













## The PM has his work cut out

THE Modi 2.0 government adopted a no-holds-barred stand against individuals who were perceived to be a security threat. The new government led by Narendra Modi may have to revisit this policy in the light of the victory of some separatists in the recent Lok Sabha elections. The election of imprisoned Khalistani activist Amritpal Singh from Khadoor Sahib and Indira Gandhi assassin Beant Singh's son Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa from Faridkot should make the government sit up and take notice. The Surjit Singh Barnala-led Akali government, which worked in close association with the ruling Congress at the Centre in the 1980s, had got the Sikh masses to reject Khalistan. In the early 1990s, Jat Sikh farmers assisted the government in curbing terrorism. Without their active help, terrorism could not have been wiped out.

The allegations made by Canada regarding the murder of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar and the US claim about an India-sponsored plot to eliminate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a US national spearheading the Khalistan demand in the West, must have influenced the people who voted in favour of Amritpal and Sarabjeet.

So, in a manner of speaking, the Modi-Shah policy of stern action against anti-nationals may become the trigger for a recurrence of the troubles Punjab faced in the 1980s. Policymakers should keep such factors in mind before taking hard decisions.

The defeat of moderate leaders like Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti in Kashmir and the victory of a hardliner like Engineer Rashid are signs that the Modi-Shah duo needs to ponder over. The swift and decisive action they took in the troubled state of Jammu and Kashmir to abrogate Article 370 had the approbation of the BJP's core supporters in the Hindi heartland and even beyond, but the fallout is becoming alarmingly clear in the aftermath of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Muslim voters of Kashmir are turning away from their own mainstream political parties and opting for the more defiant opponents of the Modi regime. This is another cause for concern.

The election of two Khalistani Sikhs and a radical Kashmiri Muslim to the Lok Sabha underlines the need to consult sage and moderate voices like Gurbachan Jagat and Amarjit Singh Dulat, the latter for dealing with Kashmiri malcontents. Should the elected MPs be allowed to enter and speak in Parliament and vent their feelings instead of silently inciting their co-religionists against the Indian state? Whatever steps the government had taken or planned against these rabble-rousers have not worked. Their respective communities have to be won over to our side.

Parakala Prabhakar is a thinker who describes matters in befitting words. He doubts if Modi can be convinced to adopt softer policies. Prabhakar reminds us that a wolf that wears sheep's clothing will continue to be a wolf. In the constitution of his Cabinet and distribution of portfolios, Modi has already shown that he is the sole decision-maker. He continues to rule in the same manner as before. Modi should be told that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is only creating more terrorists by killing Hamas fighters and bombing hospitals and civilian localities in Gaza. We had that experience in Punjab during our struggle with Khalistani terrorists. Listing and then eliminating culprits only resulted in their replacement, sometimes by two men for the one lost. The only way to end terrorism is to deprive the terrorists of the oxygen that is provided by their own co-religionists in the shape of logistical support or even tacit approval of their madness. It is only when the community is won over that you can hope for closure. The experience of the police in Northern Ireland was exactly the same as ours in Punjab. Of course, the figures of civilians and security personnel killed in the war against terrorists were five times larger in Punjab. When I pointed this out to the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland, he, in turn, was kind enough to point out to me that Punjab's population was five times that of Northern Ireland. If the entry of three anti-government MPs into the Lok Sabha is a matter of concern, the re-election of Mahua Moitra from West Bengal will ensure that the proceedings in Parliament will be lively. Smriti Irani will not be around, but Kangana Ranaut could be her replacement. If Mahua and Kangana get into a verbal duel in Parliament, I would hate to miss it.

## Spate of terror attacks unlikely to derail electoral process in J&K

The BJP's success in fostering alternative politics is something that the Congress could not achieve, highlighting a fundamental shift in the region's political dynamics.

THE fresh spate of terror attacks in the Jammu region marks a concerning trend. Historically, such attacks were primarily concentrated in the Kashmir valley. This shift to the Jammu side of Pir Panjal suggests a strategic change in tactics. The terror strikes in Reasi, Doda and Kathua appear calculated to send out a political message and create chaos. Their timing, coinciding with the installation of the new government at the Centre, is aimed at undermining the government's narrative of achieving stability and normalcy in the region. The intention seems to be to disrupt the democratic process, as the Election Commission of India has begun the process of allotting symbols to parties and preparing for the Assembly elections. While such actions are meant to foster fear and uncertainty, the fact is that the recent Lok Sabha elections did not witness violence in J&K and saw the highest turnout in 35 years at 58.46 per cent.

