

PM Modi To Chair Security Meet Today To Review West Asia War Situation

Coffee Table
News Network

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair an extended meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) at 7 pm on Wednesday to review the evolving situation in West Asia and its potential implications for India's energy security, supply chains and overall macro-economic stability. The meeting comes within days of the previous CCS review held on March 22, where the government conducted a detailed assessment of the availability of essential commodities and critical sectors likely to be impacted by the ongoing conflict in West Asia. The CCS,

the country's highest decision-making body on national security and strategic matters, is headed by the Prime Minister and includes Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Several senior ministers handling key economic and infrastructure portfolios are also expected to attend the meeting, similar to the March 22 review, which included ministers responsible for agriculture, commerce, railways, shipping, petroleum, power, food and civil aviation. During the March 22 CCS meeting, the

government reviewed the availability of critical needs of citizens, including food, fertilisers, fuel and power, in view of the evolving global situation. Prime Minister Modi had directed that a group of ministers and secretaries work in a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to address the effects of the West Asia conflict. "The ongoing conflict in West Asia will have significant short, medium and long-term impact on the global economy and its effect on India was assessed, and counter-measures, both immediate and long-term, were discussed," an official statement issued after the meeting had stated. The meeting



also assessed the availability of fertilisers for the upcoming kharif season and examined alternative import sources to ensure continued supply in the future. Coal stocks at power plants and the need to maintain an uninterrupted electricity supply were also reviewed. The government also

examined diversification of import sources for sectors such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals and petrochemicals, while exploring new export destinations for Indian goods. The earlier CCS meeting had discussed the impact of the conflict across sectors, including agriculture,

petroleum, power, trade, MSMEs, shipping, finance and logistics, with a focus on ensuring stable supply chains and preventing disruptions. The Prime Minister had stressed that the conflict is an evolving global situation and emphasised the need for coordinated efforts to safeguard

citizens from its impact. He had also instructed authorities to ensure coordination with state governments to prevent hoarding or black marketing of essential commodities. Cabinet Secretary TV Somanathan had made a detailed presentation on the global situation and mitigation measures planned by various ministries. On March 31, Prime Minister Modi said that despite global difficulties related to fuel and energy supplies due to the West Asia conflict, India has managed to keep the situation under control through effective foreign policy and unity among citizens. On March 31, Prime Minister

Modi said that despite global difficulties related to fuel and energy supplies due to the West Asia conflict, India has managed to keep the situation under control through effective foreign policy and unity among citizens. The conflict has affected global energy markets, particularly due to disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route for global oil supplies. Since the crisis began, the Prime Minister has held discussions with several global leaders to assess developments and mitigate potential economic impact on India.

CM Launches NCMC Smart Card for MSRTC; Push Towards Digital and Seamless Travel



Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai : In a major step towards digitizing public transport services, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis today launched the 'RuPay On-The-Go' National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)-enabled smart card for the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation at Mantralaya. Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Aji Pawar were prominently present on the occasion, along with Transport Minister and MSRTC Chairman Pratap

Sarnaik, other ministers, and senior officials of the corporation. As part of the launch, the dignitaries distributed NCMC smart cards to select beneficiaries, including senior citizen Ramesh Dhavare and concession beneficiaries Sangeeta Palkar and Varsha Kamble. The initiative aims to make travel more convenient, transparent, and digitally accessible for various sections of society. Under this scheme, NCMC-enabled smart cards linked to Aadhaar will be issued to students, senior

citizens, women, persons with disabilities, and other eligible concession holders. With the introduction of this card, passengers will be able to avail travel concessions in MSRTC buses more easily, while ensuring improved digital tracking and transparency in travel management. The move is expected to significantly enhance the overall commuting experience and promote cashless transactions across the state transport network.

'Triple Drug Therapy' (IDA) campaign to eradicate elephantiasis

Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai : The 'Triple Drug Therapy' (IDA) i.e. combined treatment of drugs Ivermectin, DEC (Diethylcarbamazine) and Albendazole is being accelerated in Maharashtra and the country to eradicate elephantiasis (lymphatic filariasis). The Central Government has set a target of complete eradication of elephantiasis from India by 2027. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the State Government has actively participated in this campaign. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has started to take effective measures against diseases like elephantiasis, which are particularly neglected. In 2017, the Union government had first requested the Central government to give top priority to the districts of

Maharashtra, especially Vidarbha, for this treatment. This is helping to reduce the suffering of the tribal and rural people of Maharashtra, especially Vidarbha. Also, the Maharashtra government is providing full support to this initiative by playing a major role in fulfilling the Prime Minister's dream of eradicating elephantiasis from the country. Aiming to provide medical treatment to 55 lakh citizens in the state, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that a large-scale 'Mass Drug Administration' (MDA) campaign is being implemented in 12 states of the country through the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, including Maharashtra. In this campaign, preventive medicines are given to eligible citizens every year, which helps in preventing the spread of the disease. In some select districts of the state, 'Triple



Drug Therapy' (IDA) is being used instead of the traditional two drugs. This treatment method is considered more effective and helps in controlling the disease in a shorter period of time. There is a high incidence of elephantiasis in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, and special campaigns are being implemented in districts like Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Chandrapur. The aim is to provide the benefit of this treatment to about 55 lakh citizens in

the state. The campaign in rural areas of Nagpur has succeeded in bringing the prevalence of the microorganism below one percent. The disease is prevalent in 18 districts of Maharashtra, namely Nagpur, Chandrapur, Bhandara, Wardha, Gadchiroli, Amravati, Akola, Latur, Dharashiv, Solapur, Jalgaon, Sindhudurg, Nanded, Thane, Palghar, Nandurbar, Solapur and Yavatmal. According to the latest report of February 2026, about 75 percent of the total cases of

elephantiasis in Maharashtra are in Nagpur division alone. The five most affected districts are: Bhandara, Chandrapur, Nagpur, Gadchiroli and Gondia. Triple Drug Policy (IDA) success rate: In rural Nagpur, this campaign has succeeded in reducing the microfilaria prevalence rate (MF rate) from 4.91 percent in 2014 to less than one percent by 2024. According to experts, 'IDA' treatment helps in reducing microfilaria (parasite) more effectively, thus stopping the spread of the disease early. The state government is appealing to the citizens to take these medicines under the supervision of health workers instead of believing in rumors. Experts have also clarified that eradication of elephantiasis is not possible without the active participation of the community.

CAPF bill sparks fierce Rajya Sabha divide; NDA hails 'much-needed reform'

Coffee Table
News Network

NEW DELHI: Ruling NDA members on Wednesday lauded the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, calling it a long-pending reform, while the opposition slammed it as "discriminatory" and a "threat to institutional autonomy." Participating in the debate on the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, BJP members argued that the legislation would bring much-needed uniformity across paramilitary forces such as the CRPF, BSF, CISF and ITBP. Nominated member supporting the BJP, Ghulam Ali, said disparities in promotions among personnel of the same rank and service record had led to "resentment in the cadre", adding that the Bill would address

these anomalies. He stressed the need for better information-sharing and integration among forces, claiming that past lapses, including in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, were exacerbated by communication gaps. Ali said the Bill will virtually create "one nation, one CAPF". Echoing the government's position, Ajit Madhavrao of the BJP said under the Modi government, incidents of Left Wing Extremism (LFE) had declined due to "political will" and improved coordination between CAPFs and state police. "This change has not happened on its own," he said, asserting that those opposing it were placing politics above national security. Mayankkumar Nayak described the Bill as a step towards modernisation of the CAPFs, noting that

fragmented rules had led to confusion over promotions and litigation. Referring to the 2010 Dantewada attack in which 76 jawans were killed, he said the absence of a unified command under previous governments had proved costly. He said the proposed legislation would end contradictions and provide a uniform legal framework for the paramilitary forces. Nayak also said that the Modi government was "compelled" to bring the Bill. Brij Lal of the BJP mentioned an incident from 1980, when he claimed the then CBI director was asked by a "prince" to give him the Shah Commission report, and the director had refused. The Shah Commission Report (1978), led by Justice J.C. Shah, investigated excesses during the Emergency.



gress leader Jairam Ramesh said the member should authenticate the charge. Meanwhile, opposition members mounted a strong critique of the proposed law. TMC member Saket Gokhale argued that the Bill institutionalises a system where IPS officers would dominate leadership positions in CAPFs, undermining the career progression of cadre officers. "You are

telling young officers to take bullets on the border, but not trusting them to lead their own forces," he said, calling it "the most humiliating experience" for personnel when juniors from another cadre are placed above them". Gokhale highlighted the harsh working conditions of CAPF personnel, noting that they spend most of the year in hostile terrains and temporary barracks, often with fewer

facilities than their counterparts in other services. He alleged that the move would "systematically destroy the structure of forces" and enable greater political control over security institutions. NCP member Fauzia Khan termed the Bill "judicial evasion in the garb of law," accusing the government of overriding a Supreme Court verdict. She said the legislation would impose a "single central law" on diverse

forces with distinct operational cultures, thereby weakening national security. Raising concerns over stalled promotions, she asked whether officers who spend years fighting insurgency on the ground would be sidelined in favour of deputed officers. She also demanded that the Bill be referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee and that wider consultations be held with CAPF personnel. The Bill seeks to provide a unified legal framework governing the administration, service conditions and operational coordination of CAPFs. At present, all CAPFs -- CRPF, CISF, BSF, ITBP and SSB -- have by their respective Acts which govern the recruitment and conditions of service for Group A General Duty Officers and

other officers and members in the CAPFs. The Bill provides that to appoint officers from the Indian Police Service in CAPFs, 50 per cent of the posts will be filled by deputation in the rank of inspector general and a minimum of 67 per cent of the posts by deputation in the rank of additional director general. The proposed legislation comes after the Supreme Court, in October last year, dismissed the Centre's plea seeking a review of its 2025 verdict that directed that IPS officers' deputation in the CAPFs up to the level of Senior Administrative Grade (SAG) should be "progressively reduced" and asked for a cadre review to be carried out in six months.

