of an Iranian ship in the Indian Ocean, dividing the political class, Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh chaired the all-party meeting in an attempt to forge a broad domestic political consensus on the matter. But the Opposition appeared unsatisfied with the government's outreach with the Congress demanding a discussion in both the Houses of Parliament on the volatile situation and the government's foreign policy approach. Apart from Singh, the meeting was attended by seven ministers including Jaishankar, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Health Minister J P Nadda and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju. At the outset, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri made a presentation on the developments in West Asia and the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz. Asked about the conversation Modi had with Trump, Jaishankar told the meeting that Modi conveyed to Trump "we want to see the war coming to an end as it is affecting everyone."

## I am also worried about my mother's health, I was lying on the hospital couch all night; Sonia Gandhi in the hospital, Rahul is worried

Coffee Table  
News Network

Thiruvananthapuram: Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi has been admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi for the past two days. 79-year-old Sonia Gandhi was admitted to the hospital around 10 pm on Tuesday due to stomach and urinary tract infection. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi has stayed at the hospital to take care of his mother. Rahul Gandhi posted a video on the Congress party's social media account and said, "I was sleeping on a small sofa in my mother's room in the hospital. Like any child, I am deeply worried about my mother's health. However, a nurse in Kerala took very good care of my mother, which gave her relief." In fact, due to Sonia Gandhi's ill health, Rahul did not even attend the all-party meeting held at



Parliament House on Wednesday. His planned visit to Kerala was also cancelled. Mallikarjun Kharge went on the tour in his place. Rahul addressed the audience online, "Last night I was sleeping on a small sofa in my mother's room in the hospital. Just like any son worries about his mother's health, I was worried too." The only thing that comforted me throughout the night was a nurse from Kerala; she used to come every hour to check on my mother. Every hour, she would come there and

take care of my mother. She would smile and hold my mother's hand. I was thinking about how many children, sisters and brothers these nurses from Kerala must have comforted in the most difficult times of their lives. In the morning, I asked her, "Do you sleep at night or do you work all night?" She replied, "I work all night." This means that when the whole world is in deep sleep, these women of Kerala are working to comfort people—not only in Kerala, but in Delhi, across the

country and even around the world. They are holding people's hands and comforting them and making them feel relaxed and safe," said Rahul Gandhi. Dr. Ajay Swarup, Chairman of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said on Thursday that Sonia Gandhi was admitted to the hospital on the night of March 24. Her condition is stable now. There is no serious cause for concern. She was admitted to the hospital around 10:22 pm on Tuesday after she developed fever.

## India's Grey Counter: How New Delhi Is Fighting China's Invisible War In The Indian Ocean

Coffee Table  
News Network

There is a version of a contest that occurs with no shots fired, no diplomatic communiqués, and no headlines. It unfolds in the deep waters of the Ninety East Ridge, in the quiet rotations of a research vessel near Sri Lanka, in the gap between two radar pings as a ship switches off its transponder south of the Malabar coast. It is the contest that Beijing has been winning, largely undisturbed, in India's maritime backyard. Until New Delhi, slowly but with growing urgency, began to push back. That reckoning is now underway. India's response to China's grey-zone maritime strategy, in times of neither war nor peace, a deliberate campaign of intelligence-gathering, infrastructure seeding, and presence-by-stealth, is taking shape across multiple fronts. From the deployment of underwater sensor networks to the fast-tracking of the procurement of autonomous maritime systems, New Delhi is building the architecture of a maritime surveillance state. The question is not whether India is responding. It is whether it is responding fast enough and whether it will be adequate. China has mastered the grammar of ambiguity at sea. The research vessel Dong Fang Hong 3, operated by the Ocean University of China, is emblematic of the same. Ship-tracking data shows the vessel