The 2024 General Election in J&K was historic as it marked the first major electoral process in the region since August 2019, when the Government of India abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, which granted J&K special status. The elections were historic for two reasons. One, the most notable outcome was the dismantling of the longstanding perception that participating in polls was an act of betrayal, often referred to as 'gaddari'. This stigma had long discouraged many from voting, as they feared social ostracism or being labelled as traitors to the so-called cause of Kashmiri autonomy. This shift reflects a growing acceptance of democratic norms and a desire for political engagement among the populace. Two, the participation of young voters was another critical aspect of this election. For the first time in many years, there was a substantial turnout of young people.

This election was also historic because it managed to satisfy diverse political aspirations in one way or another. Despite being relatively new to the political scene in Kashmir, the BJP managed to make inroads. The party's success lies in its ability to challenge the entrenched political dominance of two prominent families — the Abdullahs and the Muftis. Although the perceived BJP proxies — Sajad Ghani Lone and Altaf Bukhari — did not win, the mere fact that the traditional political strongholds were shaken is a significant achievement for the saffron party. One of the most profound impacts of this election is the emergence of alternative politics in the

region. This is crucial as it opens up the political arena to new actors and ideas, which is essential for a healthy democracy. The election of Engineer Rashid, who defeated former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, is a loud proclamation of democracy's triumph in the Valley. Rashid, who has been lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail since 2019 for alleged terror funding, capitalised on a wave of sympathy votes across north Kashmir. The National Investigation Agency had filed a case against him for raising and receiving funds through illegal means, including hawala, to support separatist and terrorist activities in J&K. Rashid's victory is not just a personal success but a symbol of the people's desire for a new political narrative, free from the clutches of dynastic

the dominance of traditional political parties, particularly the National Conference (NC). Rashid's ideology, often considered a deviation from the mainstream, could be re-evaluated in a more pragmatic light, given the evolving political dynamics in the Valley. The political scenario in Kashmir has evolved significantly over the past five years. The fact that even the Jamaat-e-Islami — traditionally seen as a separatist organisation — had expressed its willingness to contest elections underscores the changing dynamics in the Valley. Rashid, along with many others, appears willing to work within a transformed environment, acknowledging the evolving political realities and the necessity for a more inclusive and democratic approach.

The possibility of the government considering Rashid's release stems from the failure of the BJP's perceived proxies to create a substantial alternative. Rashid's release could further bolster the BJP's efforts to establish a new political paradigm in the Valley.

The election also brought to light a significant shift in public sentiment towards the right to vote. For several years, Kashmiris were deprived of this fundamental right. The boycott of elections in the past only served to reinforce the dominance of traditional political parties. This time, however, the high turnout demonstrated a collective determination to reclaim democratic rights and participate in the electoral process. Whether the BJP, the NC or the People's Democratic Party won or lost, the true winner of this election was democracy. This poll was a testament to the people's desire for change and a

better future. The BJP's success in fostering alternative politics is something that the Congress could never achieve, highlighting a fundamental shift in the region's political landscape.

As the UT looks forward to the Assembly polls, the General Election has not only restored the democratic process but also laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and representative political environment in Kashmir. The terror attacks in the Jammu region are intended to delay the elections and create a sense of unrest. However, such attempts are unlikely to succeed, given the clear signal that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are fully committed to democracy.



politics. Rashid is a two-time former MLA from north Kashmir's Langate Assembly segment. In his earlier avatar, he was considered a close confidante of slain Hurriyat leader and People's Conference founder Abdul Ghani Lone, Sajad's father. Rashid broke away and made a significant impact by winning the 2008 and 2014 Assembly elections. Rashid's victory dismantled the political legacy that Sajad and his father had established since 1967. His release from jail could further enhance the BJP's position by fostering alternative political voices.

Rashid's release, provided that he is able to counter the charges against him, will be a critical moment in Kashmir's political evolution. It could signify the end of

## Kuwait tragedy

Workers' wellbeing should be Delhi's priority

THE death of 49 people, mostly Indians, in a fire that engulfed a building housing foreign workers in Mangaf, Kuwait, has turned the spotlight on the conditions under which these employees live and work not only in this Gulf nation but the region as a whole. Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, who visited the site, has blamed the greed of real-estate owners for such incidents, even as an investigation has been launched to pinpoint the lapses and fix accountability. India's immediate focus is on the identification of the bodies and bringing back the mortal remains of the victims, besides granting ex gratia relief to the families of the deceased. At the same time, New Delhi needs to be actively involved in the probe to ensure that those responsible for the tragedy are dealt with strictly.