Famous Kirtan singer crushed by truck

Coffee Table
News Network

Nanded: Time has taken its toll on the Kirtankar who enlightened the society through Kirtan. After finishing the meeting of the Warkari Parishad, H.B.P. Madhukar Maharaj Barulkar, who was going to his village Barul on a two-wheeler, was crushed by a speeding highway truck. He died on the spot. This unfortunate incident took place in the CIDCO area of Nanded city on Tuesday evening. This incident has caused a stir. (Nanded Kirtankar Madhukar Maharaj Barulkar) H.B.P. Madhukar Maharaj Barulkar is a resident of Barul in Kandhar taluka. He was also the regional vice-president of the Sant Namdev Tukaram Warkari Parishad of the Maratha Seva Sangh. He had been working vigorously in the organization for the past many years. He always tried to enlighten the society through Kirtan and keep the society away from superstition. He had attended the meeting of the Warkari Parishad held in the CIDCO area on Tuesday. After the meeting, he was returning to Barul village on a two-



wheeler. At around 6 pm, as he approached the Ruby Hotel in the area, a high-speed truck hit the two-wheeler from behind. (Nanded Kirtankar Madhukar Maharaj Barulkar) H.B.P. Madhukar Maharaj died on the spot after being crushed under the truck. On receiving information about the incident, the officers and staff of the rural police station rushed to the spot. Taking advantage of the wedding crowd, the truck driver fled. This incident has caused a stir. Heavy traffic is banned in Nanded city. Meanwhile, heavy vehicle movement is going on in the city in large numbers. The train of sand-transporting vehicles continues throughout the day in the CIDCO Hadco area. There have been incidents of sand-transporting trucks crushing many people within the limits of the rural police station. There is a demand from the common citizens to

impose a permanent ban on such vehicles. (Nanded Kirtankar Madhukar Maharaj Barulkar) Talwar Baba's supporters protest at the police station while the Bhondubaba Ashok Kharat case is going viral across the state, Talwar Baba has come into the news in Nanded district. The police have arrested Bhondubaba from Badur in Biloli taluka. Dnyaneshwar Karde, who is famous as Talwar Baba, was brought to Biloli police station. After that, Baba's supporters created a ruckus in the police station and threatened the police. At the same time, two of his supporters tore up the documents of the case filed against Bhondubaba. In this case, the police have also arrested two of Baba's supporters. This Bhondubaba was cheating people with a sword in his hand. Now there is a stir due to his supporters' bullying.

Coffee Table
News Network

Pune: Nationalist Congress Party leader and MLA Amol Mitkari has raised questions about Naresh Arora, who is related to the party's election strategy, a few days ago. He had raised the question of where exactly Arora, the head of the organization Design Box, which works for election campaign, is missing a few days ago, after which once again Amol Mitkari has written a post about Naresh Arora and attacked him, while after the death of Ajit Pawar, one of the main and neglected characters in the discussion is the design box wala gadi, Naresh Arora! He has targeted Arora by saying that Amol Mitkari has criticized Ajit Pawar, mentioning Arora's work in the elections and other things. At the same time, Mitkari also said that Ajit Pawar is behind the success of the NCP in the assembly and other elections, and no one else has a hand in this. The entire credit for the fact that Ajitdada was in power and 41 MLAs were elected goes to Ajitdada. There was no contribution from others or his hand in it. Arora used to give instructions to Ajitdada

Wrong survey; Wrong information about MLAs, financial benefits taken but no work, Mitkari accuses Naresh Arora



to make unnecessary announcements, but Dada refused in clear words and said, "I will speak in front of the people only what I can do," and he strictly followed them. He used to give instructions to criticize Pawar Saheb, but Ajitdada never accepted them. It is heard that Arora has established an airline company on the strength of the NCP. It is also said that he has bought a second-hand aircraft. Amol Mitkari has also said that he should not leave Maharashtra until this question is answered. Amol Mitkari's post "One of the main and overlooked characters in the discussion of whether Ajitdada's plane crashed or was an accident is the design box wala gadi, Naresh Arora! Even though his work in the party is over now that there are no elections

in the future, this word is used so that the people who are rooting for Dada know some things. In order not to give tickets to the currently elected MLAs of the Nationalist Congress Party, he gave Dada tickets by conducting a wrong survey, but those MLAs got elected by more than 50 thousand votes. Despite the design box survey, Ajitdada gave tickets from his own system. Many MLAs in the party know this information." "A MLA from the party does not meet Naresh Arora, does not know him or does not greet him, for these reasons Arora used to give wrong information about those MLAs. In the beginning, Ajitdada even fooled some MLAs, believing that he must be working honestly in the organization; but later, when the

concerned MLAs improved their relations with Arora, their reports automatically started getting good. In the elections while Ajitdada was preparing to contest more seats, this same Arora tried to make the Sena contest fewer seats, not field candidates against the BJP, and if it did, not campaign for them. Many of Ajitdada's meetings were cancelled." "Ajitdada was aware of all these things; but he did not pay attention to these things as it would not be appropriate to set up a new campaign mechanism during the election season. Although Arora was taking financial benefits from the party in the name of distributing leaflets, putting up banners and creating an atmosphere, nothing was actually done.

While Ajitdada was being criticized in various media, he did not take any concrete stand and did not give any effective response. He did not know even one percent about the history, politics and social work of Maharashtra." "Apart from hiring 10-12 photographers and advising Dada to wear a pink jacket, Arora had no concrete contribution. The entire credit for the fact that Ajitdada was in power and 41 MLAs were elected goes to Ajitdada. There was no contribution from others or even his own cadre. Ajitdada Arora used to give instructions to make unnecessary announcements, but Dada flatly refused, saying, "I will speak in front of the people only what I can do," and he strictly followed them. He used to give instructions to criticize Pawar Saheb, but Ajit Dada never accepted them. It is heard that Arora has established an airline company on the strength of the NCP. It is also said that he has bought a second-hand aircraft. He should not leave Maharashtra until this question is answered. #SutraDhar

Saklai Project to Fulfil Long-Awaited Dream with CM Fadnavis' Support: GM Vikhe Patil

Coffee Table
News Network

Ahilyanagar : Water Resources and Guardian Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil has expressed satisfaction over the state cabinet's approval of the Saklai Lift Irrigation Scheme, stating that the long-pending dream of providing water to drought-prone regions will now be realised with the support of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The project, which is expected to benefit 32 villages across Shrigonda and Ahilyanagar talukas, will provide irrigation to nearly 10,000 hectares of drought-affected land. Vikhe Patil said the Mahayuti government has honoured its commitment, bringing

much-needed relief to farmers in the region. He further stated that sustained efforts, including multiple review meetings and securing necessary clearances, have paved the way for the project's approval. The scheme, originally envisioned by veteran leader Balasaheb Vikhe Patil, is now set to be completed within the next four years. Under the project, water will be lifted in four stages from Mhaisgaon and distributed across 32 villages in Ahilyanagar district through decentralized storage systems. Existing percolation tanks, minor irrigation reservoirs, cement nala bunds, and village ponds will be replenished. The total water allocation includes 1.60 TMC for



irrigation and 0.20 TMC for drinking purposes, amounting to 1.80 TMC. The scheme involves drawing water from the Ghod dam reservoir, with the construction of four pump houses and three distribution chambers. Water will be lifted up to a height of 208.34 meters and supplied to hilltop storage reservoirs at Chikhali and Ghutewadi. From there, it will be

distributed through a gravity-based pipeline network to fill around 196 water bodies across the beneficiary villages. Vikhe Patil highlighted that late Balasaheb Vikhe Patil had consistently pursued the project to ensure water availability in drought-hit areas. He credited Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for expediting approvals—from survey stages to final sanction—after the

Mahayuti government came to power. He also noted that despite attempts to politicize the issue during the Lok Sabha elections, the state government ultimately fulfilled its promise to the people. BJP leader Dr. Sujay Vikhe Patil also expressed happiness over the approval, stating that his persistent follow-up at the administrative level contributed significantly to the project's progress. He said the government's support has ensured justice for people in drought-affected areas and will bring lasting benefits to farmers. The Saklai Lift Irrigation Scheme is expected to transform the agricultural landscape of the region and provide long-term relief from water scarcity.