conducting repeated survey missions between 2024 and 2025 across strategic waters near Taiwan, Guam, and, critically, through the Indian Ocean, including routes approaching Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the vital Malacca Strait. Chinese authorities describe these missions as climate science and seabed analysis. Naval experts are less credulous. Deep-sea mapping yields the kind of data that allows submarines to navigate covertly, evade detection, and operate at maximum efficiency. The science is, for the most part, real, but so is its military utility, which is what China is after. You May Like And the Dong Fang Hong 3 is not alone. China's ocean-mapping programme has documented dozens of research vessels and hundreds of seabed sensors sweeping the Pacific, Indian, and Arctic oceans in what amounts to a sustained subsurface intelligence effort. The Ridge figures prominently in that survey record, a 5,000-kilometre underwater mountain chain running through the central Indian Ocean whose topography offers

natural navigational cover for submarine transit towards the Andaman Sea and India's eastern seaboard. Since 2020, the PLAN has roughly doubled the number of submarines it rotates through the Indian Ocean Region. Yuan-class diesel-electric boats and Jin-class ballistic missile submarines have been tracked operating within range of Indian waters. The surface picture is equally telling: Chinese vessels, research ships, survey platforms, and merchant traffic with state connections have repeatedly switched off their AIS transponders while transiting sensitive areas of the IOR, creating deliberate gaps in any tracking record that a single nation, acting alone, could hope to assemble. At sea, China's strategy is inseparable from its broader effort to reshape the strategic geography around India. Beijing has spent years cultivating a network of economic and military relationships across South Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral to try and create an anti-India arc. The China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor, whose announced value has risen to approximately 62 billion US dollars, provides China a direct route from Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea via Gwadar, easing the Malacca Strait chokepoint while entrenching a permanent strategic presence on India's western flank. Colombo, Hambantota, and other Indian Ocean ports carrying the hallmarks of Belt and Road investment are potential dual-use strongpoints from which Chinese naval logistics could be supported in a crisis. The convening of the China-Indian Ocean Forum, through which Beijing has cultivated diplomatic traction among littoral states, adds a political dimension to what is otherwise a military-intelligence campaign. China is using the Indian Ocean as a strategic laboratory, experimenting with instruments of influence unavailable elsewhere.

**ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS**

**LIMIT SPEED ON HIGHWAYS**

**60**

**Embrace Safe Driving Practices!  
Reduce Speed - Save Lives**

**COFFEE TABLE**  
An initiative of Coffee Table towards Road Safety

## Article 25 Doesn't Include Right To Seek Public Holiday On Religious Occasion

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

The Supreme Court has held that the fundamental right to freedom of religion under Article 25 does not include a right to demand that the State declare a public holiday on a religious occasion, while emphasising that as a developing nation, India must prioritise productivity and continuity of work. A Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta dismissed a public interest litigation filed by the All India Shiromani Singh Sabha seeking directions to declare the birth anniversary (Prakash Parv) of Guru Gobind Singh as a nationwide gazetted holiday and to frame uniform guidelines governing the declaration of public holidays across the country. The Court had dismissed the matter last week (March 17) and the detailed order was uploaded yesterday. At the outset, the Court expressed deep reverence for Guru Gobind Singh, observing that his teachings emphasise honest labour and selfless service, and that his legacy is best honoured through dedicated performance of duties rather than disengagement from work. "At the outset, it must be observed that the tenets of Sikhism place paramount emphasis on remembrance, honest labour, and selfless service. The life of Guru Gobind Singh Ji stands as a testament to courage, discipline, and unwavering commitment to duty, even in the face of the gravest adversity. His teachings, rooted in the concept of 'Kirat Karo' (earn an honest living) and 'Vand Chakko' (share what you earn), illuminate a path of active engagement