Those under scrutiny include the companies that hire foreign workers and the realtors who provide accommodation, besides travel agents who facilitate recruitment. According to reports, India's embassy in



Kuwait received over 16,000 complaints from Indian citizens working there between March 2021 and

December 2023. Most of them pertained to delays in the payment of salaries, below-par accommodation and harassment by employers. Alarmingly, over 1,400 Indians, mostly migrant workers, died in Kuwait in 2022 and 2023, according to information shared by the Ministry of External Affairs in Parliament earlier this year. All this suggests that the Indian authorities have been lax in addressing the workers' concerns.

India is the world leader in terms of remittance receipts, with a total of \$125 billion being sent by Indians living across the globe to their families back home last year. Gulf Cooperation Council countries are among the biggest sources of India's remittance inflow. New Delhi must press these nations to crack down on unscrupulous employers who compromise the safety and wellbeing of

workers.

## Draw lessons from Kuwait blaze to protect workers

It is wrong to assume that labour-exporting countries cannot work together as they are competing with each other.

A building with about 200 foreign workers, mainly from India — with Kerala and Tamil Nadu accounting for the majority — caught fire in the early hours of June 12 in Kuwait. According to a report from Kuwait, the fire broke out around 3.15 am. As the building lacked arrangements for fire-fighting, including a fire alarm, the blaze spread and some residents even tried to jump from the building. At least one person died in such a fatal jump. The fire was reportedly caused by a cooking gas cylinder that was being used by a security guard. The fire department was alerted at 4.30 am and fire extinguishers were promptly sent. The Kuwaiti Home Ministry got a report of the fire by 6 am. The Kuwait Government has expressed condolences over the loss of 49 lives. Some senior officials of the municipality have been suspended for failing to ensure adherence to safety norms for buildings. While we spontaneously think of the plight of the bereaved families and of the injured, we should apply our minds to the lessons to be learnt and the measures required to prevent recurrence of such a tragedy. Let me share a few thoughts based on my professional association with the West Asian region starting from 1976, when I went to Teheran. Our embassies need a better set-up to look after the nine million of our compatriots there. Kuwait has around one million Indians, accounting for 30 per cent of the expatriate population and about 21 per cent of the total population. The embassy website says that the labour section works from 8 am to 4 pm, Sunday to Thursday. Obviously, barring the security guard, no official will be available to attend to emergencies when the labour section is closed. In this context, we need to raise a few questions. When did the Indian embassy get information about the fire incident? When did the Indian media get to know of the fire? Hours after it occurred. Why? When I was in Doha (1992-97), we had cases of maids running away from home seeking shelter in the embassy. We had arranged for an official, preferably speaking the mother tongue of the maid, to come to the embassy within half an hour. This arrangement was good 24x7.



In the present case, I rang up the helpline number of the embassy a couple of times. It was busy. Obviously, there should have been more than one number.

In this context, there is a good deal we in India can learn from the Philippines. When a Philippine citizen arrives in a West Asian country to work as a caregiver or maid, she is received at the airport by embassy officials. She is briefed about the country and how she can get in touch with the embassy in need. She goes to the employer after a day or two. The embassy invariably has labour attachés holding a law degree. There is no communication or coordination among the labour-exporting countries. Two years ago, I visited the region. I asked the first secretary

in charge of consular work and labour welfare whether he attended a conference that the International Labour Organisation had recently organised in the city on the problems of migrant labour. He replied that he had not heard about the conference. I asked him whether he met his counterparts from manpower-exporting countries to exchange views. The answer was in the negative.

The set-up in the Central Government, too, needs a reform. For a long time, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) handled the matter. Later, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs was established in 2004. It was dissolved in 2016 and the MEA resumed charge. There is only one Joint Secretary who is the Protector General of

Emigrants, an office that was earlier with the Ministry of Labour. The MEA organises well-choreographed annual Pravasi Day functions where the affluent members of the diaspora are feted and lauded. Has there been any conference on the problems facing the ABC (ayah, bearer, cook) part of the diaspora? India is the leading country in South Asia and the leading voice of the Global South. What initiative has New Delhi taken to address the problems of the migrant labour globally? The idea that labour-exporting countries cannot work together as they are competing is wrong.

