

## Positivity Key in Rahuri By-Poll Campaign Says, Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Ahilyanagar, April 3: Water Resources and Guardian Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil on Friday called upon party workers to adopt a positive approach and actively connect with voters in the upcoming Rahuri Assembly by-election, describing the contest as a tribute to the legacy of late Shivajirao Kardile. Addressing a meeting of key officials and workers in Rahuri taluka, Vikhe Patil said that while public support

remains firmly behind the Mahayuti alliance, it is the responsibility of each worker to ensure that the government's message reaches every voter. He announced that the nomination papers for the by-election will be filed on April 6 in the presence of BJP state president Ravindra Chavan. The meeting was attended by MLA Monika Rajale, senior leader Subhash Patil, BJP district president Dilip Bhalsing, candidate Akshay Kardile, and other office-bearers.

Farmers from the beneficiary region felicitated Vikhe Patil for securing 1,234 crore for the Saklai irrigation scheme. In his address, Vikhe Patil said late Kardile had worked tirelessly for the development of Rahuri and stressed that the by-election is crucial to realize his vision. "Workers must avoid internal differences and fight the election with unity and a constructive mindset," he said. Highlighting national developments, he said that under Prime Minister



Narendra Modi, India continues to progress across sectors despite global instability. He

urged workers to counter attempts to malign the government over fuel and gas-related

issues. Emphasizing the state's role in achieving the vision of a developed India, Vikhe Patil said key

decisions taken under Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis are significant. He appealed to party workers to effectively communicate the benefits of central and state schemes to voters during the campaign. He further noted that substantial funds are being allocated for irrigation projects in the district, and decisions related to the Vambori and Saklai schemes are vital for addressing water scarcity in drought-prone areas. He also highlighted efforts to promote industrial

development in Rahuri taluka to generate employment. MLA Monika Rajale, in her speech, paid tribute to late Kardile and urged workers to campaign with dedication, treating the election as their own. She described the approval of the Saklai project as a positive development for farmers in drought-affected areas. Other leaders, including Subhash Patil, Dilip Bhalsing, and Akshay Kardile, also addressed the gathering.

## The work of the country's first bullet train is being done in a fast, NATM method. The 21 km long tunnel

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

India's first bullet train corridor has a 21 km long tunnel. Out of which, 5 km has been completely excavated using the New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM). After the excavation work is completed, work is now underway on the next stages of the tunnel construction. The work of the drainage system inside the tunnel is underway. The seepage is safely collected by the drainage casting gantry and discharged through



a separate drainage system. Special membranes are installed through the waterproofing gantry, which creates a strong protection against water ingress into the tunnel. Reinforcement cages are being installed

inside the tunnel, which provide additional strength to the final concrete structure. After this, the final concrete layer is poured through the lining gantry, which gives the tunnel permanent strength

and a smooth finish. Special equipment rooms are also being prepared to house important machinery required for operation and maintenance. With each phase being completed in a planned manner, this underground part of India's first bullet train project is moving towards completion at a rapid pace. Meanwhile, the government is trying to start the country's first bullet train on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad route by the end of 2027.

## Big blow to America, Iran claims to have shot down F-35 aircraft, pilot taken into custody

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

New Delhi: The war between the US and Iran is intensifying. Iran has claimed to have successfully shot down the second and fifth version of the US stealth F-35 fighter jet. Along with this, Iran has also claimed to have captured the pilot of the US plane. Iranian government and semi-government news channels have quoted officials as saying that the pilot is unlikely to be alive.



However, according to some reports, the pilot of the F-35 plane has been captured alive. According to some reports, the US tried to rescue the pilot by

sending a helicopter after the plane crashed. However, it is known that they were not successful. According to a report by Iran's Taslim News

Agency, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps shot down a sophisticated US fighter jet on April 3 and said that the pilot landed in Iran after the attack on the plane. On the other hand, Mehr News Agency said that the US may think that the pilot is alive and they may be trying to get the pilot out of Iranian borders. However, according to some sources, the Iranian military has captured the pilot.

## Let's celebrate Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary as a celebration of his thoughts

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Mumbai, Date 03: The thoughts and the Constitution given by Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar have given the country a direction for progress. It is very important to reach every section of the society with his work and contribution for the betterment of the society. The state government is trying to make the program to be held on the occasion of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary more excellent every year, and this year too it will be celebrated in a grander manner with the coordination of various departments. Let's celebrate Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary as a celebration of his thoughts, appealed Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. In connection with the preparations for the 135th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on April 14, 2026, a review meeting was held at the Sahyadri Guest House under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. He was speaking at the time. Social Justice Minister Sanjay Shirsat, former Minister of State Bhai Girkar, former MLA Prakash Gajbhiye, Mumbai Municipal Corporation Commissioner Ashwini Bhide, Additional Chief Secretary Lokesh Chandra, Additional Chief



Secretary of Urban Development Department Govindraj, Konkan Divisional Commissioner Rubal Agarwal, Mumbai Police Commissioner Deven Bharti, Principal Secretary Shrikar Pardeshi, Principal Secretary of Social Justice Department Harshdeep Kamble, Venerable Dr. Rahul Bodhi Mahathero, General Secretary of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Mahaparivirvana Din Coordination Committee Nagsen Kamble, representatives of Dadar Chaityabhoomi Smarak Committee along with Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, Secretaries of various departments were present at the meeting. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the purpose behind celebrating the birth anniversaries of great men is not just a formality but to

convey the inspiration of their thoughts and work to the next generations. The Constitution given by Dr. Ambedkar is one of the best constitutions in the world, and due to its principle of inclusiveness, India is moving towards a developed nation. The new generation needs to understand who is behind the opportunities, rights and progress that society gets. Therefore, the birth anniversary celebration is not just a celebration but an occasion to spread ideas. Lakhs of citizens from all over the country come to Chaityabhoomi for the birth anniversary celebration of Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on April 14, 2026. In the backdrop of summer, all necessary facilities should be made available for the followers and citizens who come to pay their respects in the Chaityabhoomi area. Pavilions should be

erected at various places to provide protection from the heat. Mainly, drinking water should be made available. Also, Chief Minister Shri. Fadnavis directed the concerned officers to ensure that the traffic police make proper planning and control to ensure smooth traffic in Dadar and the surrounding areas. Information boards should be put up at various places to guide the citizens. BEST administration should provide adequate bus service between Dadar Railway Station and Chaityabhoomi, so that the movement of citizens becomes easier. Dr. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that it is our responsibility to celebrate the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar in a better way, mentioning that it is being celebrated on a large scale across the country and the world.

## Coffee Table

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## Guardian Minister Dr Vikhe Patil Inspects Damage in Pathare; Orders 100% Crop Loss Assessment

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Ahilyanagar / Shirdi : Following unseasonal rains, hailstorms, and strong winds that caused extensive agricultural damage in Rahata taluka and other parts of the district, Guardian Minister Dr. Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil has directed the administration to conduct 100% accurate loss assessments (panchnamas) and submit detailed reports at the earliest. In the wake

of Thursday's untimely rainfall, the minister reviewed the situation with District Collector Dr. Pankaj Ashia and gathered comprehensive information on the extent of damage. To ensure immediate relief for affected farmers, he also conducted an on-ground inspection at Pathare (Bk.) village, interacting directly with farmers in their fields. During the visit, Dr. Vikhe Patil inspected the farms and cattle sheds of local farmers Sanjay Bhausaheb Gholap



and Sopan Gholap. He took note of a tragic incident where nine cows died due to electrocution after a live electric wire fell amid strong winds. The minister visited the Gholap family's residence to offer condolences and

assured them of full government support. He instructed officials to expedite financial assistance from the state government. Additionally, he directed the electricity distribution company to immediately repair

fallen power lines and poles and restore electricity supply in the affected areas without delay. According to official estimates, unseasonal rains on March 18, March 30, and April 1, 2026, have damaged crops across 1,800

hectares, affecting approximately 2,759 farmers in Rahata taluka alone. Major crops impacted include wheat, onion, grapes, maize, pomegranate, chickpea, watermelon, and mango. Significant losses have also

been reported to stored produce, as well as infrastructure such as shade nets and polyhouses. Across the district, crop damage has affected 42,618 farmers. Recent rainfall has also led to livestock and property losses, including one animal death in Jamkhed, two in Sangamner, nine in Rahuri, and damage to one house in Kopargaon. The minister has ordered complete and accurate assessment of all such losses. Several

officials, including revenue, agriculture, and animal husbandry officers, along with local representatives, were present during the inspection. With forecasts predicting further unseasonal rainfall in the coming days, Dr. Vikhe Patil has appealed to farmers to take precautionary measures by securing harvested produce and relocating livestock to safer locations to minimize potential losses.