Maharashtra Youth Congress Announces New State Executive Committee

Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai : The Maharashtra Pradesh Youth Congress has announced its new state executive committee, with appointments aimed at strengthening the organization at the grassroots level. The announcement was made by state president Shivraj More, with the approval of Indian Youth Congress national president Uday Bhanu Chib. The newly declared 126 member executive committee includes key appointments such as Aniket Navale and Akshay Jain as treasurers, Pravin Kumar Biradar as General Secretary (Organization), and Vivek Gavande as General Secretary (Administration). In addition, Tanveer Vidrohi, Prashant



Ogale, Prathamesh Abanave, Kapil Dhoke, Anurag Bhojar, Amer Abdul Salim, Diptesh Parab, and Afreen Hussain have been appointed as Vice Presidents. The committee also comprises 44 General Secretaries and 74 State Secretaries. A notable feature of the new executive body is the significant representation given to youth from ordinary backgrounds with no prior political lineage. Emphasis has been placed on individuals who have actively worked at the grassroots level and contributed consistently to

strengthening the organization. Speaking on the development, Shivraj More expressed confidence that the newly formed team would energize the Youth Congress and create a positive atmosphere among young people across the state. He added that the office bearers would work to take the ideology of the Indian National Congress to the grassroots and actively raise issues concerning youth through strong movements and initiatives. The announcement has been widely welcomed across the state, with party workers expressing optimism that the new leadership will bring renewed momentum and direction to the Youth Congress in Maharashtra.

Bhonde Kharat's 'Maya' in Pune, no checks, only cash transactions, luxurious flat worth Rs 1.20 crore in the name of the daughter in Model Colony

Coffee Table
News Network

Pune: The investigation has revealed that Nashik's Bhonde Kharat (Ashok Kharat Case) has a large property in the name of his wife and close relatives, similarly, it has been revealed that Bhonde Kharat (Ashok Kharat Case) has a 3 BHK flat in a luxurious building in Pune's Model Colony. It has been revealed that there is a luxurious 3 BHK flat of 1055 square feet on the seventh floor in a luxurious society called 24 Ratnam. It has been revealed that this flat was purchased on September 13, 2023. (Ashok Kharat Case) It has also been revealed that Ashok Kharat (Ashok Kharat Case)

paid Rs 1 crore 20 lakh in cash to the concerned builder for this flat. There is no mention of cheque transactions in the sale deed. It has come to light that the fraudster Ashok Kharat (Ashok Kharat Case) has bought real estate in major cities across the state by deceiving and intimidating people on a large scale. It has now come to light that his daughter has a luxurious flat in the name of Model Colony, which is considered the most expensive in Pune. The fraudster Ashok Kharat was paying income tax by showing an income of only twelve lakhs. It has been revealed that Ashok Kharat's assets are worth hundreds of crores. The Income Tax Department also



suspects that Ashok Kharat has evaded GST in companies, construction projects and hardware businesses. It is being predicted that the Income Tax Department will take major action

against Ashok Kharat. The investigation into the assets of the fraudster Ashok Kharat is also underway, Kharat's CA will be questioned in front of Ashok Kharat yesterday. The fraudster Ashok

Kharat will be produced in court again today. The fraudster Ashok Kharat from Nashik will be produced in court again today. Ashok Kharat's police custody is ending today. New complaints are being filed against

him. The list of sexual abuse committed by Ashok Kharat, financial fraud committed by many people and many other crimes is increasing. Therefore, they will seek an extension of Kharat's

custody from the SIT court. Ashok Kharat will be produced in the Nashik District Court today. He has been remanded in police custody three times in the first case of atrocities filed against Ashok Kharat. Dramatic events were taking place until late at night before Ashok Kharat was produced in court today. A case was also registered against Ashok Kharat and his wife in the land fraud case in Shirdi. However, before the SIT team went to Kharat's house, Kharat's wife Kalpana Kharat absconded. While Kharat's son Harshvardhan was detained by the police from his house. (Ashok Kharat Case Nashik Crime News) Since

Ashok Kharat is not cooperating in the investigation, his son will be questioned in front of him. Information is coming to light that the investigation is not progressing as Ashok Kharat is not cooperating and is not providing clear information. The SIT is focused on collecting more information from Ashok Kharat and arresting his wife. Initially, the SIT will focus on investigating the crime of sexual abuse and then other crimes will be investigated. After Ashok Kharat was produced in court today, everyone's attention is on what side the government parties will present.

Many ministers of the Mahayuti are in the Ministry;

Lakhs of rupees spent on the hall and work is going on from private bungalows, here the whims of the officials

Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai: It is currently seen that many ministers of the Mahayuti government do not even visit the Ministry at other times except for the meeting of the State Cabinet (Maharashtra Ministers). Sources have informed that many ministers are holding many meetings and meetings with officials at their private bungalows. For these meetings and meetings, more than half of the staff from the Ministry (Mantralaya) go to the minister's bungalow with all the necessary equipment. Due to this, it has also come to light that the officials are taking many decisions in the absence of the ministers of the Ministry (Maharashtra Ministers). After the ministers, the whims of the officials are more. On the other hand, it was alleged that the officials were also taking decisions during the action of the Anti-Corruption Department in the office of Minister Narhari Zirwal. The situation is similar in other ministerial departments as well, and the whims of the officials are more visible in the ministry, considering the elections held one



after the other in the state. Some ministers are camped in their constituencies. Sources have informed that some ministers are not even setting foot in the ministry except for cabinet meetings. After the grand alliance government came to power, lakhs of rupees were spent on the halls of all the ministers, but if the ministers themselves are not coming to the ministry, then why was so much spent? There is also talk that the absence of ministers in the ministry is affecting the daily work of the ministry. Important files are being cleared with delay, and some officials have also indicated that there is a lack of transparency in the decision-making process. Since the minister himself is not present, many policy decisions are taken at

the level of senior officials, which is disrupting the balance of responsibility. Meanwhile, the opposition has also targeted the government on this issue. If the ministers are absent from the ministry, then who is in control of the administration is the question being raised. Also, there is a demand that ministers should regularly attend the ministry and review the work. Political circles are expressing the view that there is a need to clarify the responsibility of discipline and decision-making process in the administration. State Cabinet meeting to be held at 12:00 noon. The state cabinet meeting will be held today at 12:00 noon. Before that, it is known that the pre-cabinet meeting of the

NCP Ajit Pawar party will be held in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar. In this meeting, the viral video case related to Food and Drug Administration Minister Narhari Jirwal will be discussed and what position the party will take is being discussed, everyone's attention is on this, the opposition is demanding Jirwal's resignation, and everyone is paying attention to what decision Sunetra Pawar is taking regarding his ministerial post. Whether Narhari Jirwal himself will attend the cabinet meeting to be held at 12:00 noon and the party's cabinet meeting or not is also being paid attention to.

Youth attacked with a scythe by a gang in Pune; He died on the spot due to serious injuries, the incident has angered the district

Coffee Table
News Network

Daund: A shocking incident has taken place in Rajegaon in Daund taluka over an old land dispute. It has been revealed that a youth was brutally murdered by a gang with sharp weapons. A case has been registered against seven people in this case and the police have arrested two accused. According to the information received, a young man named Vijendra Bhosale, who lives in Rajegaon, had an old dispute with some people over a land transaction. This dispute escalated and then

the accused attacked Vijendra Bhosale. Bhosale was beaten up brutally with a scythe and sticks. Meanwhile, the accused slit his

citizens. A murder case has been registered against seven people at Daund Police Station on the complaint filed by Hrishikesh Bhosale



throat with a scythe, causing Vijendra Bhosale to die on the spot. After this incident, there has been a lot of commotion in the Rajegaon area and an atmosphere of fear has been created among the

in this murder case. Meanwhile, the police have taken immediate action and arrested Janardhan Bhosale and Mahesh Bhosale. The search for the remaining accused

is on and they will be arrested soon, the police have informed. A murder case has been registered at the police station on the complaint of Hrishikesh Bhosale. As soon as the information about the incident was received, the police rushed to the spot and conducted a panchnama and the body has been sent for autopsy. Further investigation is underway under the guidance of Police Sub-Inspector Sunil Ugle of Daund Police Station to find out if there is any other reason behind this murder case besides the land dispute.

BJP candidate announced for Rahuri by-election, ticket for son after death of Shivaji Kardile

Coffee Table
News Network

Ahilyanagar: A by-election has been announced for the Rahuri assembly constituency that fell vacant after the death of BJP MLA Shivaji Kardile. The Bharatiya Janata Party has announced Shivaji Kardile's son Akshay Kardile as its candidate for this. It is being speculated that NCP: Sharad Chandra Pawar's party leader Prajakta Tanpure will contest against him. Shivaji Kardile died of a severe heart attack in October last year. He breathed his last at the age of 66. He was the MLA of Rahuri assembly constituency in Ahilyanagar district. He had served as MLA six times. After recovering from a serious illness, he was taken to the hospital due to sudden deterioration in his health, but he said goodbye to the world there. By-elections will be held in eight seats across the country, including Baramati and Rahuri in



Maharashtra. The deadline for filing applications for the by-elections is April 6, the withdrawal period is April 9 and voting will be held on April 23. The votes will be counted and the results will be announced on May 4. The political culture of holding unopposed elections after the death of a public representative was preserved in Maharashtra if a family member is given the nomination. However, in the past, this tradition has been broken in some places.