In the run-up to the 2022 Football World Cup in Qatar, many foreign workers died, mainly due to unsafe working conditions. I do not recall any in-depth investigation by the Indian media.

The Guardian of the UK investigated and concluded that 6,500 migrant workers from South Asia had died, with India accounting for a good part thereof. We have not heard that India officially took up this matter with Qatar.

There is apathy in the government and the media. What can be done to remove that apathy? Any French citizen abroad can vote in the French elections. Let us extend this facility to Indian citizens abroad. If the workers in the Gulf can vote, we might expect our politicians, and consequently, the bureaucracy to take more interest in their welfare. It might be argued that the Gulf monarchies would resent such a move. I doubt it. The matter deserves to be examined immediately. The Central Government responded with alacrity once it came to know of the Kuwait tragedy. The Prime Minister chaired an emergency meeting. He sent Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh to Kuwait to oversee assistance to Indians injured in the mishap.

In the big evacuation of 1990-91 to bring back 176,000 Indians from Kuwait and Iraq, no minister had to visit Kuwait, except then External Affairs Minister IK Gujral, who oversaw the entire operation. He went there only once and did not interfere with the work of the Ambassador.





# Amazon India Workers Take Oath To Finish Task Before Toilet Break: Report

**Workers at some Amazon warehouses in India are asked to pledge not to take breaks, including for water or toilet visits, until they achieve specific targets, the report said.**

**New Delhi:** Amazon India finds itself under scrutiny after allegations of harsh working conditions and stringent productivity demands surfaced from workers at its warehouses in Haryana's industrial hub of

Manesar. Recently, a 24-year-old worker revealed to The Indian Express that employees in one of Amazon's warehouses are routinely asked to pledge not to take breaks, including for water or toilet visits, until they achieve specific targets. These targets often involve unloading packages from large trucks, a physically demanding task exacerbated by the scorching temperatures of up to 50°C during the ongoing heatwave. The worker, earning a monthly salary of ₹ 10,088 for ten-hour shifts over five days a week, described the pressure to perform without adequate rest breaks. "Even if we work continuously, we struggle to unload more than four trucks a day," he told Express, reflecting the impracticality of the imposed targets.

The situation is particularly dire for female workers, who face additional challenges due to the lack of adequate facilities and the physical toll of the job. Reports indicate that some departments have no designated



restroom facilities, forcing employees to use makeshift solutions that are neither sanitary nor adequate for their needs. In response to these allegations, an Amazon India

spokesperson stated that the company takes the safety and well-being of its employees seriously. They mentioned the presence of heat index monitoring devices and cooling

measures in their facilities, asserting that employees are provided with adequate water, hydration breaks, and rest opportunities.

he issue isn't confined to India alone. Amazon has faced similar allegations internationally, with authorities in the US citing safety violations and ergonomic hazards in several warehouses. Earlier this year, the company fired a warehouse worker in US after he posted a video on TikTok about having to pick up heavy boxes.

Three female marketing managers in Seattle have also filed a proposed class action accusing Amazon of widespread sex discrimination and that the tech giant has retaliated against them, including by firing one and forcing another to quit. The workers in an amended complaint claim Amazon's illegal conduct only escalated in the weeks after they initially filed the lawsuit in November last year alleging violations of federal and Washington state laws.

## "Matka Phod" Protests By Congress Amid Water Crisis In Delhi

**New Delhi:** Amid a water crisis in the national capital, the Delhi Congress held 'matka phod' protests across the city on Saturday with its members smashing earthen pots to the ground. The protests began around 10 am in all 280 blocks in Delhi. Carrying earthen pots on their heads and Congress flags, the protesters raised slogans against the Delhi government and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Later, they threw the pots on the



ground. Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav, who also joined the protests, demanded a special session of the assembly to discuss the issue. He had alleged on Friday that the Delhi government had not taken effective steps to address the water shortage in the city due to towchik, people had to run after water tankers. Water Minister Atishi had said on Friday that water production in Delhi was decreasing continuously as less water was reaching the Yamuna river here. The AAP government has been accusing BJP-ruled Haryana of not releasing Delhi's share of water.