with one's responsibilities rather than disengagement therefrom. This Court records its deepest reverence for the Tenth Guru, whose life was a tireless crusade for justice and the fulfillment of one's earthly duties. In this light, the celebration of his legacy is perhaps best achieved through the dedicated performance of duties toward society and the nation rather than a symbolic show of respect by demanding a holding in reverence." Addressing the core issue, the Court underscored that the declaration of public holidays is a matter of policy determination involving administrative efficiency, economic implications and governance considerations. It noted that any indiscriminate expansion of gazetted holidays could adversely impact governance and public productivity. Significantly, the Bench highlighted the developmental context of the country, observing that the dignity of labour and continuity of work must remain central considerations in policy decisions relating to public holidays. The Court observed that increasing non-working days through judicial mandate would

involve a line-drawing exercise that is inherently policy-driven and not amenable to judicial determination. In this context, we must be mindful of the fact that the country's diverse diaspora already enjoys a variety of holidays based on religious beliefs. Our national and regional calendars are replete with observances reflecting our rich pluralism. The expansion of the list of gazetted holidays is a matter of administrative calibration, and any indiscriminate addition would adversely impact governance and public productivity. As a developing nation, the focus must remain on the dignity of labour and the continuity of work. Any judicial mandate to increase non-working days involves a line-drawing exercise that is inherently policy-driven and not amenable to judicial determination." the reliance on Article 25, the Court clarified that while the Constitution guarantees every individual the right to profess, practice and propagate religion, it does not extend to seeking State recognition of a religious occasion through the declaration of a compulsory nationwide public holiday. The invocation of Article 25 for such a claim, the Court held, was

misplaced. "Similarly, the reliance on Article 25 of the Constitution of India is totally misplaced. While the freedom of religion guarantees every individual the right to profess, practice and propagate religion, it does not extend to a right to seek State recognition of a religious occasion in the form of a compulsory nationwide public holiday." The Court further observed that India's federal structure necessitates variation in executive decisions across States based on regional socio-cultural considerations, and that divergence in approaches to public holidays does not by itself amount to arbitrariness or discrimination under Article 14. Cautioning against judicial overreach, the Bench warned that granting such relief could open the floodgates to similar demands from diverse groups, resulting in an impractical expansion of public holidays and adverse consequences for governance and administrative functioning. Accordingly, holding that the relief sought did not disclose a justiciable violation of fundamental rights under Article 32, the Supreme Court dismissed the writ petition.

## Mandate On Non-Disclosure Of Rape Victim's Identity Not Being Followed: Supreme Court Directs Strict Compliance In Pending Cases

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Expressing concern over the disclosure of a rape victim's identity in court records, the Supreme Court has directed all Registrars General of High Courts to ensure strict compliance with the statutory prohibition under Section 228-A IPC in all pending cases, including those instituted prior to its 2018 judgment in Nipun Saxena v. Union of India. The Court observed that the mandate against disclosure of a victim's identity is a long-standing position in law, yet it has not been consistently followed. In the end, we direct that a copy of this judgment be sent to all the Registrars General of the High Courts to ensure that in all matters dated prior to the passing of this Court's judgment in Nipun Saxena v. Union of India, which has mandated the non-disclosure of the victim's identity, and still pending, the proscription in Section 228-A IPC is followed strictly. This has been the long-standing position in law but, it has not been followed," the Court observed. The observations came in a case where the Supreme Court set



aside the acquittal of a man accused of committing rape on a minor girl, holding that minor inconsistencies in witness statements cannot be a ground to discard the prosecution case in its entirety when the core of the case remains intact. The Court noted that minor inconsistencies in the witness statements should not be a reason to discard the prosecution's case in entirety when the core of the prosecution's case is not compromised. It is well recognised that human perception, memory and narration are imperfect. As such, the Court has consistently held that minor inconsistencies or trivial discrepancies in the testimony of

witnesses do not by themselves make the evidence unreliable... Truthful witnesses may differ in detail due to normal lapses of memory or differences in perception. The essential question is whether the inconsistencies materially compromise the backbone of the prosecution narrative... when omissions or contradictions relate to material facts that form the foundation of the prosecution's version, they assume significance and may create reasonable doubt," observed a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N. Kotiswar Singh. The prosecution's case was that the victim/prosecutrix had left her house on her mother's instructions to bring

a 'lassi' from a relative's house at about 07:30 AM, which is 8 KMs away from her home. While she was returning bringing in the 'lassi', the Respondent-accused committed a rape on her, and she returned back home by 09:30 AM. The trial court convicted the accused under Section 376 IPC and sentenced her to rigorous imprisonment for ten years, which was interfered by the High Court doubting the prosecution's case on the ground of founding the prosecutrix/victim's statement of travelling 16 KMs within two hours as highly improbable. Against the High Court's decision of acquittal, the State appealed to the Supreme Court.