Prajakt Prasad Tanpure is likely to contest as an independent from Rahuri. Prajakt Tanpure is the nephew of Sharad Pawar group leader Jayant Patil. Tanpure had won the 2019 assembly elections on behalf of the Nationalist Congress Party. He had won by 1,97,392 votes, defeating Shivaji Kardile. After that, he held the post of Minister of State for Urban Development in the Maha Vikas Aghadi government. Later, there was a split in the Nationalist

Party, but he remained with Sharad Pawar. In the 2024 elections, he contested the assembly from Rahuri against Kardile, but Tanpure was shocked by defeat. Now, after Kardile's death, there is a possibility that Tanpure will give his son a tough fight when the by-election is held. Nationalist Congress Party: Sharad Chandra Pawar will soon know whether he will enter the fray on the party's symbol or fight as an independent.

Accused woman in police custody demands physical pleasure, case against ASI Rajesh Jadhav

Coffee Table
News Network

Akola: A shocking incident that has brought the police force to its knees has come to light from Akola. A serious allegation has been made that a police officer on duty demanded 'physical pleasure' from a female accused in a fraud case of Rs 80 lakh. This incident has created a huge stir in the Akola police force. Senior officers have immediately taken cognizance of the matter. A case has been registered against Assistant Police Sub-Inspector Rajesh Jadhav and further investigation is underway in this case. According to the information received, the woman concerned was arrested by the cyber police for cheating her of Rs 80 lakh on the pretext of getting her a job. When she was produced in court, the



court remanded her in police custody for two days. During this custody, the woman was kept in the Civil Lines police station in Akola city. The accused woman made a sensational claim to a lady police officer that Assistant Police Sub-Inspector Rajesh Jadhav had demanded sexual favours from her while she was in custody. The concerned female police officer immediately brought this matter to the attention of her senior

officers. Upon learning that an officer from her own department had committed such a despicable act, the senior police officers became furious. Upon receiving the information, the senior officers directly reached the Civil Lines Police Station and publicly reprimanded the concerned police officer ASI Rajesh Jadhav. This incident had created a tense atmosphere in the police station for some time. The allegations made by the woman of

demanding sexual favours are very serious. However, whether they were made out of revenge or if there is any truth in this, it is now a big challenge for the police to investigate. If the message goes out that women are not safe in police custody, the department can be greatly defamed, so senior officers are investigating the matter. This incident has sparked heated discussions in the police circles of Akola.

'Maha-Sadhana Week' from April 2 to 8 to Boost Skills of Government Officials

Coffee Table
News Network

Nashik : A statewide 'Maha-Sadhana Week' will be organised from April 2 to 8, 2026, aimed at enhancing the skills and technological capabilities of government officers and employees. The initiative is being conducted jointly by the Capacity Building Commission and Karmayogi Bharat. Nashik Divisional Commissioner Dr. Praveen Gedam has urged all officers and employees in the Nashik division to actively participate in the online training programme.

Departments that demonstrate outstanding performance during the week will be honoured at the 'TECH-Vari 2.0' event. The Central Government has directed all states to implement the Sadhana Week initiative, following which Maharashtra is organizing the Maha-Sadhana Week during the specified period. Under the programme, participating officials are required to complete at least four hours of training courses within seven days by logging into the 'iGOT Karmayogi Bharat' portal. Officials

and employees across various government departments will gain exposure to new skills, emerging technologies, and improved administrative practices relevant to their work. Instructions in this regard have also been issued to all departments by V. Radha from the General Administration Department, making participation essential across offices. Dr. Gedam emphasized that since the training is conducted online, employees can complete the courses alongside their regular duties without affecting routine

work, thereby ensuring continuous skill development. Participants completing three courses related to Artificial Intelligence will be awarded the 'AI Daksh' badge, while those finishing advanced marketplace courses will receive the 'Karmayogi Utkarsh' badge. Departments with exceptional performance will be recognized and rewarded. The initiative is expected to significantly improve the efficiency, quality, and speed of government functioning across the state.

Pushkar Kulkarni Appointed as Ahilyanagar District President of Parshuram Hindu Seva Sangh

Coffee Table
News Network

Ahilyanagar : Pushkar Kulkarni has been appointed as the District President of Parshuram Hindu Seva Sangh Maharashtra for Ahilyanagar. The appointment letter was formally handed over by MLA Hemant Rasane and the organization's state president Vishwajeet Deshpande. Parshuram Hindu Seva Sangh Maharashtra is actively engaged in initiatives aimed at the overall development of the Hindu community, working across social,



religious, and organizational spheres. According to the organization, Kulkarni's selection was based on his willingness and commitment to actively contribute to these activities. As mentioned

in the appointment letter, Kulkarni's tenure will be for a period of three years, during which he is expected to carry out responsibilities in line with the organization's policies and

objectives. The organization has expressed confidence that he will dedicate himself wholeheartedly—through his efforts, resources, and leadership—for the upliftment of society. Extending their best wishes, office bearers of the organization expressed hope that Kulkarni's work during his tenure will bring pride to the community and further strengthen the organization's presence in the district.

Editorial...

Take Companies Act Beyond ESOPs Fables

Evolving with corp tastes on compensation

Earlier this month, Nirmala Sitharaman introduced fresh amendments to the Companies Act, which, among other matters, recognise new instruments for executive compensation. This is much welcome. The company law is being refined to add esoteric varieties of sweat equity. These per form the same function as employee stock options, with a twist. Employers issue Esops to align employee and share holder interests. If an employee stays long enough and the company's shares climb, the argument runs, everybody is happy. But it doesn't work that way all the time. Share prices are volatile, and employees could be disappointed when their shares are vested. Then there are limits to how much equity a company can divvy up among its employees without diluting control. That's where restricted stock units and stock appreciation rights come in handy. Unlike Esops, employees don't need to 'buy' restricted stock units. These are granted by a company at the end of a period, and the employee does benefit every time so long as

the shares are worth something. Stock appreciation rights is simply a cash or equity bonus of the share price delta. These are improvements over the van-illa Esop where the employee bears some risk and are taxed accordingly. The further these instruments move away from employers and employees sharing business risk, the closer they move towards being income, and will be taxed as such in the new company law that is undergoing parliamentary scrutiny. Which raises the question about the purpose they serve beyond companies locking in talent. Employers prefer refined versions of sweat equity because they don't have to worry about diluting equity. There is also no 'cost to the seexercises, which makes them less risky. Accounting requirements for restricted stock units and stock appreciation rights are less demanding. Which is why companies prefer them. The law is evolving with corporate tastes on employee compensation. It's an admission that companies and their staff need fancier ways of ensuring everyone puts their weight behind the wheel.

Expect More Funky Moves from RBI

Coffee Table
News Network

RBI's direction to banks to cap their foreign exchange positions at \$100 mn is a signal that the central bank may be open to other forms of capital controls. Unwinding by banks has thrown up arbitrage opportunities for companies between onshore spot market for dollars and forwards market. This limits rupee's ability to recover, unless RBI draws up a broader fence around the demand for dollars. Uncertainty in the energy market will keep demand for dollars elevated, and more unconventional moves by RBI can't be ruled out. Although it's premature to speculate whether the central bank might consider special schemes to raise dollars from India's large pool of overseas workers. Rupee's decline in March has been unusually severe, and RBI is drawing on its emergency playbook to

stabilise the currency. Impact of higher energy prices on India's economic outlook is yet to be determined. Foreign portfolio investment-selling has intensified since US-Israel war on Iran broke out. RBI's intervention to steady the rupee has run into strong dollar demand from energy importers. The directive to banks to cut back their dollar holdings will contribute to market volatility because of large open positions and short window for unwinding. Rupee has logged its worst yearly performance in over a decade on US tariff action and the Persian Gulf crisis. Central bank intervention is likely to slow the decline. But the underlying pressures will persist as inflation spikes globally and the world economy tilts towards a recession. RBI has managed to keep rupee a 'middle of the pack' performer since hostilities began. Maintaining its place may become tougher if the conflict widens

Keep on the Strait & Narrow

Beleaguered Tehran has played the Hormuz gambit well to gain strategic advantage over US

Coffee Table
News Network

Four weeks since Iran came under combined attack from the US and Israel, even its enemies acknowledge that Tehran is holding up considerably well. After more than 10,000 US strikes and over 3,000 Israeli bombs dropped on the Iranian capital, its ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a large number of political and military functionaries killed, much of its military capabilities badly degraded, Iran should no longer appear to be the menace it was made out to be. That Tehran is still in the fight is not simply on account of its demonstrated ability to get many of its missiles and drones past Israel's aerial defence systems. It's also that by closing the Strait of Hormuz to international shipping, Tehran has managed to ratchet up costs of the war for its adversaries so much that Donald Trump is under pressure from within the US establishment to dial down. The Hormuz Strait is a 104-mile stretch of waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, 24 miles at its narrowest and 60 miles at its widest point. Connecting oil-rich coasts of the Persian