## MIC&S Marks 47th Raising Day in Ahilyanagar



**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Ahilyanagar : The Mechanised Infantry Centre & School (MIC&S) commemorated its 47th Raising Day on Wednesday, celebrating nearly five decades of excellence in training and tactical innovation within the Indian Army. Originally established as the Mechanised Infantry Regimental Centre (MIRC) on April 2, 1979, the institution has undergone a significant transformation over the years. It was re-

designated as a Category 'A' training establishment on September 17, 2021, reflecting its enhanced stature and expanded role in the Army's training framework. Recognised as the Army's premier institution for technical and tactical training related to Infantry Combat Vehicles (ICVs), MIC&S serves as the nucleus for mechanised warfare doctrine. It currently trains soldiers from multiple arms, including personnel from all 50 battalions of the

Mechanised Infantry. As part of its forward-looking approach, the Centre is in the process of establishing a state-of-the-art Urban Warfare Training Node in Ahilyanagar. The facility is expected to significantly strengthen the Army's preparedness for operations in complex urban environments. In addition to basic and specialised training, the institution conducts advanced courses for personnel across various ranks of the

Indian Army, the Indian Coast Guard, and military personnel from friendly foreign countries, further enhancing its global training footprint. On the occasion, the Colonel of the Regiment extended his congratulations to all ranks of MIC&S, praising the institution's evolution into a modern and dynamic training centre. He highlighted its crucial role in maintaining the operational readiness and combat effectiveness of the Indian Army.

## Centre Favourable to Naming AYUSH Hospital After Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Proposal Referred to State Government

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Ahilyanagar : The Central Government has expressed its willingness to name the centrally sponsored AYUSH hospital in Ahilyanagar South Lok Sabha constituency after Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The proposal, initiated by MP Nilesh Lanke, has been forwarded to the Maharashtra Government for further action. MP Lanke had written a detailed letter to the Ministry of AYUSH on December 15, 2025, explaining the social and constitutional significance of the proposed naming. He stated that the



hospital serves as a vital healthcare centre for rural residents, women, senior citizens, and underprivileged sections of society. He also noted that naming the hospital after Dr. Ambedkar would be a tribute to his ideals of social justice, equality, and inclusive development. Responding to the proposal, Union Minister of State

for AYUSH Prataprao Jadhav conveyed a positive stance. In his reply dated March 30, 2026, he informed that the proposal has been referred to the Maharashtra Government for further necessary action. The minister clarified that the hospital has been approved as a 50-bed integrated AYUSH facility under the National AYUSH

Mission, and therefore, the name must reflect the scheme. He also stated that although the project is centrally sponsored, the final authority to decide the name lies with the State Government. The proposal was officially sent to the State Government on March 16, 2026, and a final decision is awaited. The move is expected to strengthen the values of social justice and inspire confidence among marginalized communities. The proposal has received a positive response locally, and a decision from the State Government is expected soon.

## Congress enters Baramati and Rahuri constituencies! Party leaders give green light to contest by-elections

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Pune: In the backdrop of the Baramati and Rahuri assembly by-elections in the state, the Congress has taken an important decision and decided to contest elections in both the constituencies. It has been reported that the party high command has given the green light for this. (Baramati and Rahuri By Election) Interviews of potential candidates for the Baramati assembly by-election were held yesterday, and the local level equations were reviewed. It is being said that the party leadership will take a careful decision to select the right candidate considering the number of aspirants. Meanwhile, the process of finalizing the candidates for the Rahuri assembly by-election is in the final stage, and an official announcement is likely to be made soon. Information has been received from Congress sources that the names of the candidates will be



finalized only after discussing with the allies in both the constituencies. With this decision, there are signs that the political battles in Baramati and Rahuri will become more colorful, and further developments regarding seat sharing and strategy in the Maha Vikas Aghadi will also gain momentum. (Baramati and Rahuri By Election) Congress Party Maharashtra State President Harshvardhan Sapkal also told the media yesterday that we have spoken to our party leaders regarding Rahuri and Baramati assembly constituencies. We have received applications seeking candidature for this. 6

applications have been received for Baramati and 4 applications have been received in Rahuri. We will announce our stance on contesting the elections in the next 2 days. He had informed yesterday that online interviews have also been held today. According to the information that came to light today, the Congress party will field candidates for the Baramati and Rahuri by-elections in the state. Congress State President Harshvardhan Sapkal has confirmed this information. The process of selecting candidates will be completed throughout the day today and the information will be given to the media tomorrow, Congress

State President Harshvardhan Sapkal has informed. The by-elections for Baramati and Rahuri assembly constituencies in Maharashtra have been announced. Voting for Rahuri and Baramati will be held on April 23 and the counting of votes will be held on May 4. The seat of Rahuri assembly constituency in Ahilyanagar district has fallen vacant due to the death of BJP MLA Shivajirao Kardile. Meanwhile, the late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar died in a plane crash on January 28. Due to this, the seat of Baramati assembly constituency is vacant. By-elections have been announced for both these seats.

## Two Arrested in Crackdown on Organised Cattle Slaughter and Beef Sale Racket in Ahilyanagar

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Ahilyanagar : In a major crackdown, the Camp Police in Ahilyanagar have arrested two individuals for their alleged involvement in an organised racket engaged in the illegal slaughter of cattle and sale of beef. The accused have been booked under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Maharashtra Animal Preservation Act, 1976. According to police, a case (Crime Register No. 169/2026) has been registered at the Camp Police Station under Sections 271, 325, 331, and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with Sections 5(a), 5(b), 5(c), and 9 of the Maharashtra Animal Preservation Act. The arrested accused have been identified as Asif Iqbal Qureshi and Tanveer Mohammad Qureshi, both residents of Sadar Bazar in Bhangar



area of Ahilyanagar. They were taken into custody on April 2. Preliminary investigations have revealed that Asif Qureshi is the alleged mastermind behind the racket. He, along with his associates, was reportedly involved in the transportation of cattle, subjecting them to cruelty, carrying out illegal slaughter, and storing and selling beef on a regular basis. Police also found that the

accused have prior criminal records related to similar offences. Given the organised and repeated nature of the crimes carried out for financial gain, additional charges under Section 111 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which pertains to organised criminal activity, have also been invoked. The operation was carried out under the guidance of Superintendent of

Police Somnath Garge, Additional Superintendent Vaibhav Kalubarme, and Sub-Divisional Police Officer Dr. Dilip Tiparse. The team from Bhangar Camp Police Station, including API Jagdish Mulgir, Police Constable Dilip Shinde, and Pramod Lahare, executed the action. Further investigation is being conducted by Police Constable Pandurang Bargaje.

## Acid thrown on body over Rs 600 dispute in Malad 7 to 8 people injured

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Mumbai: An incident of a man throwing acid on seven people over a dispute over just Rs 600 took place in Kurar area on Wednesday. Samar Bahadur Singh (38) has been arrested in this case. Police say that seven people were burnt due to the acid he threw. Meanwhile, a case of assault and rioting has been registered against seven to eight people based on Singh's complaint. According to the Kurar police, Samar Bahadur Singh owns a jewellery polishing shop and Mayur Kanojia (20) has a jewellery manufacturing unit nearby. The two used to exchange work and money regularly. In one transaction, Kanojia mistakenly gave Singh Rs 27,000 instead of



Rs 26,400. He then demanded the extra Rs 600 from Singh back. Kanojia's father went to Singh's shop and demanded the remaining amount, but Singh refused to pay the extra amount. Enraged by this, Kanojia along with seven or eight of his friends went to Singh's shop at around 3:30 pm on Wednesday. Singh was beaten up by seven to eight people. During this, Singh threw water-mixed acid used for polishing on them. Seven people were injured in this and all of them were admitted to

Shatabdi Hospital in Kandivali West. As soon as the information about the incident was received, the Kurar police reached the spot. Based on Singh's complaint, a case has been registered against Kanojia and his associates, while based on Kanojia's complaint, a case has been registered against Singh. Two of the injured have been discharged home. The police said that the condition of the other injured is stable. Singh and Hemant Rathod, Nitin Dhobi have been arrested, the police said.

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Mumbai: The Tax Assessment and Collection Department of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation has achieved a record performance in property tax collection this year. Breaking all the previous records of property tax collection, the Municipal Corporation has collected property tax worth Rs 7,610 crore 90 lakh as compared to the revised target of Rs 7,341 crore set for the financial year 2025-26. Various civic

services and facilities are provided to the citizens by the Municipal Corporation. To improve the quality of these services and ensure their efficient implementation, capable financial resources are required. In that regard, property tax is a very important revenue source. Extensive awareness was created so that Mumbaikars should pay property tax on time. To make tax payment easier, civic convenience centers were kept open on



weekends and public holidays and online payment facilities were made available. Along with this, effective follow-up was done for recovery of past dues with special focus on big defaulters. The

Mumbai Municipal Corporation had set a revised property tax collection target of Rs 7,341 crore for the financial year 2025-26. During the stipulated period from April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026, a

property tax of Rs 7,610 crore 90 lakh was collected. This is 103.68 percent of the total target. Along with this, Rs 301 crore 13 lakh was also collected in the form of additional penalty. In terms of administrative performance, 'K' East (Rs 719 crore 23 lakh), 'G' South (Rs 670 crore 64 lakh), 'K' West (Rs 622 crore 16 lakh), 'H' East (Rs 577 crore 78 lakh) and 'H' West (Rs 536 crore 55 lakh) have recorded the highest property tax collection.