## Supreme Court Urges P&H HC To Consider Request To Relax 45% Minimum Mark Condition For SC Candidates In Civil Judge Exam

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

The Supreme Court recently requested the Punjab and Haryana High Court to "sympathetically consider" a request to relax for the Scheduled Caste category candidates the condition of securing 45% in the mains examination for the recruitment of Civil Judge (Junior Division), held as per the advertisement issued by the Haryana Public Service Commission in January 2024. The Court was hearing a petition filed by a Scheduled Caste woman, Diksha Kalson, who sought accommodation on the grounds that she failed to meet the criteria by only 1.9 marks. She also stated that only 9 candidates were



recommended for appointment as Civil Judge (Junior Division) from the Scheduled Caste category against a total of 39 vacancies. As per her plea, Kalson scored 493.10 marks out of 1100 and failed to meet the criteria by a narrow margin of 1.9 marks. The cut-off marks for the Scheduled Caste category were 495 marks. She stated that she was awarded zero marks for one of her answers in the English paper, which all authorities having

repute in the English language attested to be correct. She then made several representations to the Chief Justice of the Punjab & Haryana High Court, the Secretary of the Haryana Public Service Commission, and the Registrar (Recruitment), and even preferred a writ petition before the High Court. The High Court dismissed her petition on the grounds that once she appeared in the exam, she was disallowed from challenging Clause

33 of the Advertisement, which barred re-evaluation of the paper. Against this, she approached the Supreme Court in this regard. A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice Vipul M. Pancholi, found no fault with clause 33 of the advertisement. However, when Senior Advocate Sanjay R Hegde (for the petitioner) submitted that 30 vacancies are remaining to be filled in the Scheduled Caste category, the Court granted liberty to the petitioner, as well as to others who may be placed higher than her on the merit list, to make a representation before the High Court.

# Plant Trees

## Save the Earth

Join the Green Movement!

Act Now for Greener Tomorrow!

Stay Ahead with.....

Contact : 9890615255

# Coffee Table

A premium English daily newspaper focused on Banking, Finance, Economy & Law

## 13 people killed in Andhra Pradesh bus fire; PM Modi announces ex gratia

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Markapuram: At least 13 people were killed and 22 others were injured after a private bus caught fire after it struck a tipper lorry in Andhra Pradesh's Markapuram district on Thursday. According to officials, the impact of the collision led to a fire in the bus, leaving several passengers trapped. Many of the victims were charred to death. Officials said rescue operations are ongoing while a command and control room has been set up at Markapuram deputy collector's office to assist families. The private bus was heading to Kaligiri in Nellore district from Jagtial in Telangana when the accident occurred between 5:30 am and 6 am. The truck overturned and the front of the bus was completely sheared off by the force of the collision. Chief Minister N.



Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock and grief over the loss of lives. He directed authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident and submit a detailed report. President Droupadi Murmu condoled the loss of lives in the accident and wished a speedy recovery to the injured. "Deeply saddened to learn about the tragic bus accident in Markapuram district, Andhra Pradesh. I extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families. My thoughts and prayers

are with them. I wish a speedy recovery to those injured," Murmu said on X. Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the deaths and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh from PMNRF to the next of kin of each deceased. "The mishap in Markapuram district, Andhra Pradesh, is tragic. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover at the earliest. An ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would

be given Rs. 50,000," PM Modi said. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy also expressed shock over the accident. Wishing a speedy recovery to the injured, he directed Chief Secretary K Ramakrishna Rao to gather details of those killed and injured. The Chief Secretary was also asked to coordinate with officials in Andhra Pradesh. Rao also spoke to his counterpart to ensure the injured receive the best medical care.