Sharing data, she had said water production on June 6 was 1,002 million gallons per day (MGD) and it declined to 993 MGD the next day and 990 MGD on June 8. It was 978 MGD on June 9 and 958 MGD the next day. On June 11, 12 and 13, water production was 919 MGD, 951 MGD and 939 MGD, respectively, the minister had said.

## Drunk Soldier Urinates On Train Berth, Wets Woman Sitting Below

**New Delhi:** A woman has alleged that an army personnel urinated in his train berth and it fell on her while she was sleeping. The incident happened on the Gondwana Express which was travelling from Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin station to Chhattisgarh's Durg. In the B-9 coach of the train, an allegedly drunk soldier, occupying berth number 24, urinated on the seat. The urine fell on a woman seated below on berth number 23, who was accompanied by her 7-year-old child. The woman, a resident of Chhattisgarh, immediately informed her husband, Himachal Singh, who then lodged a complaint with the Railway Helpline. Despite the prompt complaint, the response from the Railway Protection Force



(RPF) was inadequate. At Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior, RPF personnel attended to the complaint, took photographs, and left without taking any action. When the train reached Jhansi, a combined team of RPF, Government Railway Police (GRP), and MCAO personnel boarded the train, promising further action at Lalitpur. However, the train continued its journey without any action being taken against the soldier.

The RPF officer in charge, Sanjay Arya, acknowledged the incident, confirming that the soldier was indeed intoxicated and his pants were wet. However, Mr Arya defended the lack of action by stating that the female complainant could not be located on seat number 23 in the B-9 coach when the RPF reached. Consequently, the soldier was not removed.

## RSS denies rift with BJP after Mohan Bhagwat's 'true sevak' remark: Sources

**New Delhi:** The RSS on Friday rejected rumours of differences with the BJP after its chief Mohan Bhagwat said a true 'sevak' was never arrogant in his first remarks after the party fell short of a majority in the Lok Sabha elections, RSS sources told news agency PTI. RSS sources said there "was no rift" between the Sangh and the BJP, its ideological mentor, amid assertions by a section of people, including Opposition leaders, that Bhagwat's remarks were aimed at the saffron party's leadership or Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They added that such comments were speculative and taken out of context. At an event in Nagpur on Monday, Bhagwat said, A true 'sevak' maintains dignity. He follows the decorum while working. He does not have the arrogance to say 'I did this work'. Only that person can be called a true 'sevak'.

In response, RSS sources said, "There



was not much difference in his (Bhagwat) speech from what he had given after the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Any address is bound to make a reference to an event as important as national elections." "But it was misinterpreted and taken out of context to create confusion. His 'arrogance' remark was never directed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi or any BJP leader," they added. RSS sources also disassociated from its national executive member Indresh Kumar's swipe at the BJP over its poll performance, with a functionary

saying that it was his personal opinion and did not reflect the organisation's official stand. At an event near Jaipur on Thursday, Kumar said, "The party (BJP) which did the 'bhakti' (of Lord Ram) but became arrogant was stopped at 241, but it was made the biggest party", adding, "and those who had no faith in Ram, they together were stopped at 234", referring to the number of seats to Opposition INDIA bloc won. As a row erupted over his remarks, Kumar on Friday said the country was happy with the BJP's poll performance and Narendra Modi becoming prime minister for the third consecutive term. "At this moment, the latest news is that those who were against Lord Ram are out of power and those who were devotees of Lord Ram are in power," he told PTI. "Under PM Modi's leadership, the country will progress," he asserted.

## Probe Agency Raids Kerala-Based Ponzi Company That Duped Depositors Of 1,500 Crore

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate Friday said it raided multiple locations in various states as part of a money laundering investigation against a Kerala-based company that allegedly duped depositors to the tune of ₹ 1,500 crore through a ponzi scheme.

The searches were launched on June 11 on the premises of the promoters of HighRich Online Group in Kerala, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. The money laundering case stems from multiple FIRs filed by the Kerala Police.