## Grandmother on duty after handing over child to neighbours; Both found dead in morning

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

M. T. Representative, Pune: A 70-year-old woman and a six-year-old child were brutally murdered in their house in Kelgaon near Alandi on Thursday. This incident has shaken the Alandi area. Police investigation has revealed that the murder was not committed for the purpose of theft. Due to this, the mystery behind the murder has increased. Meanwhile, the police have expressed suspicion that the second husband of the deceased girl's grandmother committed this act. The names of the deceased are Dhanashree Kedari (age six) and Mangal Shinde (age 70, resident of

Thakarwadi, Kelgaon). Sangeeta Dattatreya Kedari (age 41) filed a complaint at the Alandi police station. Sangeeta's son and daughter-in-law do not live with her. Dhanashree was the daughter of Sangeeta's son. She had lived with Sangeeta since childhood. Sangeeta works as a housekeeper in a private hospital. Mangal Shinde used to live alone next to Sangeeta. On Wednesday night, Sangeeta had gone to work for the night shift. On the way, she asked Mangal, who lives next door, to sleep with her nephew. On Thursday morning, Sangeeta returned home from work as usual around 8:30 am. She initially went to Mangal's house. However, his door was locked. So



she came to her house. When she pushed the closed door, she found Mangal and Dhanashree lying in a pool of blood in the house. She came out and screamed. After informing the Alandi police about this, the police immediately rushed to the spot. It has come to light that the attacker entered

the house at night and stabbed Dhanashree and Mangal Shinde in the head with a sharp weapon and killed them. No property was stolen from the house. Therefore, the preliminary investigation has revealed that the murder was not committed with the intention of theft. The police's forensic team;

as well as the dog squad were immediately called to the spot. With their help, the accused is being tracked down. Special teams have been dispatched to search for the accused. On Thursday night, the police detained the second husband of the complainant Sangeeta.

## Maharashtra lashed by rains, will fall in Madhya Maharashtra including Thane and Raigad;

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Mumbai: Pune and Nashik districts were lashed by unseasonal rains on Thursday. The rains accompanied by thunder have disrupted human life. Several people have lost their lives and animals have also died. Along with this, light showers were reported in some places in Mumbai yesterday. The Meteorological Department has predicted that rain will continue in some places in Mumbai, Thane and Raigad districts in the coming days. The India Meteorological Department has expressed the possibility of heavy rains in central and south Maharashtra for the next 24 hours. Meanwhile, a warning of light showers has also been issued in Vidarbha and Marathwada. Due to this, the maximum temperature in the state has decreased. The mercury in Mumbai also reached 33 degrees



Celsius. Also, the temperature has decreased in Konkan and there is relief from the heat for some time. The weather has become unstable due to changes in the weather in the Arabian Sea and the surrounding region and the Western Disturbance in North India. Therefore, there is a possibility of heavy rains with thunder in the next 1-2 days. Meanwhile, this changing weather has affected the most places in North India and there is a possibility of rain in states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar. The heavy rains in Pimpri-Chinchwad city have affected the Punawale area, and traffic has been

completely disrupted due to large amount of water accumulation in the underpass. Due to the sudden water accumulation, a long queue of vehicles formed and traffic jams were created on both sides. As the rain continued in the city since noon, the water could not drain from the underpass. As a result, two-wheeler and four-wheeler drivers had to face a lot of trouble. The situation became even more serious as some vehicles got stuck in the water. Due to this, the traffic police immediately decided to divert the traffic and diverted the flow of vehicles towards Ravet, Bhumkar Chowk and Tathawade routes.

## Tree collapses in Pune due to rain, flower seller dies in a tragic accident

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Pune: A heartbreaking incident has taken place on Sinhadag Road during the heavy rains in the city, when a large tree fell on a woman who was selling flowers near a temple and she died. Ranjana Giri had been selling flowers near the temple for the last 15 to 20 years. The reason for her death today is that the banyan tree, which provided shelter in the sun and rain, has become the cause of her death. The name of the deceased woman is Ranjana Navnath Giri (age 60, resident of Dattawadi). An accidental death has been registered in this case at Parvati Police Station. She is survived by her husband, three sons

and a daughter. According to the information given by the police and fire department, Ranjana Giri had been doing the business of selling flowers near the Navshya Maruti Temple on Sinhadag Road for the past many years. Since it was Hanuman Jayanti on Thursday, she had been selling flowers on a handcart since morning. In the afternoon, a sudden gust of wind and heavy rain began. At the same time, a large banyan tree near the temple fell on a handcart. She died during treatment in this incident. For the past 15 to 20 years, Ranjana Giri had been doing business under this banyan tree in the sun and rain. This tree had become an



integral part of her daily life; but in a cruel twist of fate, the same tree that had provided shade for many years finally took her life. The tree that fell in the gust of wind did not do what it used to. There is a feeling in the area that time has attacked her in the form of the

same tree under which she lived her life, informed local social activist Chandrakant Pote. "On Thursday afternoon, around 2:30 pm, the wind and rain started. We went into the shed and stood, but Ranjana Giri was sitting under the shade of a tree.

Heavy rain started and the wind started picking up. Suddenly, the tree fell and Ranjana tai got trapped under it. Unfortunately, she died in this shocking incident," informed the women who were with Ranjana Giri every day.

## Red signal for 'Nashik-Kalyan local', width of the ghat reduced;

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Nashik: The central government has once again taken the role of a toll collector on the long-standing demand to start local train services between Nashik-Kalyan. 36 suburban trains are already running on the Kasara-Kalyan-Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus route. The Union Railway Ministry

has clarified that starting new local services depends on the capacity of the route, available paths, rolling stock, infrastructure and maintenance system. MP Rajabhau Vaje has accused the central government of playing April Fools' Day on Nashik by answering that the width of the Kasara-Igatpuri ghat is less and the width of local



trains is greater. Disappointment on the part of Nashikers MP Rajabhau Vaje once again raised the issue in the

Lok Sabha regarding this local train service and asked the Railway Ministry for an answer. However, the

answer given by the ministry was based on technical reasons and lacked a concrete timeline, which has once

again disappointed the people of Nashik. The demand for starting local services on the Nashik Road to Kalyan route is not just a convenience but a vital need. Thousands of students, farmers, small traders and daily wage earners travel on this route every day. Passengers face great inconvenience as express trains do not stop at many

stations, the MP said. In its reply, the Railway Ministry stated that 36 suburban trains are already running on this route. However, the ministry highlighted the limited width of the tunnels in the Kasara-Igatpuri Ghat section as the most important problem. Since it has been clarified that it is not possible to run local services on this route at

present due to the width of local trains, the start of the said local service has now become a dream. The ministry has not put forward any clear position on what concrete measures will be taken to overcome the problem, whether new technology will be used, and when exactly this service will be started. Therefore, this important question remains unanswered.

## Editorial...

## World economy in peril as Trump is on warpath

US President Donald Trump will stay on the warpath until he believes a moment arrives which may convince the world that he has annihilated Iran's military and its nuclear bomb making capabilities. The world will pay a very heavy price for this braggadocio as oil and gas prices will rise exponentially, especially if Iran pursues extreme options in the asymmetrical war that it is waging already by interfering with shipping in the Red Sea waterway, too, through its proxy in the Houthis of Yemen. Mr Trump has resolved to keep the war going for two to three weeks at least when he believes more of the stated military objectives like stripping Iran of the power to assemble missiles and bombs are achieved. This is war mon-gering at its most extreme, the underlying logic of all modern wars since World War II lasting for years rather than weeks or months unlikely to convince anyone that this Iran war is anything but an illegal and needless one. Towards pursuing war goals further into a second month, Mr Trump is abandoning US's European allies and Asia by leaving the Strait of Hormuz problem to them to sort out by going to "the Strait and just take it" rather than strive to keep the crucial waterway open for the rest of the world to get around a fifth of its oil and gas. He may not have followed through on his threat to abandon Nato yet, but he has given sufficient indication that the US is no more interested in being the trusted protector. It is up to the world now to face the worst effects of America's 'Epic fury' as economic growth is threatened even as inflation leaps along with oil prices but with the movement of goods also impeded, disrupting supply chains, the scenario is depressing. It is no more fanciful that crude may zoom to near \$200 a barrel,