## No power tariff hike for FY 2026-27 in Andhra Pradesh: ERC Chairman PVR Reddy

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

KURNOOL: Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC) Chairman P Venkata Ramana Reddy announced that there will be no increase in electricity tariffs for any category of consumers in the State for the financial year 2026-27. On Wednesday, APERC Chairman PVR Reddy along with other officials released the Retail Supply Tariff Order for the financial year 2026-27. The tariff order along with the DISCOMs' True-up/True-down and Performance Review Order for FY 2024-25 also formally unveiled at APERC office in Kurnool. The Chairman, speaking on the occasion, stated that the tariff order is a crucial exercise aimed at ensuring transparency, the financial stability of power distribution companies, and the protection of consumer



interests. He noted that the Commission has carefully reviewed all relevant factors, including operational costs and public feedback, before finalising the order. He explained that the Commission has issued orders on retail electricity tariffs along with the true-up and performance review of DISCOMs for FY 2024-25. The state's power distribution companies (DISCOMs) had proposed a revenue gap of Rs 17,508.17 crore. However, the Commission approved a reduced gap of Rs 15,790.57 crore after detailed scrutiny of filings and stakeholder consultations. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has committed

to bridging this gap, ensuring that no additional burden is passed on to consumers. PVR Reddy highlighted that around 1.13 crore domestic consumers will benefit from the decision, as tariffs remain unchanged. Additionally, nearly 22 lakh agricultural consumers will continue to receive free power supply, while about 22 lakh consumers from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and economically weaker sections will receive power either free or at concessional rates through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). In a significant relief to commercial users, tariffs have been reduced from Rs 12.25

per unit to ₹9.95 per unit, benefiting nearly 2 lakh consumers. The Commission has also increased the load limit for cottage industries from 10 HP to 20 HP, extending concessional tariffs to around 18,000 such consumers. The APERC Chairman also announced several structural changes, including the creation of a separate tariff category for solar module manufacturing industries to promote renewable energy. Certain sectors like water purification plants and printing press units have been reclassified under the industrial category. The Commission rejected key proposals from DISCOMs, including changes to Time-of-Day tariffs and removal of the green power category. It also directed DISCOMs to improve efficiency, reduce arrears, and enhance electrical safety measures across the state.

## No shortage of funds for Polavaram: Union Secretary VL Kantharao

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM: Union Water Resources Secretary VL Kantharao has reiterated that there is no shortage of funds for the Polavaram project, with adequate budget provisions made for both the current and next financial years. He said a comprehensive plan is in place to complete the project within the stipulated timeframe. Speaking to the media after inaugurating the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA) office in Rajamahendravaram on Wednesday,



Kantharao said the office was shifted from Hyderabad to ensure closer monitoring of works. He also reviewed ongoing construction at the project site. Nearly 20 agencies are working in coordination to expedite completion within 15 months, with a target set or June 2027. Kantharao stressed the need to accelerate progress

and clarified that design-related matters are with the Central Water Commission, where a dedicated team is finalising them. "There are no issues with the design. Quality and skilled execution are our top priorities," he said. He added that monthly review meetings will be held to monitor the project works.