The searches have led to the freezing of around ₹ 32 crore of proceeds of crime in various bank accounts of the company, promoters and their family members, seizure of about ₹ 70 lakh in cash, jewellery and four four-wheeled

vehicles, the central agency said in a statement. The search also led to tracing of immovable properties worth ₹ 15 crore with promoters and various leaders of HighRich Online group which have been acquired out of the proceeds of crime. "Searches have also revealed that the company and its promoters and leaders were involved in trading in cryptocurrency on few exchanges and sold their own so-called crypto coin named HR Crypto Coin," it said. The crypto coin, the agency claimed, was sold in exchange for Indian rupee and USDT (a type of crypto currency) and it was also a part of ponzi scheme where people were lured to invest their money for which they got 15 per cent interest per year. When the customer introduced a new customer, they got 30 per cent

direct referral income, it said. The agency said the company was selling the memberships in the form of digital IDs which consisted of the user credentials (user name and password) of the individual investors to access the website-- www.highrich.net. "The members would further sell the memberships/digital ids to other people to earn commission," the ED said. It was found that the company would give incentives to these individuals when they refer new members to join the marketing scheme which is nothing but sharing of the commission received on joining of new members, the agency said.

There is no real underlying business of sale of goods and this is the typical modus operandi of a Ponzi scheme, it said.

Isolated heavy rainfall was very likely over Odisha between June 17 and 19 and east Bihar on June 18 and 19, the IMD said. Fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) was likely in Karnataka, Kerala, Mahe, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Madhya Maharashtra and Marathwada, according to the IMD. The weather office predicted isolated to scattered light to moderate rainfall over Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Rayalaseema, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal during the next five days. Isolated heavy rainfall was possible in Marathwada on June 16 and 17, Konkan, Goa, Kerala and Mahe from June 17 to 19, North coastal Andhra Pradesh and north interior Karnataka on June 17 and Madhya Maharashtra on June 18 and 19, the Met Department said. Meanwhile, conditions were favourable for further advance of Southwest Monsoon into some more parts of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, parts of West Bengal and parts of Bihar during the next four to five days, the IMD said.

## Why Has Physics Wallah CEO Approached Supreme Court For Probe Into NEET

**Alakh Pandey's petition claims the alleged arbitrary awarding of grace marks to over 1,500 candidates by the NTA. He has requested the Supreme Court to establish an expert panel to scrutinise the examination.**

**New Delhi:** Alakh Pandey, founder of the prominent EdTech firm Physics Wallah, has petitioned the Supreme Court to address the issues surrounding the NEET-UG 2024 examination. This national-level entrance test, conducted by the

National Testing Agency (NTA) and crucial for admissions into MBBS and other medical courses, has been embroiled in controversy over alleged irregularities. Mr Pandey's petition claims the alleged arbitrary awarding of grace marks to over 1,500 candidates by the NTA. He has requested the Supreme Court to establish an expert panel to scrutinise the examination process and its results. The NEET-UG 2024, held on May 5 across 4,750 centres, saw participation from approximately 24 lakh candidates. While results were anticipated on June 14, they were announced early on June 4, allegedly due to expedited answer sheet evaluations. Controversy erupted following allegations of question paper leaks and the granting of grace marks, leading to widespread protests and legal challenges in seven high courts and the Supreme Court. The unprecedented performance, with 67 students scoring a perfect 720 - including six from a single



centre in Haryana's Faridabad - has raised suspicions of irregularities.

On June 10, students gathered in Delhi, demanding a thorough investigation into these allegations. It is believed that the contentious grace marks may have contributed to the unusually high number of top scorers. The NEET-UG examination, overseen by the NTA, is a gateway for medical admissions in both government and private institutions across India. However, the integrity of this year's process has been called into question, prompting protests and legal scrutiny. In response to the uproar, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan

assured aspirants and parents that there is no substantial evidence of a paper leak. He said that the allegations are under investigation by competent authorities.

"There's no evidence of any paper leak yet. There are allegations and competent authorities are looking into them. Certain allegations and loose information are coming in. Let us wait for the probe by the authorities concerned. Let's wait till July 8 for the Supreme Court's judgment. There's nothing to hide..." Mr Pradhan told NDTV. The minister reassured students, noting that the Supreme Court has already delivered a judgment on the issue. He announced that all 1,563 affected students would have the opportunity to reappear for the exam, especially those from the six centres where time constraints were reported. Despite these measures, questions remain about the NTA's response before the Supreme Court's intervention.