sinking many an economy with the sheer weight of dependence on energy sources in West Asia to keep the wheels of economy moving. Iran may have been desperate in its self-defence to try and snare the rest of the Gulf into the war, aiming indiscriminately at targets in about 12 nations, though they may have had little to do with the war save in self-preservation against a nation that has harboured hate against Israel and US. But what options does that country have when its leaders have died in targeted killings and its military infrastructure bombed? It is curious that anti-war sentiment is boiling over as protests gather in the US as well as Europe, but then this is only history repeating itself as American interventions everywhere, beginning with Vietnam in the 1960s, had invariably drawn such opposition. Its global policeman role and its eternal quest of regime change in countries far away has invariably invited opprobrium. Buffer stocks in oil in global shipping pipelines are drying up. Fertiliser supply has shrivelled even as planting seasons are coming up in both hemispheres. Grocery and food inflation is ready to skyrocket while raw material shortages in production of plastics, etc., is affecting commerce. Future shocks may boggle the imagination while Mr Trump, more confused over whether he needs to keep this foolish war going than in starting it, pursues indistinct aims. American bombers will pound Iran even as its missiles and drones threaten all its neighbouring states. Markets may tumble but, more significantly, confidence in a rules-based world order, which was not doing badly until the likes of Mr Vladimir Putin and Mr Trump, not to mention Mr Benjamin Netanyahu, let loose the dogs of war.

## FCRA Bill: Govt must come clean

The decision of the Union government not to take up for discussion in the Lok Sabha the Foreign Contribution Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, in the Budget Session is a welcome step by half. It may have been prompted as much by the strong objections raised by the Opposition as the elections to the Assemblies in four states and a Union territory but the government may do well to address the genuine concerns expressed by those who will be impacted by the legislation. "The statement on objects and reasons" of the bill suggests that the government noticed "certain operational and legal gaps" in relation to the management of foreign contribution and assets created in cases where registration is cancelled, surrendered or otherwise ceases, and it has sought to form a "designated authority" to take care of such assets. While it is understandable that an institution must hold a valid licence for accepting foreign contribution or for its running on such contribution, it defies logic that the government can take over the property even if the

management has no role in the delay in the renewal of the licence. Worse, there is no judicial oversight for the entire process, which makes the very object of the bill suspect. The government may also verify if such a provision violates some of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. None will have a complaint in the government placing legal restrictions on foreign contribution to ensure the best and intended use of it, and take legal actions against violators. But casting a shadow of doubt on all those who run institutions dependant on foreign contributions and preparing a legal straitjacket for their functioning is hardly the way to regulate them. A number of such institutions are already facing the heat of overregulation; and the bill, in its present form, could choke the life breath out of them. The government must talk to stakeholders, make a clean breast of its intentions and return to Parliament with a piece of legislation that helps address its genuine concerns,

## The economic resilience of India: Taking stock

Economic shocks from war, climate or inept leadership are the norm and not an aberration. Some economies sail through depressing times. Others flounder. The Nordic economies, the United States, Britain, Germany, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Singapore and Switzerland all come to mind as being particularly resilient amongst the rich economies. China is on the cusp of joining this group formally in terms of per capita income, but in real-world metrics economic heft, defence capabilities and range of engagement in global affairs it already sits at the high table. However, hell-for-leather investments have provoked a property crash, repressed domestic consumption while the consequences of the "one-child norm" are manifesting in a stagnating workforce. Rich or "near rich coun-tries have a head start on resilience because they have deep private and government buffers to hide through a shock. Strategic planning can enhance resilience even in middle-income economies. Think ASEAN, which learnt from the 1997 Asian financial crisis that adequate forex reserves, market reflective exchange rates, prudent external debt levels, and fiscal stability are key metrics of resilience. Vietnam is the outlier for its strong export-led growth - a strength in good times but also a source of volatility in uncertain times, as the example of China illustrates. In South Asia, Ranga desh's rapid export growth and the deep, domestic moorings of its nationalism enhance resilience. Both Nepal and Bangladesh, with

new, elected governments in place, successfully tained their democratic credentials despite the recent 1 described as the nd this familiarity lic health truth the most polluted s. At a time when easingly volatile, est Asia and uncer ndia must rethink ww but more about med transition to be considered. from cooking has lem is particularly Dorer urban house itchens

Remittances from its 38 million expatriates meet one half of the merchandise trade deficit of \$300 billion. Export of of services account for the other half. Public debt levels are acceptable at around 82 per cent of GDP. has been The fiscal deficit has trending downwards from its Covid-driven spike of 9.5 per cent to its normative level of four per cent GDP. Inflation was at 3.2

ships are being permitted through the Strait of Hormuz by Iran. Alternative supply options from Russia also help. Remittances about 40 per cent from the Gulf are holding up. However, stock markets are 10 per cent lower due to the outflow of foreign portfolio investors. Every \$10 per barrel increase in crude price increases India's CAD by 0.35 per cent of GDP and Developing multiple

The Union government could absorb the price impact by cuts to budgeted fiscal outlays or by borrowing, but the latter would enlarge the fiscal deficit well beyond the norm of four per cent. State Assembly elections are scheduled in April for four states Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, and the Union territory of Puducherry. The Centre is unlikely to risk passing through the market price of oil and thereby stoking inflation-though this could act as an automatic stabiliser for contracting demand. Sadly, it does lead to frayed voter tempers. The The exaggerated presence of state-owned oil majors in the distribution business paves the way for a quasi-administered system for pump prices. Crude prices reduced by 45 per cent from \$99 a barrel in 2014 to \$54 a barrel in 2017. However, the government kept pump prices stable much to the chagrin of consumers. Instead, it used the fiscal bonanza to reduce the Promoting electric cooking aligns with broader national goals of energy security and decarbonisation, much like the push for electric mobility. Yet, the transition is not without challenges. Reliable electricity supply remains uneven across regions. While access has improved, consistency and quality of supply are still concerns in many rural and peri-urban areas. Electric cooking requires not just connectivity, but adequate load capacity at the household and distribution levels. fiscal deficit from 4.3 to 3.4 per cent of GDP. Fiscal prudence enabled it to peak the deficit at 9.5 per cent in 2020-21 to counter the economic depression during the Covid pandemic. This example is instruc-

tive in the present context. The targeted fiscal deficit this year is 4.3 per cent, but the government has the firepower to unleash an additional four per cent of GDP (Rs 16 trillion, or about \$170 billion) to protect consumption, if the war disruptions continue. This would increase public debt to 86 per cent of GDP still less than China at 88 and azil at 87 per cent of GDP (IMF2024). The real constraint on using this reserve fiscal capacity is the inflation consequences. India is loath to lose its "Goldilocks moment", ent", with inflation below four per cent and real growth above seven per cent. Four lessons learnt stand out. First, developing multiple supply options for trade and particularly for energy, is the resilient choice, even if it comes at a cost. This means adequate storage for LNG and LPG. Coal is here to stay and, post-gassification and carbon capture, likely to grow. The government is right to promote nuclear power expansion along with renewable energy. Pushing harder on electrifying and greening transport is critical. Integrated national grid expansion and management, for a national energy and carbon market is key. Second, multipolar trade and investment arrangements make sense given frayed multilateralism. Third, the focus on plurilateral arrangements should commence within South and East Asia, including establishing a substantive trade and investment relationship with China. Fourth, greater market orientation of the domestic economy is the key for enhancing competitiveness and global integration. Finally, India can thrive and shall survive



using bioracts, skin and eye irritation, and premature mortality. The burden is highest on the poor and vulnerable. Women, who spend more time cooking, and young children, often nearby, face disproportionate exposure. This is, therefore, not just an environmental issue but one of health equity and social justice. India has made important a great deal of progress in addressing this challenge. The expansion of liquefied petroleum gas, supported by government programmes, has significantly reduced dependence biomass fuels in many households. But LPG is, at best, an intermediate solution. It remains a fossil fuel, and its price and availability are closely tied to global geopolitics. on political disruptions. In India, political stability over nearly eight decades, despite enormous cultural diversity, is a gift of democracy.

per cent prior to the outbreak of the Gulf war. Forex reserves are at \$689 billion versus a merchandise trade deficit of \$283 billion in 2024-25, up from \$241 billion in the previous fiscal. Export of services account for 45 per cent of total exports, generating a surplus of \$188 billion in 2024-25, which together with about \$135 billion in remittances, kept the current account deficit at around 0.06 per cent of GDP and economic growth at 6.5 per cent of GDP. In fiscal 2025-26, growth is expected to be about 7.5 per cent of GDP. how resilient is India to the ongoing Gulf war? Thus far, four weeks into the war, we were relatively shielded from the non-availability of LNG and LPG, which we substantially import from Qatar and Saudi Arabia. India's long-standing economic cooperation with Iran and nifty diplomacy ensured that India-bound petro-cargo

supply options for trade, particularly for energy, is the resilient choice, even if it comes at a cost. This means adequate storage for LNG and LPG. Coal is here to stay, but expand nuclear options, too. inflation by 0.5 per cent of GDP. The extent of price increase depends on the volume of oil reduced from global demand. In 2022 the Ukraine war spiked oil prices by about 60 per cent to \$130 per barrel. Just three per cent of global supply from Russia was directly affected, but sanctions and realignment of supply chains caused a wider ripple effect of 10 per cent. The Gulf exports 20 per cent of global oil demand. Extensive destruction of production capacity and export terminals could spike oil price significantly. In the short term three months both impacts can be diluted by the RBI using its reserves to support INR thereby reducing imported inflation.