## Kashmir handicrafts, carpets in disarray over war

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

SRINAGAR: The carpets and handicrafts sector in Kashmir has been severely hit by the Iran war, with business crashing suddenly. Traders say they have stopped getting queries from prospective buyers and warn that if the situation persists, there may be massive job cuts in the handicrafts sector that sustains nearly three lakh livelihoods. Former Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief and member of the Carpet Export Promotion Council, Sheikh Ashiq, told this newspaper that the crisis has acquired an



unprecedented scale. "The carpet and handicrafts sector in the valley has gone in silent mode since the start of the Iran war. Even buyers from the US and Europe are not making any business queries," he said, underlining the global ripple effects of the Iran conflict. Kashmir's carpets, known for their intricate craftsmanship and heritage value, are exported to around

25 countries, with West Asia serving as a key market. Alongside hand-knotted carpets, traditional handicrafts, such as papier-mâché, Pashmina shawls, Kani weaves, Sozni embroidery, Khatamband woodwork, and walnut wood carvings, form the backbone of the valley's export economy. According to him, any war impacts Kashmir's

business community badly, as they trade in high-end and luxury products. "Whenever a war happens, we are the first victims of it, as people shift their priorities from luxury spending to basic survival," he said. Prominent carpet dealer Fayaz Ahmad Shah, who is overseeing creation of the world's second largest silk carpet, measuring 30 feet by 72 feet and covering an area of 2,160 square feet, also expressed serious concern about the situation. While a group of 17 master artisans are working on the ambitious project since February 2015, Shah warned that prolonged instability could force him to

halt the project. "Right now, the dealers are managing to keep the looms running, but if the situation persists, it will become impossible," Shah said. The Kashmir carpets and handicrafts sector exports goods worth Rs 600 crore to Rs 700 crore annually, which is a significant sum for the state's economy. Ashiq cautions that the global market is unlikely to stabilise in the near term. "Everything has been disturbed. If the war continues, it could lead to massive job cuts, and thousands of families dependent on this sector may lose their only source of income," he said.

## Police action on EC orders on BJP seal issue shows intolerance towards criticism: CM Pinarayi Vijayan

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

KOCHI: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said the Election Commission's direction to police to act against alleged misleading news on social media regarding a letter carrying the BJP's seal shows "intolerance towards criticism" by the poll panel. Vijayan said the matter would be taken up with the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), describing the presence of the BJP Kerala unit's seal on an Election Commission document as "unbelievable" and not a mere lapse by a single official. He added that Kerala Chief Electoral Officer Rathan U Kelkar had informed him that the matter was under investigation. According to him, the details of the probe and its findings should be made public. "Such developments will be criticised. I am criticising it now. But directing police to take



action is a move to block criticism. It shows intolerance towards criticism. Can the ECI behave like that? It has to remove itself from such decisions. Not allowing criticism is not right in a democratic system," Vijayan said. He further said the police were no longer under his control and that the action was taken at the direction of the ECI. The poll panel had on Tuesday said it had directed police to take down misleading news about the issue from social media platforms. Police said certain images and content, which were later clarified by the Kerala Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), continued to be

circulated in a misleading manner across platforms. "These were being used as part of a misinformation campaign, with the potential to adversely impact the integrity of the electoral process and erode public trust," it said. The controversy surfaced after the CPI(M) flagged the issue on social media platform X, sharing an affidavit attached to a March 19, 2019 letter sent to political parties that bore the BJP Kerala seal instead of the Election Commission's official seal. The Election Commission had termed it a "purely clerical error" and said it was rectified immediately.

## CM Rekha Gupta trains guns on previous AAP govt over CAG findings

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday tabled a detailed account in the Assembly, alleging serious financial irregularities in the construction of ex-CM Arvind Kejriwal's residence, widely referred to as the 'Sheesh Mahal'. Launching a sharp attack, Gupta said those who built a 'Sheesh Mahal' in Delhi have now moved into what she described as a 'Sheesh Mahal-2' in Punjab. She accused Kejriwal of behaving like an emperor, claiming he saw himself as a ruler as treated the residents of Delhi as his subjects. At her instance, the House referred the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for a detailed probe. Quoting a



couplet, she remarked, "Wo zahar deta to sabki nigh mein aa jaata, usne yoon kiya ki dava dena band kar diya" (Had he given poison, it would have been obvious; instead, he chose to withhold the medicine). She emphasised that the issue went beyond bricks, furniture or interiors, and was about exposing what she described as a 'well-planned deception' concealed for years. According to her, the report indicates a deeper moral decline, where a leader who