## NEWS BOX

## Mark Wood hopes Mitchell Marsh's team will play the 'Australian way' vs Scotland

New Delhi. England fast bowler Mark Wood has hoped that Mitchell Marsh's Australia will play the 'Australian way' in their final group-stage match in the T20 World Cup 2024 against Scotland. Wood's comments come ahead of his team's match against Namibia in the tournament. Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Wood hoped that Australia would beat Scotland, which would help England's chances of qualifying for the Super 8 stage. The T20 World Cup 2024 saw a mini-controversy earlier this week, when Josh Hazlewood said that Australia losing to Scotland would help the team in the latter stages of the tournament, as the by-product of the loss will result in England getting knocked out of the tournament. England's chances dangle by the thread at the moment, as they not only have to beat Namibia in their final game but also have to depend on Australia not intentionally going soft against Scotland. Asked about Hazlewood's



comments, Wood said that it was just some classic England vs Australia banter and hoped that Mitchell Marsh's side would play the game with all honesty. "I think that's part of being England and Australia, isn't it? I think actually I saw it more as a respect thing, if I'm honest, that he was saying that England have done well against Australia in the recent past and thinks we're a big threat and a big team so I have no problem with it," Wood said at the pre-match press conference. "I'm absolutely confident they'll play the game the hardest, that's the Australian way, that they'll play hard but fair and try and get the win," he further added.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF AUSTRALIA LOSE WILLINGLY

Australia are going to be the king-maker in Group B as they play Scotland in their final group-stage game. In case Australia lose to Scotland, the latter will qualify with 7 points to their name (highest in Group B), and in case Australia win, Scotland will tie with England on points - 5. England have the superior NRR at the moment and would qualify for the Super 8 stages. Australia fast-bowler Josh Hazlewood was asked about the NRR calculations after the team's win against Namibia. Hazlewood cheekily mentioned that Australia would love for England to get knocked out from the T20 World Cup, as it would serve the team's best interests.

## Aiden Markram wants South Africa to learn after narrow win vs Nepal: Not near our best

Aiden Markram said that South Africa were far from their best when they faced Nepal in a thrilling Group D encounter in the T20 World Cup. On Saturday, the Proteas beat Rohit Paudel's team by 1 run at the Arnos Vale Ground in Kingstown, St Vincent. After being asked to bat first, South Africa scored 115 for the loss of 7 wickets on the back of Reeza Hendricks' 43-run knock in challenging conditions.

Nepal were in the hunt for the most part of the run-chase before falling short. Tabraiz Shamsi finished with figures of 4-0-19-4 and helped his team snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. After the game, Markram said that his team will be looking to get better after somehow getting over the finish line against Nepal. South Africa vs Nepal,



## T20 World Cup Highlights

"Very grateful to have got the win, we were not near our best tonight. Reflecting back on the game over the next few days, there will be a lot of learnings for us. We have a good pace attack and you want to back that. I thought if we got the ball in the right areas, it would be challenging for the batters. In hindsight, we should have picked another spinner," Markram said in the post-match presentation ceremony. Markram also had words of praise for Nepal, who fell short of securing their maiden win over a Test-playing nation in the history of the T20 World Cup.

"First and foremost, the way [Nepal] bowled it made it really tough for us. They put us under a lot of pressure. And maybe there was not enough conviction in our plans," Markram added. With the win, South Africa finished on top of the table in their group with 8 points and a net run rate of +0.470 thanks to wins in all 4 of their matches.

## T20 World Cup: Tabraiz Shamsi stars as South Africa edge past resilient Nepal

**T20 World Cup 2024: Aiden Markram's South Africa survived a huge scare after beating Nepal by 1 run in St Vincent to finish with wins in all matches in the group stage.**

New Delhi. South Africa survived a huge scare after beating Nepal by 1 run in a T20 World Cup 2024 Group D match. On Saturday, June 15 at the Arnos Vale Ground in Kingstown, St Vincent, the Proteas snatched victory from the jaws of defeat after a roller-coaster ride. With their fourth win in the group stage, Aiden Markram and Co. finished on top of the table.

Nepal, in the meantime, would not be able to make their way through to the Super 8 despite their whole-hearted efforts. It also means that Najmul Hossain Shanto's Bangladesh and Scott Edwards' Netherlands will be competing for the other spot from their group. Sri Lanka were earlier knocked



## South Africa vs Nepal, T20 World Cup Highlights

After being put in to bat first, the Proteas huffed and puffed their way to scoring 115 against Nepal. Barring Reeza Hendricks, most of the South African batters struggled to get going. Hendricks scored 43 runs off 49

balls with 5 fours and a six before Dipendra Singh Airee accounted for his wicket. Airee made life tough for the opposition batters with figures of 4-0-21-3.