## Spirit of the law: On legislation by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh on religious conversions

Coffee Table  
News Network

Legislation passed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh recently on religious conversions misleadingly claims to protect freedom of religion but effectively does the opposite. Laws made by both States restrict the individual freedom of faith through requirements of prior permission from the state, public disclosure, and by shifting the burden of proof to the accused. These States now join at least 10 others in

having detailed legal restrictions on an individual's right to practise and profess any religion of their choice. It is true that the state has a duty to protect all citizens from force and fraud. But when that principle is applied to test whether a person's religious faith is an outcome of criminal force or fraud, it is a leap into chaotic darkness even with the best of intentions. What goes on in a person's mind, such as matters of faith, is not accessible to another person in its entirety, and

any attempt to police faith will invariably lead to high-handedness. A batch of petitions challenging these laws has been pending before the Supreme Court of India, and the final status of the new laws in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh will also be linked to the final determination of the constitutionality of such laws by the Court. Meanwhile, the laws will disturb social order and harmony, achieving the exact opposite of what they purportedly set out to do. The

provisions are harsh, intrusive and authoritarian. Under the Maharashtra law, a person intending to convert must give 60 days' notice and seek prior permission from a designated authority. Conversion must be registered within 25 days, or it will be treated as null and void. The authority will publish the notice locally, including at the relevant gram panchayat, inviting objections within 30 days. If objections are received, the authority may direct police to

conduct an inquiry. The Chhattisgarh legislation also has similar provisions, but additionally exempts reconversion to one's ancestral religion from its purview. Even community religious gatherings can attract provisions of the Chhattisgarh law, which replaces a 1968 law made by undivided Madhya Pradesh. Anti-conversion laws are premised on a lack of agency of the individual and driven by an ideological framework that links nationality to faith. In a less

passionate and more reasonable framing, a person's change of faith is no different from their decision to change their passport, political affiliation, or place of residence — all of which are legal. In any case, religions have no basis in verifiable scientific facts, and propagation of religion, a constitutionally guaranteed right, can easily be misrepresented as fraud. By seeking to resolve a problem that does not exist, the Bharatiya Janata Party is serving only its own narrow political interests.

## No More 60% Free Seat Rule On Flights As Centre Puts Norm On Hold

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

The Civil Aviation Ministry on Wednesday put on hold its earlier directive that required airlines to offer at least 60% of seats free of charge on every flight, following concerns raised by airlines over its operational and commercial impact. As per the letter, the directive would remain suspended until further orders while the government conducts an a letter issued to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) dated April 2, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) said that the decision came after representations from the Federation of Indian Airlines and Akasa Air flagged potential operational and commercial challenges, including the impact on fare structures and the country's deregulated tariff regime. "The matter has been reviewed in light of



representations received from the Federation of Indian Airlines and Akasa Air, highlighting operational and commercial implications of the above provision, including its potential impact on fare structures and consistency with the prevailing deregulated tariff regime," the letter said. "In view of the above, and pending a comprehensive examination of the issue, it has been decided that the provision relating to offering at least 60% of seats free of charge shall be kept in

abeyance till further orders," the letter added. However, the ministry asked the DGCA to continue enforcing other passenger facilitation measures outlined in the earlier directive. These include greater transparency in seat allocation, ensuring co-seating of passengers on the same passenger name record (PNR), and clearer disclosure of applicable charges. The regulator has also been asked to ensure smoother policies regarding the carriage of musical instruments, sports

equipment and pets on flights. As per the earlier directive, the airlines were required to offer at least 60 per cent of seats on every flight without any additional charge starting April 20. Currently, airlines allow only around 20 per cent of seats to be selected without an additional charge, with the rest falling under paid categories. Seat selection fees can range from Rs 200 to Rs 2,100, depending on factors such as location, extra legroom, or proximity to the front of the aircraft.

## AAP Hits Out At Raghav Chadha Can Either Struggle To Save India Or Make Samosas Cheaper

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) official spokesperson Anurag Dhandha hit out at Raghav Chadha after he was removed as the party's Deputy Leader in the Rajya Sabha, accusing him of being scared of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and hesitating to speak about the real issues of the country. Raghav Chadha was replaced by Ashok Mittal as AAP's Deputy Leader in the Rajya Sabha, and the party has reportedly urged the Secretariat not to allot Chadha time to speak in Parliament, fuelling exit rumours. "We are Kejriwal's soldiers. Fearlessness is our first identity. If someone fears Modi, will they fight for the country?" Dhandha wrote on X. He also took a jibe at Chadha for raising public interest issues in Parliament, like paid paternity leave and lowering food costs at airports. "In Parliament, the party gets just a little time to speak - in that, we can either struggle to save the nation or push to make samosas cheaper in the airport canteen. In Gujarat, hundreds of our workers have been arrested by the BJP's police - did the



honourable MP say something in the House?" he added. "In West Bengal, the right to vote is being snatched away. When a proposal against the CEC came up in the House, he (Chadha) refused to sign it. When the party walked out of the House, they stayed back to mark attendance for Modi ji. "For the past few years, you've been scared, Raghav ji. You hesitate to speak against PM Modi. You hesitate to speak on the real issues of the country," Dhandha further remarked. "Soft PR Issues' Meanwhile, senior AAP leader Saurabh Bhardwaj used the "jo dar gaya so mar gaya (one who fears is dead)" for Chadha, saying that while opposition leaders were protesting against the government's "dictatorial" approach, the latter was raising inconsequential matters in Parliament. "For the

past few years, you have not raised any issue in the Parliament that questions PM Modi or the BJP. How can this politics of fear work? We have to raise issues of Punjab, where you come from, but you did not talk about it. Arvind Kejriwal was arrested in a false case by the government while being CM, but you were not in the country," he said. Bhardwaj said the government does not care about "soft PR issues" and told Chadha to reflect on his role in the Parliament. "You must look the BJP in the eye and question them. Otherwise, being soft makes no difference," he added. Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann also targeted Chadha, saying he appeared to be speaking from a different platform altogether. Mann said Chadha focused on trivial issues like

samosas instead of raising Punjab's key concerns and other important matters. He also emphasised that such changes are routine within a party and leadership roles like leader or deputy leader can change over time, adding that action will be taken if anyone deviates from the party. These remarks came after Chadha gave a strongly worded response to his demotion, saying that he was "silenced, but is not defeated". He quickly targeted AAP and questioned the party whether raising people's voices is a crime. "The topics nobody dares to raise, but is raising public issues a crime? Have I committed a crime? Have I made a mistake? Have I done something wrong? I am asking this question because the AAP told the Secretariat to stop Raghav Chadda from speaking in Parliament," Chadha asked in a video message posted on X. Raghav Chadha is among the youngest MPs in the country and was once considered a close confidant of Kejriwal. He had played a key role in party affairs, particularly in Punjab and during the AAP's tenure in Delhi.

## Tanker Carrying Iranian Crude Oil Diverts From India, Now Headed To China: Report

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

A tanker carrying Iranian crude oil that was initially expected to deliver its cargo to India has instead changed course and is now heading toward China, highlighting the complex geopolitics surrounding oil trade amid ongoing regional tensions. The Ping Shun, an Aframax tanker built in 2002 and sanctioned by the US in 2025, is now signaling Dongying, China, according to ship-tracking firm Kpler. Earlier this week, the vessel had indicated an arrival at Vadinar on India's west coast, but it has since veered sharply south. Tracking data, however, is not final, and the ship's destination may still change, as per a Bloomberg report. The Eswatini-flagged Ping Shun had earlier indicated through its transponders and AIS (automatic identification system) that it was en route to



the Vadinar offshore terminal, with an expected arrival on April 4. An official familiar with the matter said on Wednesday that the ship was initially destined for India, contingent on completing all "legal documentation mandated by international maritime protocols." Also Read Iran Claims Second US F-35 Fighter Jet Shot Down, Pilot's Survival Unlikely A second official, who requested anonymity, noted that multiple factors could explain

the change in course, including issues with price, insurance, operating crew, or documentation. He added, however, that he did not know the exact reason the ship altered its destination, Hindustan Times reported. Earlier, US President Donald Trump, on March 21, had allowed sale of Iranian oil already loaded on to tankers in an attempt to tamp down soaring crude prices. The vessel is operated by Nycity Shipmanagement Co. Ltd, a Chinese company. It had

loaded crude oil from Iran's Kharg Island and had previously indicated a destination in China. India relies heavily on imports for its energy needs, sourcing nearly 90% of its crude oil, about half of its liquefied natural gas (LNG), and roughly two-thirds of its LPG from abroad. Most of these supplies pass through the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran's recent crackdown on maritime traffic has disrupted global energy flows since the conflict began on February 28.