projected himself as a common man allegedly adopted a lifestyle of excess and entitlement. Questioning Kejriwal's image of simplicity, Gupta pointed out that even though the AAP national convenor had taken issue with former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit having 10 air conditioners, he himself built a residence equipped with 50 ACs and 70 fans. She also criticised how construction continued even as Delhi battled the Covid-19 pandemic. Calling out

the alleged opulence, Gupta said, "The residence included high-end features, such as a lift costing several lakhs solely to transport food, along with premium refrigerators and imported coffee machines. Six private consultants were hired for various aspects of the project, including interiors, furniture and landscaping." She also questioned how the cost involved in the project escalated from an initial Rs 8 crore to a whopping Rs 62 crore, calling for a thorough

investigation. Gupta said the alleged extravagance was not limited to Kejriwal alone, but extended to his associates. She stated that his former deputy Manish Sisodia spent Rs 7.5 crore of public funds on his residence. Likewise, Rs 2.33 crore was spent on renovating Rakhi Birla's residence, while former Speaker Ram Niwas Goel spent Rs 3.23 crore. Former minister Gopal Rai spent Rs 2.55 crore, Satyendar Jain Rs 2 crore, and Imran Hussain & Rajendra Pal Gautam spent Rs 3 crore each on upgrading their homes. Additionally, Saurabh Bharadwaj spent Rs 1 crore of public money on improvements to his residence. The Chief Minister assured action, as the House unanimously approved her proposal to refer the matter to the Public Accounts Committee for further investigation.

## Teen runs over software engineer in Indore; father-son booked for murder

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

BHOPAL: A female software engineer, Shampa Pathak (Pandey), working with IT major Infosys in Madhya Pradesh's commercial capital Indore, was crushed to death by a speeding car driven by the young son of an electrical engineer in a posh residential society late on Wednesday night. Hours after the incident, the father-son duo, Kuldeep Chaudhary and his son Mohit Chaudhary (18), were arrested by Lasudiya police and booked for murder. The incident occurred at Shiv Vatika Samridhhi Enclave under the Lasudiya police station area of Indore at around 10.30 pm, when a noisy brawl broke out between Kuldeep Chaudhary (a lead electrical engineer in a private company), his 18-year-old son Mohit, and residents of the society over the alleged commercial use of their penthouse through the Airbnb app. Angered over the penthouse being frequently rented out



for short stays to outsiders, including foreign nationals, particularly young men and women, residents of the private residential society shut down the power supply to the penthouse. Miffed by this, the father-son duo shut down the power supply of the entire society, following which the argument escalated into a noisy brawl between them and other residents of the enclave. When the father and son attempted to leave the enclave premises in a huff, residents tried to prevent them from leaving. At that point, 18-year-old Mohit sped the Swift Dzire car through the crowd, running over the Infosys software engineer Shampa Pathak Pandey. Another woman was also injured by the car, but is stated to be out of danger. With

severe head injuries, the Infosys software engineer was rushed to Bombay Hospital, where she died due to excessive internal bleeding. The family of four, reportedly hailing from Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya, comprising Saurabh Pandey, Shampa Pathak Pandey and their two sons, Shresth (10) and Shreyans (7), had been living in Indore for the past three to four years. The Pandey family, which earlier lived in Scheme 114, had purchased a flat in the Shiv Vatika Samridhhi Enclave multi storeyed apartment society and had shifted there on March 13. The deceased software engineer's husband, Saurabh, said, "After hearing noise from downstairs, we came down from our flat to see what had actually happened. Suddenly,

the brawl intensified and the penthouse owner's young son, despite being stopped by residents, sped the car, first hitting a female standing near it and later running over Shampa. Had he stopped the car, Shampa would've survived." According to Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP Indore Zone II) Kumar Prateek, both the accused, including Kuldeep Chaudhary and his son Mohit (who had recently turned 18), were arrested within a few hours of the incident and have been booked by Lasudiya police for murder. The entire brawl, which led to the incident, stemmed from longstanding opposition by residents to the use of the penthouse, owned by Chaudhary, via the Airbnb app for short stays by outsiders, including young male and female foreign nationals, who often arrived late at night and in the early morning hours, compromising the safety and privacy of the enclosed campus