Gulf, it accounts for 20% of world's oil and gas traffic, nearly a third of the world's fertilisers, and quite a few other oil-based industrial products. Much of this narrow channel on the Omani side is not deep enough for most vessels, which, thus, necessarily have to pass through territorial waters of Iran. In normal times, Iran does not come a cropper. But under attack, Iran is refusing passage to any vessel that may either belong to its enemies or their allies, and letting only a few vessels through on a case-to-case basis. There are even unconfirmed reports of the IRGC collecting hefty tolls in Chinese yuan while allowing ships to pass. In doing this, Tehran is not guilty of violating the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) because, like the US, Tehran has not ratified it. Iran is invoking, instead, the principle of the Montreux Convention of 1936, which allows Türkiye to close the Strait of Dardanelles and Bosphorus to enemy vessels in times of war. Closure of Hormuz has stopped the supply of oil and associated commodities from Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and much of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, thereby pushing global oil prices past \$100 a barrel. It has



also brought to grief economies worldwide dependent on gas supply from the Gulf, and promises short- to medium-term dislocation for a broad swathe of economic activities ranging from agriculture to pharmaceuticals, not to speak of a strong inflationary push in consumer prices. For decades, Iran factored the closure of Hormuz into its defence policy as a measure of area denial in the event of any asymmetric conflict with a far superior military force. Transgressed upon by Israel and the US from February 28, Tehran's retaliatory strikes with missiles and combat drones targeted not only Israelis and Americans but also US assets in the neighbouring Gulf states. Nevertheless, Tehran did not quite have the military capabilities to ward

off its enemies. Hence its resorting to the closure of Hormuz. Medium- to long-term prospective economic repercussions of the blockade aside, the impact on money markets and forthcoming US midterm elections seem to have rattled Trump. Playing with options of further escalation and diplomacy seeking an exit strategy, he seems to be pursuing both. After hinting at occupation of Kharg Island — the principal offshore embarkation point of Iranian oil exports — in a bid to end the blockade, he seems to be considering occupation of smaller but strategically significant islands (Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunbs, Larak), and maybe even the mountainous coasts overlooking Hormuz. Iran has been preparing for this predictable US

strategy for the last 40 years. Americans could still make short work of the Iranian naval forces (mostly speedboats and other smaller vessels), and even their onshore missile and drone launchers over a period of time. But if Iran lays mines in the Strait's shipping channels, it would take a much longer time to clear them even with the minesweepers, of which the US presently has few. The mere possibility that a stray mine could blow up a merchant vessel is certain to spike both shipping costs and insurance premium for a long time to come. Hence, experts are warning global oil prices could rise above \$150 a barrel unless the conflict is brought to an end quickly. Hence, diplomacy. Attacked twice within the last year while negotiations were

ongoing, Iran refuses to sit down for talks with the US any more. A back channel seems to have been opened through Islamabad, and Trump's reported '15-point Proposal' has been answered with Tehran's 'Five Points'. While the US insists on Tehran abandoning the nuclear option, chatter suggests Iran is stressing on guarantees against future US and Israeli aggression. Having offered a unilateral pause on attacks against Iranian energy installations till March 27, Trump has now extended it to April 6 to give the 'successful' back-channel diplomacy a chance — even as he mobilises troops with an eye to the possibility of putting boots on the ground. It's clear that regime change in Tehran is no longer on the menu. Whether Trump actually dials down and persuades Israel to back off, or decides to escalate the conflict to force reluctant Iranians to the negotiation table, and gets stranded in a 'forever war', remains to be seen. That beleaguered Tehran played the Hormuz gambit well to gain strategic advantage, despite being militarily worsted, need not be doubted. The writer is professor of history, Calcutta University

Target Set, Aim, Release

Coffee Table
News Network

Last week, the Union Cabinet approved India's updated nationally determined contributions (NDC) for 2031-35. Coming as it did after several missed self-imposed 'soft' deadlines, the response was of relief followed by disappointment. Targets set by the 5-lar gest economy do not compare well to its past ambition and record. Yet, if there is a fit case for not judging a book by its cover, India's NDC 3.0 is it New Delhi has stuck to the formula set out in the two earlier rounds three quantified goals and five qualitative ones. Pledging to increase share of non-fossil fuels in the installed electricity generation capacity to 60% from the 2030 target of 50%, reducing emissions intensity of the economy by 47% from 2005 level the current target is 43% and increasing natu re-based carbon sink to 3.3-

4bn 5-4 bn tonnes over 2005 stocks from 2.5-3 bn tonnes by 2000. At first pass, the targets appear to be modest, considering what has already been achieved. In February non-fossil fuel sources accounted for 52% of installed capacity, reduced emissions in intensity of the economy by 36% from 2005 levels by 320,000, and created 2.3 bn tonnes of nature-based (forest and trees) carbon sink by 2021. Look beyond the headline numbers and India's NDC 3.0 is significant for its timing. In announcing its NDCs at a time when the world is grappling with a major energy disruption, India telegraphed its continued commitment to multilateral endeavour to tackle climate change as encapsulated in the Paris Agreement, and UN Framework Convention. It's a commitment to move away from fossil fuels, the primary contributor to runaway global warming. A clear



message has been sent out to those who see climate action as unnecessary, green and clean energy a hoax, and climate change as a long con. It also sends out a signal to those who doubted India's commitment to climate action and multilateralism. India has come to terms with its disappointment at Baku, and is ready to get off the bench. It won't shy away from owning up to actions it is taking and its commitments. It's a reiteration that tackling climate change requires collaboration and

cooperation among all stakeholders. Perhaps the long wait, peppered by glimpses from NITI Aayog's 'Vikalt Bharat-Net Zero' scenarios, the CEA's generation adequacy report, doubling of nominal GDP in the past decade, and growth projection of above-st have raised expectations. India's RE journey over the last decade has been impressive. In 2025, India added nearly 55GW of RE capacity of which solar accounted for about 39 GW. The

big concern was about curtailment of RE capacity due to transmission adequacy and grid security. According to energy think tank Em her, India lost 2.3 TWh of solar generation in the second half of 2025. Crisil Rating reports that as much as 35 GW of renewable capacity risks curtailment in FY27 because of grid inadequacy. Ensuring continued flow of investments in greening the electricity system will require investing in agrifit for purpose one that can handle integrated distributed energy resources, address cybersecurity concerns of an increasing digitalised system, and account for physical risk, be it from drones and hybrid warfare, or extreme heat, floods and drought due to climate change. set an As a growing economy that is yet to peak its emissions, India has set an emissions intensity target, a pledge to have a smaller

GHG footprint even as it develops. Efficiency in process and resource use will help. But without technological shifts and breakthroughs at scale and cost, the big gains may not be that easy. Battery storage technologies, green hydrogen and low carbon biofuels are among the tech interventions that can accelerate the decarbonisation process. The rary pickings are mostly done with. Hard work of bringing about policy and regulatory changes to accelerate electrification and decarbonisation, and to attract necessary investments, must be priority. India has always been a cautious player, promising only so much, as it knows it can deliver preferring to overachieve than over promise. NDC3@targets. may be modest, But it says loud and clear that India is back and open for business

'Century Of Defeats For Self-Proclaimed Prince': PM's Swipe At Rahul Gandhi In Assam Poll Pitch

Coffee Table
News Network

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday sharpened his political attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, referring to him as a "self-proclaimed prince" and asserting that the upcoming Assam Assembly elections would add to what he described as a continuing series of electoral defeats for the Congress party. In his remarks during the address in Assam's Gogamukh, the Prime Minister said, "This time, a hat-trick for the BJP-NDA government is certain. And a hat-trick of defeat for Congress is also certain. And a century of defeat for Congress's self-proclaimed prince is also on the cards." Addressing a rally in the poll-bound state, PM Modi projected confidence in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) securing a third consecutive term in Assam. Continuing his criticism of the Congress party, PM Modi alleged that its past policies promoted divisive politics and vote-bank considerations. Referring to the pre-2014 period, he claimed the Congress-led government had attempted to introduce legislation that could have created divisions in society. The Prime Minister reiterated key promises outlined in the BJP's manifesto, including the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Assam, while safeguarding tribal traditions and Sixth Schedule areas. "To ensure that no deceit is done to our daughters, implementing the Uniform Civil Code in Assam and protecting the traditions of our tribal society are very



projected confidence in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) securing a third consecutive term in Assam. Continuing his criticism of the Congress party, PM Modi alleged that its past policies promoted divisive politics and vote-bank considerations. Referring to the pre-2014 period, he claimed the Congress-led government had attempted to introduce legislation that could have created divisions in society. The Prime Minister reiterated key promises outlined in the BJP's manifesto, including the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Assam, while safeguarding tribal traditions and Sixth Schedule areas. "To ensure that no deceit is done to our daughters, implementing the Uniform Civil Code in Assam and protecting the traditions of our tribal society are very

big announcements. The BJP does what it says," PM Modi said. He also highlighted welfare measures, including housing and women empowerment schemes. PM Modi said over 22 lakh families have already received pucca houses and promised that 15 lakh more families would benefit under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Referring to the Lakhpati Didi initiative, the Prime Minister said around 3 lakh women in Assam have already become financially empowered, adding that the NDA aims to increase that number to 40 lakh beneficiaries. "With the Lakhpati Didi Abhiyan, 3 lakh sisters of Assam have become Lakhpati Baideo. The NDA will ensure that 40 lakh sisters become Lakhpati Baideo," he said. Earlier in the day, PM Modi visited a tea garden in Dibrugarh, interacted with workers and plucked

tea leaves, praising their contribution to Assam's identity and economy. Calling tea the "soul of Assam," the Prime Minister said the hard work of tea garden families has enhanced the state's pride. "We are very proud of the efforts of every tea garden family. Their hard work and perseverance have enhanced Assam's pride," the Prime Minister said in a post on X. The BJP is contesting the elections in alliance with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF), while the Congress is aiming to return to power by unseating the incumbent NDA government. The ruling alliance is seeking a third consecutive term in the northeastern state, with the BJP highlighting governance, welfare delivery and infrastructure expansion as key campaign planks.