## Bengal police arrest alleged mastermind of judicial officers' gherao at Bagdogra airport

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

KOLKATA: The West Bengal Police on Friday arrested two persons, including the alleged mastermind of the gherao of seven judicial officers in Malda district, from Siliguri's Bagdogra airport, a senior officer said. The alleged mastermind, identified as advocate Mofakkarul Islam, was arrested while attempting to board a flight, the officer said. "He is the mastermind of the Kaliachak incident, in which seven judicial officers were gheraoed inside a block office for several hours on Wednesday night. He was trying to board a flight to flee," the



officer told PTI. Speaking to reporters, ADG (North Bengal) K Jayaraman said Mofakkarul Islam hails from Itahar in Uttar Dinajpur district and was currently residing in Kolkata. Three cases have been registered against him at Kaliachak police station for allegedly "instigating" locals through speeches on

Wednesday, following which the seven judicial officers were gheraoed inside the Kaliachak-2 block office under Mothabari assembly constituency, he added. "We started tracking Mofakkarul Islam after the incident, and with the help of the West Bengal Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Siliguri Police, nabbed him and his associate

from Bagdogra airport. Three cases were lodged against him for instigating locals in three different places," he said, adding that a total of 19 cases have been lodged in connection with the Kaliachak incident. The police officer said that despite the National Investigation Agency (NIA) taking over the probe, the West Bengal Police would continue their investigation to determine whether the incident was "pre-planned" and whether more people were involved. With the latest apprehension, the police have so far arrested 35 people, including an ISF candidate, for their alleged involvement in the incident.

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## Supreme Court Holds Good Friday Sitting To Modify Order On Rajasthan SI Selection Exam

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News Network

The Supreme Court, in a special sitting today, modified its yesterday's order which allowed the petitioner and similarly placed candidates to appear for the Sub Inspector Police/Platoon Commander Recruitment Examination 2025 in Rajasthan. The exam is scheduled to take place on April 5. The Court has now restricted the benefit only to the present petitioner, Suraj Mal Meena. To briefly state, the petitioner Suraj Lal Meena participated in the recruitment for Sub Inspector pursuant to a 2021 notification. The written exam was conducted, and the results were announced in 2023, but it was challenged in the Rajasthan High

Court because the paper was leaked. During the pendency, the Cabinet Committee of Ministers recommended the cancellation of the 2021 exam. new notification with adequate posts along with age relaxation for candidates who appeared in 2021 was published on July 17, 2025. However, it was alleged that there was no age relaxation for the 2021 applicants. In the meantime, the single judge of the High Court on August 28, 2025, ordered the cancellation of the entire 2021 recruitment process on grounds that some gangs were involved in leaking the paper through exam groups. The State appealed this order before the division bench of the High Court, which stayed the

order of the single Judge vide order dated September 8, 2025. This order came to be challenged before the Supreme Court, which stayed the interim order and directed the High Court to dispose of the appeals within three months. It also said that the status quo, as it existed before the Single Judge had passed an order, would continue. In another set of petitions, the petitioner approached the High Court seeking age relaxation so that they may appear as per the newly issued recruitment notification. Vide order October 30, 2025, the Single Judge provisionally allowed the petitioner to participate. This was challenged before the division bench of the High Court, which vide



an interim order dated November 13, 2025, stayed the operation. This came to be challenged before the Supreme Court, which passed an order on January 9, 2026, directing the division bench to decide both pending appeals before March 31, 2026. The petitioner approached the Supreme Court in the present petition, stating that although the High Court has completed hearings

of both matters and reserved orders, it has yet to pronounce the judgment. In this context, a bench comprising Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma yesterday passed an order allowing the petitioner and similarly placed candidates to appear in the exam provisionally. However, the Rajasthan State Public Commission (RSPC) approached the

Court today through Advocate Yuvraj Samant, arguing that the petitioner has misled the Court. He submitted: "There are already 7.71 lac candidates who are appearing across 41 cities and 1174 centers. We have approximately 71,000 manpower that is required. If I may submit, the petitioner has malafidely hid two facts. One, the division bench had stayed the effect of the single judge

order and even after that, 713 candidates in the writ petition are already included in the recruitment process for 5th and 6th of April. They have already been supplied admit card. The applicant has misled the Court, saying they are not included in the process." When the Court asked Senior Advocate PB Suresh (for applicant Suraj Mal) whether he was allowed to have the admit card prior to the Court's order yesterday, he denied. But Yuvraj submitted that he was allowed. Justice Datta questioned Sr Advocate Suresh as to why he argued yesterday that the benefit of provisional appearance should also be extended to similarly placed candidates. He said: "One can't come for others." After the

brief arguments, the bench modified its early order: "On consideration of difficulties, we are of the considered opinion that the order passed by us yesterday ought to be modified. We direct the deletion of para 5 and 6, and we modify para 7 by reserving that it should be restricted only to the applicant and not others. This order is made having regard to the fact that the Jaipur bench of the High Court of Rajasthan is yet to pronounce judgment on appeals pending before it. In the event any private parties seek to get the benefit of the orders of the division bench, and the division bench directs RPSC to hold exams further, it shall be open to the party to approach the appropriate court."

## Rajasthan High Court Deletes Earlier Remarks On Transgender Bill 2026, Uploads Updated Version

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

The Rajasthan High Court has deleted its earlier critical remarks made on the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, which seeks to amend the Transgender Act 2019. In an order passed on March 30, Justice Arun Monga, in the epilogue to the judgment, had remarked that the Transgender Amendment Bill 2026, which received the Presidential Assent on March 30, 2026, took away the transgender person's right to self-determination. The subsequent amendment to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, however, marks a departure from that said constitutional baseline. It is now proposed that legal recognition of gender identity shall be conditioned upon certification, scrutiny, or other forms of administrative endorsement. What was recognized by the Supreme Court as an inviolable aspect of personhood now risks being reduced to a contingent, State-mediated entitlement," Justice Arun Monga wrote in the epilogue. Justice Monga had further commented that the state should be mindful that the statutory developments could not be implemented in a manner that dilutes the constitutional guarantees and the comparative models adopted by the State should be structured in a manner that



advances inclusion without subjecting identity to impermissible constraints. "In this backdrop, the epilogue, therefore, is more of a caveat that it remains open, and indeed, still incumbent upon the State of Rajasthan to ensure that any policy framework evolved pursuant to the directions, in the judgment above, preserves, to the fullest extent possible, the principle of self-identification, within the contours of the amended law, of course. The State must be mindful that statutory developments cannot be implemented in a manner that dilutes constitutional guarantees. The comparative models, including those adopted by other States, may yet be structured in a manner that advances inclusion without subjecting identity to impermissible constraints," the court had said. The court had also noted that the policy framework devised by the state should strive to preserve the constitutional guarantee by extending reservation. It had noted that the state should adopt an

approach that harmonises statutory compliance with constitutional congruity, ensuring that transgender person's rights are not left illusory. "In the altered legal landscape, any policy framework devised by the State must be careful and it must strive to preserve, to the fullest extent possible, the constitutional guarantee by extending affirmative measures of reservation. Any framework, be it legislative or executive, the Rule of Law demands that such measures must withstand scrutiny not merely of legality, but of constitutional conscience. The State, as a constitutional actor, is expected to adopt an approach that harmonizes statutory compliance with constitutional congruity, ensuring that the rights of transgender persons are not rendered illusory by procedural constraints. The true measure lies in the tangible dismantling of systemic marginalization that transgender persons continue to endure," the court had ensured. On Thursday (2nd April), the bench

however issued a clarificatory order replacing its earlier order. The court has deleted the above three paras in the updated version and added two new paras in its place. The court has now observed that the main judgment, which was passed keeping in mind the legal position on the date, should be complied with and that the state had a duty to ensure that any policy framework evolved pursuant to the directions is within the contours of the existing law as on date of the judgment. The remarks were made in a plea of a Transgender person challenging a 2023 notification issued by the State of Rajasthan by which the State declared transgender persons as "Other Backward Class". The bench had directed the State to form a committee to identify the extent of marginalisation suffered by the transgender persons and to recommend appropriate measures. The bench has also directed the State to award an additional 3% mark to transgender persons in matters of public employment and education.