*Stay Ahead with.....*

# Coffee Table

A premium English daily newspaper focused on Banking, Finance, Economy & Law

\* *In Depth Banking & Finance*

\* *Economic & Legal Insights*

\* *Expert Analysis & Updates*

\* *Be Informed*

\* *Be Empowered*

\* *Be Successful*

Published from **Ahilyanagar**  
& Circulated at

\* Solapur \* Latur \* Dharashiv  
\* Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar \* Beed \* Jalna  
\* Nanded \* Parbhani \* Hingoli \* Nashik

**Contact : 9890615255**



## Medicine prices to rise due to raw material shortage amid West Asia war, warn Himachal pharma manufacturers

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

CHANDIGARH: The pharmaceutical supply chain has been disrupted by the ongoing West Asia war, pushing up the prices of critical raw material by 200-300% in just fifteen days. As a result, drug manufacturers are warning of increase in prices of medicine and hinting at supply shortages if the situation continues. There are around 650 pharmaceutical units in Himachal Pradesh which produce approximately 25% of all the medicines supplied across the country. The Himachal Drug Manufacturers Association (HDMA) has urged the Union Government for formation of Emergency task force with industry representatives and immediate implementation of Essential Commodity Act 1956. Talking to TNIE, Sanjay Sharma, spokesperson of Himachal Drug Manufacturers Association (HDMA), said that if the present conflict in West Asia continues then there is bound to be shortage of medicines due to the shortage of raw material. He said that, at present, about 40% of the supply has been cut and the prices of raw material have increased by 150-200%. In the last fortnight, the price of paracetamol alone has increased to Rs 450 per kg from Rs 250, as many



manufacturers have no option but to buy material at increased rates. "The production is less as now our units are operating in eight hour shifts instead of 24 hours," he claimed, hinting at job cuts. In a letter to the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers and also Department of Pharmaceuticals, the HDMA has urged that that unchecked price escalation and supply constraints have made production increasingly unviable. As there is an unprecedented 200-300% price hike in active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), solvents, excipients and packaging materials, production contracts have become unviable. To further complicate the problem there is shortages of LPG for boilers and industrial production as well as domestic LPG shortages this could lead to migration of labour, further affecting production capacity in the coming days thus threatening micro, small and

medium enterprises (MSME) segment's survival and essential medicine supply. Without timely intervention, rising raw material costs could disrupt production and undermine the availability of affordable medicines. Thus intervention has been sought from National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) to regulate the escalating costs of raw materials and packaging inputs such as aluminium, PET, craft paper and glass bottles. Surinder Duggal president of Punjab Chemist Association which has 27,400 members across the state, said that the coming day rates of all types of medicines are going to increase due to the increase in raw material costs, ingredient cost, aluminium foil cost and other solvents. The government should have taken the strict measures to control the prices of medicines particularly medicines which are regularly used by the patients like analgesic

(paracetamol) and other diabetic formulations, he said. The prices of cancer medicines which are imported from US and European countries are bound to increase in the coming days. "It looks like that the rates of all medicines will increase by 20-25% in near future, if the situation does not improve immediately. At present there are no hike in rates, but as the stock of medicines are decreasing due to shortage of raw material and solvents, there will shortage and increase of rates of medicines," he said. Medicines like paracetamol and ibuprofen are derived from petrochemicals while metformin which is prescribed drug for type 2 diabetes is composed of nearly 80-90% petrochemical inputs. Phenol, a key compound in drug synthesis, originates from petrochemical processes.