More than 300 cultural groups lose grants under Guru-Shishya scheme; artists flag distress

Coffee Table
News Network

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Culture has placed more than 300 cultural organisations, those that have received financial assistance under the Guru-Shishya Parampara (Repertory Grant) scheme for five years, under a "cooling-off" category. As a result, they will not receive any grant for 2024-25 and 2025-26. For the 2025-26 grant cycle, the ministry received nearly 2,300 proposals, including 296 fresh applications. The committee approved 41 fresh applications and 554 renewal requests. For 2024-25, a total of 2,371 applications were submitted - 1,750 for renewal and 621 fresh requests. "The Competent Authority has

approved the implementation of a two-year cooling-off

the committee may apply as 'fresh' applicants from the

Their proposals are reviewed by an Expert Committee constituted by the ministry. The implementation of the two-year cooling-off period has upset artists and cultural groups across the country. Expressing concern, they said the scheme has been a vital support system for over two decades, covering diverse art forms including dance, theatre, and intangible cultural heritage. "At present, more than 300 repertory groups are under the 'cooling-off' category, with many others rejected, while only a limited number of group, primarily select awardees and organisations, have received payments. This has created a strong sense of uncertainty and distress within the artistic community," an artist said.



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

period for organisations that have received financial assistance under the scheme for five years. However, this provision shall not apply to organisations associated with Padma awardees or those engaged in the promotion and preservation of folk, traditional, and rare art forms," read the minutes of the Evaluation Committee, which examined the applications. Organisations not recommended by

2026-27 grant year onwards. Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to eligible cultural organisations engaged in performing arts such as music, dance, theatre, and folk art, for imparting training to artists or shishyas (disciples) under their respective gurus (mentors) regularly. As per guidelines, organisations must apply annually for both renewal and fresh selection.

President Murmu gives assent to transgender amendment bill amid Opposition criticism

Coffee Table
News Network

NEW DELHI: An amendment bill which provides graded punishment for bodily harm to transgender persons has received the assent of President Droupadi Murmu. Opposition MPs had slammed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, for excluding gays and lesbians from its ambit. An authority has been established to determine whether a person is transgender, a provision that also faced backlash from the opposition. According to a law ministry notification dated



March 30, the amended law will come into effect on a date appointed by the Central Government through a notification in the official gazette. During debates in both Houses of Parliament, while the government said the objective is to protect transgender persons, the opposition slammed the proposed legislation for taking away the right to self-

determination of identity, such as gay and lesbian individuals, and demanded that it be sent to a standing committee for proper consultations. The bill seeks to give a precise definition of the term "transgender" and exclude "different sexual orientations and self-perceived sexual identities" from the ambit of the proposed law. It

underlines that a transgender person "shall not include, nor shall ever have been so included, persons with different sexual orientations and self-perceived sexual identities. The intent, object and purpose of the Act is and was to protect a specified class of persons socially and culturally known as transgender people who face societal discrimination of an extreme and oppressive nature." The purpose was and is not to protect each and every class of persons with various gender identities, self-perceived sex/gender identities or gender fluidities," the bill says.

Militant killed in ongoing encounter in J&K's Ganderbal

Coffee Table
News Network

SRINAGAR: A militant has been killed in an ongoing encounter with security forces in a village in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir. The encounter between militants and security forces began in Ahrama village in Ganderbal on Tuesday evening during a search operation. "During the night of March 31, 2026, the cordon was tactically



reorganised amid intermittent firing. Our troops effectively retaliated with a calibrated response, resulting in one terrorist being eliminated," Srinagar-based Army's 15 Corps said in a post on X. Acting on specific information, a joint contingent of

police and the army launched a search operation in Ahrama village after receiving inputs about the presence of militants. As the security personnel were conducting the search operation, they came under fire from militants hiding in the village. The troops

returned fire, triggering an exchange of gunfire. Sources said security forces have received inputs that a group of two to three militants are trapped within the cordon, and additional troops have been rushed to the village to tighten the siege. Sources added that security personnel are using drones for aerial surveillance. This is the first encounter in the Valley in 2026.

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Delay In Filing Complaint Can Be Fatal In Matrimonial Disputes: Supreme Court Quashes 498A, Dowry Harassment Case Against In-Laws

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Emphasising that unexplained delay in initiating criminal proceedings can be fatal in matrimonial disputes, the Supreme Court quashed a dowry harassment case against a woman's parents-in-law and sister-in-law, holding that a delay of nearly seven years without sufficient explanation cast serious doubt on the prosecution's case. The Court set aside the Allahabad High Court's order which had refused to quash the FIR, observing that vague and omnibus allegations without corroborative material cannot justify continuation of criminal prosecution against relatives of the husband. A bench comprising Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan observed that in matrimonial and family disputes, where evidence is often limited and relationships are

deeply personal, timely reporting of alleged offences assumes critical importance to ensure fairness in criminal proceedings. The Court noted that citizens who allege commission of an offence should pursue their remedies in real time, as the law assists those who are vigilant about their rights. Deprecating the conduct of the complainant(wife), the court observed that the unexplained delay of roughly seven years in lodging a complaint/FIR proved fatal to the prosecution's case: "We find that the citizens who allege commission of an offence should not dawdle on their rights but should rather pursue them in real time in order to achieve the ends of justice as vigilantes non dormiantibus jura subvertunt meaning, law protects those who are vigilant about their rights. The delay or lack thereof assumes greater importance in

the matrimonial cases or criminal cases between the spouses as due to the personal nature of the allegations and relationship shared between the parties, there is already an insufficiency and inadequacy of evidence to support or rebut the claims and counterclaims. A delay of nearly seven years can therefore be fatal to the prosecution's case especially when the same has not been properly explained." The prosecution's case was that the complainant was subjected to domestic cruelty and harassment for a demand of dowry (8.5 lakh and a car as additional dowry), by her in-laws (sister-in-law and parents-in-law) and husband, after the dowry demand could not be acceded to owing to her parents' financial incapacity and constraints. She further alleged of her husband and in-laws for causing a miscarriage, and



alleged that the father-in-law was engaged in a sexually inappropriate behaviour with her, leading her to file a FIR under Sections 498A, 323 and 313 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (hereinafter referred to as "IPC"), as well as Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (hereinafter referred to as "DP Act"). The charge sheet came to be filed under Sections 323, 354, and 498A IPC, along with Sections 3 and 4 of

the Dowry Prohibition Act, dropping the allegation of miscarriage as there was no medical proof substantiating the allegations. Aggrieved by the High Court's decision to dismiss their plea for quashing the criminal case, the in-laws appealed to the Supreme Court. Setting aside the impugned order, the judgment authored by Justice Nagarathna observed that the prosecution's case was entirely based on some bald allegations

made by the complainant, the Court also found that the complainant was not vigilant about her rights, as the complaint was registered by the complainant only on 15.11.2023 i.e. after a delay of more than six years and seven months from the alleged dowry demand. "A mere statement stating that the accused/appellants herein frequently demanded dowry and harassed the

complainant for the same is not sufficient to initiate criminal proceedings against them when the same are not corroborated or bolstered by other materials placed on record.", observed the bench. The Court reiterated the principle laid down in Dara Lakshmi Narayana vs. State of Telangana, that a "mere reference to the names of family members in a criminal case arising out of a matrimonial dispute, without specific allegations indicating their active involvement should be nipped in the bud." Further, the complainant's explanation that she feared her father-in-law, a reputed advocate, was rejected due to a lack of specific instances of threat or restraint over a prolonged period. "merely making such statements claiming that there was sexual misconduct when the same are not substantiated or supported by any material detail in the

Final Report filed by the Investigating Officer cannot be allowed to stand in the court of law.", the court observed. Also, the Court found that the Complainant was not interested in pursuing the case, as she remained absent from hearings despite being issued notice of the same. "At this juncture, it would not be out of place to mention that the complainant herself has failed to enter appearance in the present proceedings despite service of notice upon her. The said non-appearance, despite the service of notice being complete upon her, inevitably draws our attention towards an adverse inference that the complainant herself is indifferent and uninterested in contesting the said appeals.", the court observed. In light of the aforesaid, the appeal was allowed, and pending cases against the in-laws were quashed.