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## Central 915-cr push for AP tourism new chapter

Support for 9 new projects, clearance for 6 pending ones

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News Network

The Centre has responded positively to Andhra Pradesh's tourism proposals worth 1915 crore, giving a major boost to the state's efforts to expand its tourism and cultural infrastructure. During a meeting in New Delhi, AP tourism, culture and cinematography minister Kandula Durgesh presented nine new projects and sought clearance for six pending initiatives. Union tourism and culture minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat assured full support. The proposals include projects under the PRASAD and Swadesh Darshan schemes to develop temples, beaches and heritage



destinations. Key sites include Mangalagiri, Arasavalli, Vadapalli, Korukonda and Nellore, along with Machilipatnam. Lambasingi, Lepakshi and Buddhist tourism circuits. The Centre has also agreed in principle to set up a National School of Drama campus in Rajahmundry and a Tourism Bhavan in Amaravati. Proposals for a National Institute of Hospitality and an

Integrated Experience Centre in Amaravati were also discussed. Plans for regional centres of Lalit Kala Akademi in Visakhapatnam, Sahitya Akademi in AP and an Indian Council for Cultural Relations branch received a favourable response. The Centre also assured support for a 'Kalakshetra auditorium' at the Ghantasala and Dance College in Vijayawada. The Union minister also

agreed to support the reprint of the historic 'Surya-rayandhra Dictionary'. Durgesh sought assistance to develop Tirupati and Visakhapatnam as international tourism hubs and include them among India's top 50 destinations. He also held discussions with tourism secretary Suman Billa and culture secretary Vivek Agarwal to expedite implementation. Officials appreciated the state's project reports and assured continued support. Calling the visit a "new chapter" for tourism, Durgesh said the initiatives would strengthen infrastructure, attract global tourists and enhance the state's cultural profile.

## Parliament unanimously passes bill on capital Amaravati

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

NEW DELHI: Parliament on Thursday passed a bill seeking to recognise Amaravati as the sole and permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod to it with a voice vote, and all political parties except the YSRCP supporting the proposed legislation. Replying to the debate on the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Upper House, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the AP Legislative Assembly on March 28 passed a resolution requesting the Union Government to grant statutory status to Amaravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh by amending the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014. The resolution requested for amendment to the Act, incorporating Amaravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh with retrospective effect from June 2, 2024. Congratulating the people of Andhra Pradesh for getting legal sanctity for Amaravati as the State capital, he hoped that AP will reach new heights of progress to contribute towards achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. Speaking on the bill, Sanjay



Kumar Jha of Janata Dal (United) said Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar are the most important and trusted allies of the National Democratic Alliance right from the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led government to the present Narendra Modi-led regime. Supporting the bill, he said Amaravati would emerge as the best capital of the country in the coming years due to the visionary leadership of Naidu. Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury attacked the BJP-led NDA government for bringing the bill to make Amaravati the permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh after 12 long years. "It is a shame that we are discussing the AP Reorganisation Bill, which should have been discussed 12 years ago. It is actually a statement of national shame and the so called collective wisdom and intelligence of this House. It took

12 years to fulfil a commitment made on the floor of this House," she said. Telugu Desam Party MP Beeda Masthan Rao said the bill was not just legislation but a moral promise that our farmers' sacrifices would not be forgotten. "That our State's identity will be strong. Our children's future will be insured," he said. After a lot of planning, Amaravati was chosen for its history, location and potential as the State capital. "We will provide facilities like Singapore. We are creating opportunities for the people of Andhra Pradesh," he added. Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu called it a "very emotional moment" for him. "This redefines the pride, this redefines the faith, this redefines the consciousness of the country it has on its democracy, on the leadership and the whole political system also. And this is something which

has much stronger repercussions than looking at it as simply or merely regarding a subject of a State and its capital." YSRCP MP YV Subba Reddy opposed the bill in its 'present form', questioning its intent, legality, and impact on farmers and the State's finances. He emphasised that the term 'capital' is mentioned only for the country in the Constitution, and that even the Union government. After the passage of the bill, Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan said, "Lord Venkateswara will bless all the people of AP with their new capital." When some of the members said God will bless all of us, he said God will bless all of us. But I am praying for their well-being because they are going to get a good capital. This is a special prayer, nothing else. You will always be blessed by Lord Venkateswara, don't worry about it."

## Amaravati bill marks 'homecoming', says Minister Nara Lokesh

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

NEW DELHI/VIJAYAWADA: As Parliament on Thursday passed a bill seeking to recognise Amaravati as the sole and new capital of Andhra Pradesh, State IT Minister Nara Lokesh described it as 'homecoming' for its people, who he said had endured four capitals and decades of political uncertainty. "This is our fourth time going through it. It's homecoming. This will definitely put Amaravati on the fast track," Lokesh told reporters in the national capital after the Rajya Sabha passed the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, a day after the Lok Sabha cleared it with near-unanimous support. The TDP national general secretary recalled that the State suffered 'grave injustice' upon its bifurcation from Telangana in 2014, having been left without a capital, secretariat or high court. In that backdrop, he said, nearly 35,000 acres were pooled by farmers in just 58 days to build a new capital on the banks of the Krishna river. "Land is not about money. It is about identity. It is about livelihood," he said. The IT Minister reserved his sharpest words for the previous YSRCP government, saying five years were "wasted" under former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who had himself



promised before the 2019 elections that Amaravati would remain as the sole capital. "He specifically stated that I have built a house here and there is no way I am going to shift the capital. People of Amaravati believed him," the minister said, adding that the three-capital proposal that followed was 'a failed model globally.' He said the suffering of farmers and women who agitated for 1,600 days against the proposed shift was a matter of deep anguish. "Women who gave up their land were called prostitutes. Pregnant women were abused. Police drones would follow them. But they never gave up their land. They never gave up their struggle," he said. The minister noted that the National Democratic Alliance fought the 2024 Assembly elections on the single plank of one state-one capital, winning 164 of 175 seats. "It was the people of Visakhapatnam who gave us the highest majority - where the so-called executive capital was supposed

to come up. That was the people's clear mandate," he said. Taking a dig at YSRCP, the minister said, "The party that that got 6 per cent of the seats walked out. But today, speakers from all political parties expressed their solidarity." and said this is just the beginning of support to Amaravati. "On the pace of development, he said works worth close to Rs 50,000 crore had already been tendered and the Centre had released nearly Rs 18,000 crore to the State since 2024. "The Secretariat, Assembly, High Court, all major roads - we will complete all these in two years before the Prime Minister comes to inaugurate them. Phase one will be done by end of our term, no second thoughts about it," he said. The State government is in the process of acquiring additional 10,000 acres through a land pooling model for development of airport and sports complex. On Thursday, Lokesh called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to personally convey his gratitude for the Centre's role in

securing the legislation. Lokesh said he thanked the Prime Minister for bringing together cross-party support in favour of the State. Responding to concerns about whether a future government could reverse the legislation, the minister said the emotion around the capital was now too deeply entrenched for that. "Bills can always be amended, you need a majority. But I believe it will not change. Everyone has voted for Amaravati to be the sole and permanent capital," he said. He also pushed back against the argument that decentralised development required multiple capitals, pointing to investments flowing to Visakhapatnam, Rayalaseema and other regions under the current government. "To develop all you need is a mindset. Out of every Rs 100 being invested in India, we are now attracting Rs 25.3, going to different parts of Andhra Pradesh," the AP HRD and IT Minister said.

## INS Taragiri set to join ENC fleet in Visakhapatnam with 'Rise Above' motto

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

VISAKHAPATNAM: On April 3, the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) formally inducts INS Taragiri (F41) into its fleet. The 6,670-tonne Project 17A frigate arrived in Visakhapatnam following a construction timeline that began with its keel laying in September 2020 and its delivery by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited in 2025. While the ship is a significant engineering achievement, built with over 75% indigenous content and the contribution of 200 MSMEs, the focus for its crew is the transition from a technical project to a functional home. For the 300 crew on board, the commissioning marks the point where a structure of steel plates becomes a living vessel. Captain Hemanth Gopal, Commanding Officer, views the event as a rare professional responsibility. "Building a ship is the task of the shipbuilders, but



bringing life to it is ours," he noted, adding, "My team must ensure that hundreds of individual systems function together seamlessly. It is about taking a structure of steel and making it a functioning warship, all while upholding the respected legacy of the previous Taragiri." The vessel carries a name with historical weight in the Indian Navy. Commander Siddhartha Gupta (Executive Officer), Commander G Siva Venkatesh (Engineering Officer), Commander Akhilesh Sharma (Electrical Officer), and Commander Abhishek Bali (Logistics Officer) operate under the ship's motto, Rise Above. They

emphasise that while ships of the same class are built to the same specifications, the crew defines the ship's character. "Every ship has its own soul," the officers remarked, stating, "The previous Taragiri was known for its reliability and its ability to complete every mission assigned to it. We have embedded that same ethos into our new platform." Technically, the ship is managed through an Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS), which acts as a centralised computer for monitoring machinery and power. Lt. Bhuvan HC (Assistant Electrical Officer), alongside Praveen (Navaid)

Maintainer), Deepak Teotia (CHERA), and Varun Chourey (Radio Maintainer), manages these automated systems. They point out a practical advantage of the 'Make in India' initiative. "When equipment is indigenous, servicing and spare parts are available within the country, which significantly reduces maintenance time compared to foreign-sourced components," the officers opined. Life at sea, however, is defined by more than just advanced propulsion and missile systems. The team shared a grounded perspective on the realities of long deployments.