West Bengal SIR | Appellate Tribunals Can Entertain Fresh Documents After Verifying Genuineness

Coffee Table
News Network

In the West Bengal SIR matter, the Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed the Appellate Tribunals, which are hearing appeals against exclusions from the electoral rolls, to entertain fresh documents subject to the verification of their authenticity. The Court initially ordered that the Appellate Tribunals should not entertain fresh/new documents which were not submitted before the adjudicating officer. However, after the petitioners raised concerns, the Court modified its order to state, "The Appellate Tribunal will not entertain fresh documents without verifying the genuineness of such documents." The bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joyimalya Bagchi and Justice Vipul Pancholi was informed by the Election Commission of India that 19 Appellate Tribunals, headed by former High Court Chief Justices/Judges have been notified, and Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee National Institution of Water and Sanitation, Kolkata, has been chosen as the venue for the sitting of the Tribunals. The bench was also informed that nearly 47 lakh out of 60 lakh claims have been disposed of by the judicial officers, who have been entrusted with the task of adjudicating the claims. The Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court informed that the judicial officers, who are deciding nearly 2 lakh objections daily,



will clear the pending claims by April 7. In February, the Court had ordered the deployment of judicial officers from West Bengal and neighbouring states to adjudicate the claims and objections, in view of the dispute between the ECI and the State Government regarding the deputation of government officials for such purposes. Later, the Court directed the constitution of Appellate Tribunals comprising former High Court Judges. The Court also observed that the Appellate Tribunals must have access to the reasons recorded by the adjudicating officers. The Court observed that the reasons be supplied to the parties. During the hearing, Justice Bagchi observed: "The architecture of the software provides for a field for remarks, which are reasons given by the officers concerned while deciding whether the logical discrepancy was justified and therefore deletion was warranted or it was not justified and therefore inclusion is directed. In such cases, whenever an appeal is filed by an aggrieved person, be it the representative of the ECI who feels

that the inclusion is unjustified or be it the person who has been excluded, the reason shall be supplied to the person concerned." Justice Bagchi also observed that incorrect inclusions/exclusions can be corrected by the Tribunals. "Even if a person is excluded today, and is unable to vote in this particular election, but that exclusion appears to be unjustified to a Tribunal headed by a former Chief Justice, we see no reason why the decision can be altered and he can be included. An likewise, a person incorrectly included, and votes in this election, and your representative makes a report to the Tribunal, we see no reason why the entire cleaning exercise taken by you should not be taken to its logical conclusion" During the hearing, petitioners raised concerns about bulk Form 6 applications (for registration as new voters) were being filed. The Court said that it cannot merely act on oral submissions without anything being on record. The Court also orally observed that the voters included after the qualifying date set by the ECI cannot claim the right to vote. Senior Advocates

Kapil Sibal, Shyam Divan, Menaka Guruswamy, Gopal Sankaranarayanan, Kalyan Bandhopadhyaya, Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya etc appeared for the petitioners. Senior Advocate Dama Seshadri Naidu appeared for the ECI. A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joyimalya Bagchi and Justice Vipul Pancholi was dealing with petitions, including one filed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, challenging aspects of the revision exercise and the characterization of certain voters in the "logical discrepancy" list. On the last date, the CJI had orally observed that SIR of electoral rolls got conducted smoothly across the country except in West Bengal. He said that though there were equally complicated issues in other States, "by and large", SIR went on smoothly there. The Bench also indicated that the responsibility for managing logistical aspects of the process had been entrusted to the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court and advised parties to bring specific difficulties to the Court's attention if they persisted.

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NEW DELHI: The Union Government is set to introduce the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, which will officially declare Amaravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh and provide statutory backing to the ongoing greenfield capital city project. The bill aims to amend the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, adding the phrase, "Amaravati shall be the new capital." After Telangana was formed as a separate State, the original Act of 2014 stated that Hyderabad shall be the common capital for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for a period of not exceeding 10 years, after which Hyderabad shall be the capital of Telangana and there shall be a new capital for AP. The move follows a unanimous resolution passed by the AP Legislative Assembly on March 28, urging the Centre to grant legal recognition to Amaravati as the permanent capital. The resolution, moved by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, was



forwarded to the Rajya Sabha Chairman, Lok Sabha Speaker and Union Home Minister. CM Naidu denounces Opposition's inconsistent statements on Capital Speaking in the Assembly, Naidu stressed Amaravati's status as the sole capital of Andhra Pradesh, asserting that "no force can alter this decision." He criticised the opposition for inconsistent statements on the capital issue, emphasising that the Constitution provides the framework for governance decisions. Naidu also referred to earlier recommendations by the Sivaramakrishnan Committee, which had noted public preference for locating the capital between Vijayawada and Guntur. He highlighted the

unprecedented public support for the project and said more than 34,000 acres of land was voluntarily contributed by farmers within 58 days to facilitate the development of Capital Amaravati. The proposed amendment is expected to end years of political uncertainty surrounding the capital, particularly after the previous YSR Congress government's three-capital stalled development in Amaravati. Once passed by both Houses of Parliament with a simple majority, the bill will provide the necessary legal backing for further construction and infrastructure projects along the Krishna River. Naidu had stressed that the statutory recognition is critical for restoring investor confidence,

accelerating infrastructure development, and ensuring long-term administrative stability. He envisioned Amaravati as a world-class Blue-Green City, combining sustainability with modern infrastructure, and emerging as a self-sustaining economic hub driving growth across the State. Originally planned as the capital of residual Andhra Pradesh after the 2014 bifurcation of the State, Amaravati's formal recognition through the bill is expected to solidify its future and revive momentum for one of India's largest greenfield capital projects. The bill is likely to be discussed and passed during the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament.

AP set to launch first quantum computer

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VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has unveiled an ambitious plan to transform Amaravati into a global hub for quantum computing and position Andhra Pradesh at the forefront of next-generation technology. Addressing a round table on the Quantum Valley hardware ecosystem on Tuesday, he said the State is leveraging the National Quantum Mission to secure a first-mover advantage, much like it did in IT. Backed by partnerships with IBM, TCS and L&T, the initiative aims to develop indigenous quantum hardware and world-class infrastructure, turning Amaravati into a future-ready innovation hub. Amaravati Quantum Valley (AQV) will serve as a catalyst in positioning Andhra Pradesh among the top five global quantum hubs by 2030. "Amaravati is going to emerge as India's first quantum computer hub with the launching of the first quantum computer on April 14. With this Andhra Pradesh will become a leader in next-generation technologies. Amaravati Quantum Valley will provide a new direction to the nation in the technology revolution," Naidu said. He emphasised that AP is moving with a clear



roadmap to build a comprehensive ecosystem that includes quantum hardware manufacturing, algorithm development and research capabilities. Directing stakeholders to work with a defined timeline, he called for indigenous production of quantum computing components within the next two years. He said the State aims to reduce dependence on imports by developing core technologies such as cryogenics, photonics, advanced electronics, and quantum devices locally. He stressed that the focus should not be limited to assembling systems, but should extend to end-to-end capabilities, including design, innovation and testing. Made in Amaravati quantum hardware, should become a defining feature of the initiative, he asserted. Highlighting infrastructure plans, the Chief Minister said eight towers are being developed in

Amaravati's Quantum Valley to house research centres, innovation labs and startups. These facilities will provide an integrated ecosystem for academia, industry and entrepreneurs to collaborate and accelerate breakthroughs in quantum technologies. He also underscored the importance of creating test beds, certification systems, and incubation support to nurture startups. Drawing parallels with the IT revolution, Naidu said Andhra Pradesh had successfully leveraged early opportunities in information technology by establishing engineering colleges and institutions like IITs to build a skilled workforce. He said a similar approach is now being adopted in quantum computing, with training programmes being conducted in collaboration with global companies and academic institutions to equip youth with

advanced skills. He also spoke about the integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, real-time data systems, and digital health platforms. Initiatives like AI-driven services, including AI doctors, AI tutors and AI agronomists are being envisioned to improve governance and public service delivery, he said. The Chief Minister said early adoption of such technologies will ensure long-term economic growth and strengthen the knowledge economy. Naidu said the Quantum Valley initiative will not only accelerate technological innovation but also transform Amaravati into a world-class livable city. More than 30 quantum technology companies attended the meeting, with the State already signing MoUs with 15 firms. Seven companies have begun operations at Medha Towers in Vijayawada.