## Dust storm engulfs Delhi-NCR; AQI in 'poor' category

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News Network

A dense layer of dust enveloped large parts of Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) on Friday morning, significantly reducing visibility. Areas from Gol Dak Khana to central Delhi and adjoining regions reported hazy conditions as strong winds carried dust across the capital. The India

Meteorological Department (IMD) said the sudden change in weather is likely to persist through the day, with a generally cloudy sky and the possibility of light rain or drizzle. In its morning bulletin, the IMD also forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds reaching speeds of 40-50 kmph over Delhi and nearby areas

within the next 24 hours. The advisory extends to the wider NCR, including Faridabad, Gurugram, Ghaziabad and Noida, where similar conditions are expected. Air quality levels remained a concern amid the weather disturbance. The Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 221 at 9 am, placing it in the "poor" category, according to data from the Central

Pollution Control Board (CPCB). As per CPCB classification, AQI levels between 201 and 300 are considered "poor" and may pose health risks, particularly for sensitive groups. The index categorises air quality into six bands ranging from "good" (0-50) to "severe" (401-500), indicating progressively higher levels of pollution and associated health impacts.

## Japan-led mission uncovers asteroid with all 5 'letters' of DNA, breakthrough for understanding life's origins

**Coffee Table**  
News Network

A detailed analysis of samples returned from the asteroid Ryugu has revealed the presence of all five canonical "letters" of DNA and RNA, a finding scientists say strengthens the case that the basic ingredients for life may be widespread across the solar system. The discovery, published in the journal Nature Astronomy, comes from material collected by Japan's Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency during its Hayabusa2 mission, and represents the most comprehensive chemical examination yet of one of the oldest objects in our cosmic neighbourhood. What scientists found, and why it matters At the centre of the discovery are nucleobases, the molecular components that encode genetic information in DNA and RNA. These include adenine, guanine, cytosine, thymine and uracil, often described as the "letters" that form the instructions for life. or the first time in samples from Ryugu, researchers confirmed the presence of all five. Toshiki Koga, a biogeochemist at the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology and the study's lead author, cautioned against overinterpreting the finding, telling AFP via Phys.org: "This does not mean that life existed on Ryugu. Instead, their presence indicates that primitive asteroids could produce and preserve molecules that are important for the chemistry related to the origin of life." In simpler terms, what scientists have found is not life itself, but a complete chemical toolkit that life as we know it depends on. These molecules, when combined with sugars like ribose and phosphate groups, form DNA and RNA, the systems that store and transmit genetic information in every known organism on Earth. How the samples were collected and analysed The material analysed in the study comes from the Hayabusa2 mission, launched in 2014. The spacecraft reached Ryugu in 2018, touched down on its surface in 2019, and collected samples before returning them to Earth in 2020. In total, the mission brought back 5.4



grams of material, an amount smaller than a coin, but scientifically invaluable because it has remained largely unchanged since the early solar system, around 4.5 billion years ago. Earlier studies of a smaller portion of this material had identified only one nucleobase, uracil, along with 15 amino acids, which are the building blocks of proteins. For this latest research, scientists were given a larger sample, about 20 milligrams of asteroid dust, and used more refined analytical techniques to search specifically for nucleobases. That expanded scope allowed them to detect the remaining four: adenine, guanine, cytosine and thymine. The researchers also examined how these molecules were distributed, comparing Ryugu's chemical profile with that of other extraterrestrial samples, including the asteroid Bennu, sampled by NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission, and meteorites such as Murchison and Orgueil. A chemical pattern that surprised researchers Nucleobases fall into two structural groups: purines (adenine and guanine), which have a double-ring structure, and pyrimidines (cytosine, thymine and uracil), which have a single-ring structure. On Ryugu, scientists found a balanced ratio between these two groups, unlike other samples. Bennu and the Orgueil meteorite showed higher concentrations of pyrimidines, while the Murchison meteorite was richer in purines. What stood out most, however, was a consistent relationship between these ratios and the presence of ammonia, another molecule relevant to prebiotic chemistry. Koga explained the significance of this pattern in the study,

noting: "Because no known formation mechanism predicts such a relationship, this finding may point to a previously unrecognized pathway for nucleobase formation in early solar system materials." This suggests that the chemical environment in which these asteroids formed, particularly the availability of ammonia, may have shaped how life-related molecules developed long before planets like Earth existed. What this says about the origin of life The discovery feeds into a long-standing scientific question: Did life begin on Earth, or were its ingredients delivered from space? Some theories argue that life originated in environments such as deep-sea hydrothermal vents. Others propose that key organic molecules arrived via comets, asteroids or meteorites, seeding early Earth with the chemistry needed for life to emerge. César Menor Salván, an astrobiologist at the University of Alcalá who was not involved in the study, emphasised that the findings do not prove life began in space. Speaking to AFP, he said the results "do not suggest that the origin of life took place in space." However, he added that when considered alongside findings from Bennu, the data offers a clearer picture of what is possible: With this and the results from Bennu, we have a very clear idea of which organic materials can form under prebiotic conditions anywhere in the universe. "In other words, while life itself may not have originated on asteroids, the ingredients required to build it appear to form naturally and widely. A broader pattern across the solar system This is not an isolated

discovery. The same set of nucleobases was identified in samples from Bennu in 2023, and similar molecules have been found in meteorites that have fallen to Earth. Ryugu and Bennu are both carbonaceous asteroids, a class that makes up roughly 75% of asteroids in the solar system and is known to be rich in organic material. Observations from the James Webb Space Telescope suggest they may even share a common origin, having broken off from a larger parent body billions of years ago. Because these objects are remnants from the earliest stages of planetary formation, they effectively act as time capsules, preserving the chemistry that existed before Earth fully formed. As the researchers wrote in their study: "The detection of diverse nucleobases in asteroid and meteorite materials demonstrates their widespread presence throughout the Solar System and reinforces the hypothesis that carbonaceous asteroids contributed to the prebiotic chemical inventory of early Earth." What comes next For scientists, the next step is not simply confirming the presence of these molecules, but understanding how they form, evolve and survive in space. Koga said the team aims to push further into that question: "We want to further elucidate the mechanisms by which nucleobases essential for life are formed in space and how they come to exist universally." For now, the implication is clear: the chemistry that underpins life on Earth is not unique to this planet. It may be written into the fabric of the solar system itself, waiting, under the right conditions, to be assembled into something living.

## 'India Only Country To Lose Mariners At Hormuz': Foreign Secretary At UK-Led Iran War Talks

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News Network

The Foreign Secretary on Thursday joined UK-led talks on the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and the ongoing conflict in West Asia. At the virtual gathering, which was attended by more than 60 countries, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, who represented India, noted that it was the only country to have lost citizens in the conflict-hit Strait of Hormuz. At the multilateral meeting convened by the UK, New Delhi's stance on the West Asian conflict was emphasised, along with the

importance of principles of freedom of maritime navigation. Also Read: Iran's Iconic B1 Bridge, Highest In Middle East, Cut In Half After US Strikes | Video According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Misri "underlined that the way out of the crisis consisted of de-escalation and a return to the path of diplomacy and dialogue among all concerned parties." Misri further "emphasised the impact of the crisis on India's energy security and the fact that India remains the only country to have lost mariners in attacks on

merchant shipping in the Gulf," the ministry said in a statement cited by the news agency ANI. So far, at least three Indian sailors, all of whom served on foreign-flagged merchant vessels, have been killed in attacks in the Strait of Hormuz, said India's Directorate General of Shipping. India Joins UK-Led Talks With Other Countries On West Asia Conflict The meeting was not attended by the United States, which has remained critical of the UK not helping Washington in attacking Iran. Also Read: Pete Hegseth Asks US Army Chief

Of Staff To Step Down Amid Iran War This meeting came as countries stepped up coordination to ensure stability in one of the world's most vital energy corridors. India, too, is engaging with regional players in the Middle East, including Iran, to keep shipping lanes open, according to the MEA. "We are in touch with Iran and other countries there to see how best we can get unimpeded transit and safe transit for our ships," said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal at a press briefing.

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