Priyanka Gandhi slams CM Himanta Sarma, says one family looting Assam

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NAZIRA: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Wednesday slammed Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and alleged that "only one family is looting" everything in the state. Addressing an election rally here in support of Leader of the Opposition and party candidate for Nazira, Debabrata Saikia, she also launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and charged him with being a "slave" of the US. "One family is looting everything in Assam. And when they are not looting,



mines, lands and every other asset is being handed over to big industrialists," Gandhi claimed. Alleging massive corruption on every front during the BJP-led government in Assam, she raked up several old scams such as Sarada, Smart City and NC Hills. "The BJP said

they have given a double-engine government. In reality, it is a double-glulam (slavery) government. PM Modi is engaged in slavery of the US, and Himanta Biswa Sarma is engaged in slavery of Modi," Gandhi claimed. She also attacked the BJP government for failing to fulfil the

promise of hiking daily wages of tea garden workers and stressed that the people from the gardens are struggling in the same way. "Various tribal communities have been demanding ST status for years. The BJP had promised to accord ST status to them, but they failed to give it," the Lok Sabha MP said. She also alleged that women of Assam are forced to attend the rallies of the PM and CM with threats that their names will be removed from various government schemes, especially the flagship poverty alleviation scheme 'Orunodoi'.

'Hat-trick certain': PM Modi asserts confidence on NDA win ahead of Assam polls

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GUWAHATI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday predicted an NDA hat-trick in Assam ahead of the April 9 polls, citing a massive turnout at his Gogamukh rally despite inclement weather as a sign of public support. "The BJP-NDA government's hat-trick is certain in Assam. The Congress' defeat of a hat-trick is also certain. Assam is forming a BJP-NDA government for the third straight time. For the Congress' so-called prince, he will suffer the century of defeat," Modi said, addressing the gathering. He said Assam had seen a new era of service and good governance in the last 10 years, first under Sarbananda Sonowal and then, under Himanta Biswa Sarma. Modi praised the Assam BJP for the "excellent" Sankalp Patra (manifesto) released on Tuesday. "The Sankalp Patra released on a 'Mangalbar' (Tuesday) will bring more 'Mangal' to Assam," the Prime



Minister said. He said he was confident that the steps to be taken as mentioned in the manifesto would create more government jobs and opportunities for self-reliance for the youth of the state. Moreover, he praised the BJP for its decision to spend Rs 5 lakh crore in building infrastructure in the state. GUWAHATI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday predicted an NDA hat-trick in Assam ahead of the April 9 polls, citing a massive turnout at his Gogamukh rally despite inclement weather as a sign of

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CM Mann flags off 508 ERVs, promises six-minute police response in Punjab

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CHANDIGARH: Punjab will now deliver police assistance within just six minutes, on par with developed countries such as the United States and European nations, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be introduced to enhance the efficiency of Punjab Police as he flagged off 508 Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs) in Sangrur to significantly strengthen on-ground policing across the state. The vehicles,

equipped with advanced technology and deployed across all 28 police districts under Dial-112, are set to ensure an immediate response to distress calls. Backed by a Rs 327.70 crore investment in police vehicles over four years, Mann highlighted that modernisation of the force has not only strengthened law and order but also tightened the grip on drug traffickers, while improved security continues to boost investor confidence, reflected in major investments like Tata Steel's second-largest plant in



Punjab. Addressing a gathering in Sangrur, CM Mann gave a strong call to the people, stating, "Social boycott of those involved in the heinous crime of drug trade is necessary as a final blow to eradicate this menace completely from Punjab." He asserted that those who have ruined generations

deserve no leniency, such elements must be taught a lesson, and social boycott will act as a catalyst in freeing Punjab from drugs. "For the first time, a bottom-up approach has been adopted, with vehicles now being provided to SHOs at the ground level instead of only senior officers," he said.

Himachal govt rolls back entry tax hike after protests

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CHANDIGARH: Following widespread protests, the Himachal Pradesh government has reversed its decision to increase entry tax on certain vehicles. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced in the state assembly in Shimla that the proposed hike for

five-seater and 6-to-12-seater vehicles has been withdrawn, just hours before it was set to take effect at midnight. As per the revised decision, the earlier rates will remain in place: Rs 70 for five-seater vehicles and Rs 110 for vehicles with 6 to 12 seats. The government had initially planned to raise these to Rs 170 and Rs 130 respectively. Despite

the rollback, protestors have decided to continue their agitation until an official notification is issued. Paramjit Singh Pamma, a leader of the Sangharsh Morcha, stated that the dharna would persist until formal confirmation is received. He also emphasized that their demand is not just a partial

rollback, but either a complete exemption for Punjab's border areas or a reciprocal tax by Punjab on Himachal vehicles. The issue gained traction during the assembly session when Randhir Sharma raised concerns about growing unrest in border areas. The BJP also staged protests ahead of the session.

Iran Power Shift? IRGC Tightens Grip As Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei Stays Out Of Sight

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Iran's powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has taken control over key state functions, pushing President Masoud Pezeshkian into a "complete political deadlock," Iran International reported, citing informed sources. According to the report, the IRGC has blocked presidential appointments and decisions while establishing a security perimeter around the core of power, effectively sidelining the civilian administration from executive authority. An attempt by Pezeshkian to appoint a new intelligence minister last Thursday reportedly collapsed after IRGC chief commander Ahmad Vahidi intervened, rejecting all proposed candidates, including Hossein Dehghan, the report mentioned. Sources indicated that Vahidi insisted that critical leadership roles must remain under IRGC oversight during wartime conditions, preventing the President from installing his preferred nominee. Under Iran's political structure, presidents traditionally nominate intelligence ministers after obtaining approval from the Supreme Leader, who holds ultimate authority over national security portfolios. However, Iran International reported that uncertainty surrounding access to Mojtaba Khamenei has further complicated decision-making processes. The report



mentioned that Pezeshkian has repeatedly attempted to secure an urgent meeting with Mojtaba Khamenei in recent days, but his requests have gone unanswered. Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed in an airstrike at the start of the war on February 28, has yet to appear in public after being named and has only issued a handful of written statements. His failure to appear in person has led to intense speculation over his condition and whereabouts, but state television and some Iranian officials have indicated he is recovering from wounds sustained in an airstrike. Sources told the outlet that a council comprising senior IRGC officers is exercising control over the central decision-making structure and managing access to the Supreme Leader's office. The report said the arrangement has prevented key government updates from reaching Khamenei, effectively consolidating the Guard's influence over state affairs. The report also highlighted internal tensions within

Khamenei's inner circle, including efforts by some associates to remove Ali Asghar Hejazi, a senior security figure who has opposed the prospect of Mojtaba Khamenei's succession. Hejazi reportedly warned members of the Assembly of Experts that hereditary succession would contradict the ideological framework established by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and could ultimately concentrate power within the IRGC, weakening civilian institutions. Israeli media had earlier reported that Hejazi was targeted in an airstrike in Tehran during the first week of the war, though later accounts suggested he survived, according to Iran International. Separate reporting by Reuters highlights the IRGC's wider regional role, particularly its involvement in rebuilding Hezbollah's military structure after heavy losses during the 2024 conflict with Israel. According to the report, the IRGC deployed officers to retrain Hezbollah fighters, reorganise command systems and oversee

rearmament efforts following the killing of the group's leader Hassan Nasrallah and other senior commanders. Sources cited by Reuters said the restructuring included shifting Hezbollah's command model towards decentralised operational units designed to limit intelligence penetration and improve battlefield resilience. Reuters described the IRGC as an elite force responsible for protecting Iran's clerical system and noted that both the IRGC and Hezbollah are designated as terrorist organisations by the United States and some other countries. On March 30, Israel's military said it struck infrastructure at Imam Hossein University in Tehran, an institution run by the Revolutionary Guards that Israeli officials claim is linked to advanced weapons research. The Israeli military said the strikes targeted facilities including wind tunnels, chemistry laboratories and engineering centres allegedly used in weapons development.

Donald Trump Tells Aides He's Willing To End Iran War Even If Strait Of Hormuz Remains Closed

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US President Donald Trump is willing to wind down the American military campaign against Iran even if the Strait of Hormuz remains largely closed, according to The Wall Street Journal. The report claimed that Trump and his aides have assessed that a complex operation to fully reopen the strategic waterway could push the conflict well beyond his preferred timeline of Officials cited by the report said the administration is instead focused on achieving its core military objectives, weakening Iran's navy, degrading its missile stockpiles and limiting its defence industry and nuclear capabilities, before scaling down hostilities and relying more heavily on diplomacy. The report mentioned that Trump has conveyed mixed public messaging on the importance of the strait, at times



threatening to bomb Iranian energy infrastructure if it is not reopened, while on other occasions suggesting that ensuring maritime access is more critical for other countries than for the United States. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the current phase of military objectives could be completed within weeks, after which "it will be up to Iran to decide" whether the strait is reopened or whether a coalition of countries will ensure freedom of navigation. The Strait of Hormuz remains a key pressure point in

the conflict as around 20 per cent of the world's oil supply passes through the narrow waterway, making any prolonged closure a major concern for global markets. Multiple countries are already grappling with supply disruptions that previously flowed freely through the strait. Shortages are being felt across sectors dependent on energy-linked commodities such as fertiliser and helium used in semiconductor production. Analysts cited by the report warn that continued disruption could deepen economic

strain globally, as oil prices have surged past \$100 per barrel amid uncertainty about the duration of the crisis. Suzanne Maloney, an Iran expert and vice president at the Brookings Institution, was quoted as saying that ending military operations before ensuring safe passage through the strait would be "unbelievably irresponsible," adding that global energy markets cannot shield the United States from economic consequences.

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