It was Tristan Stubbs' unbeaten 27 off 18 that helped South Africa post 115 for 7 on the board. Kushal Bhurtel also had a dream day after he had figures of 4-0-19-4. Sandeep

Lamichhane, who played his first game in the ongoing tournament, could not make a breakthrough, but bowled at an economy rate of 4.50.

T20 World Cup Coverage | Points Table | T20 World Cup 2024 Schedule | Player Stats

## Shamsi saves the day for South Africa

Bhurtel and Aasif Sheikh laid the platform for Nepal in their run-chase with a partnership of 35 runs. Aasif was stupendous after he scored 42 runs off 49 balls with the help of 4 fours and 1 six. Rohit Paudel got out cheaply, but Aasif and Anil Sah put on 50 runs for the third wicket to put Nepal in a position of command. With Nepal needing 30 runs off 38 balls, they looked in cruise control. But then, Tabraiz Shamsi stepped up for the Proteas big time and got four crucial wickets to finish with figures of 4-0-19-4. Nepal dragged the game to the last over where they were left with 8 runs to get.

Gulshan Jha smacked Ottneil Baartman for a four, but the boundary was not enough for Nepal. Jha failed to complete a single in the last ball and was run out at the non-striker's end as South Africa won by the barest of margins.

## One hell of an opportunity: Michael Leask as Scotland eye Super 8 spot

New Delhi. Scotland batter Michael Leask looked confident ahead of their must-win encounter against Australia as he described it as a "one hell of an opportunity." Scotland would look to script history as they stand a chance to qualify for the Super 8 stage of the T20 World Cup 2024. Australia, who have already advanced to the next stage, will face Scotland at the Darren Sammy National Cricket Stadium, St Lucia on June 16, Sunday. If Scotland manage to beat Australia, they will make it to Super 8. Their win would also mean that the defending champions England will also be knocked out of the tournament.

The Group B will witness England up against the already eliminated Namibia on June 15. A win for England will keep them afloat in the tournament. However, after England's emphatic win against Oman, they boosted their net-run-rate to +3.081, which is superior to Scotland's +2.164. If England win, they will equal Scotland's points tally of 5. If Scotland lose, England will make it to the next stage, owing to a better net-run-rate. Leask realised the

importance of the crunch game against Australia and was eager to take on one of the best teams of the tournament.

"It's a must-win game, always has been. I



think we knew coming into this game it would be. We expect England to play well in the group, and that's exactly what they've done. Look, England had two tough games to play and they've played the first one very well. We always knew this

was going to be a must-win game for us and look, it's a hell of an opportunity for us to go and play really good cricket and take on one of the best in the world," Leask said. Scotland have been brilliant in the tournament so far. After their washout game against England, they went onto defeat Oman as well as Namibia.

It would be a tough way. Leask felt that it would be a huge moment if Scotland make it to the Super 8 stage. He exuded confidence and said that Scotland would bring their best game against the 2021 T20 World Cup champions.

"I think it'd be an incredibly proud moment for Scottish cricket if we did progress to the Super 8s. And look, let's not beat around the bush. It would be the tough way. We know we're going to have to beat Australia. So, I think that would make it a special for us, knowing that we've played an incredibly good game of cricket, taking on the best in the world, beat the best in the world to progress. And I think come, we're going to have to bring our A game and take them on," Leask added.

## Germany boss Julian Nagelsmann happy with 'first step,' wary of Hungary threat

New Delhi. Germany boss Julian Nagelsmann said he was happy to see his side take the first step after their thumping win over Scotland in Euros 2024 on June 14, but was also wary of the threat possessed by Hungary in their next game in the group stage. Germany got off to the best possible start as they hammered Scotland 5-1. Speaking after the win, Nagelsmann said he was hoping that his side can build on the win and was very happy with the performance. The German boss said his side made no mistakes in the first 20 minutes and they were dominant and very aggressive. Even though today was only the first step, it was a very good one. We can build on this and we're very happy," he said after Germany's triumphant start to the campaign in Munich. Even though today was only the first step, it was a very good one. We can build on this and we're very happy," he said



after Germany's triumphant start to the campaign in Munich. It's great that we scored several goals, it gives everyone a good feeling," he said. "In the first 20 minutes we were extremely good, we were very dominant and very aggressive, we made no mistakes. Hungary is an unpleasant opponent.

Germany will next play Hungary on 19 June in their next game and Nagelsmann hailed them as an 'unpleasant opponent.'

"Hungary is an unpleasant opponent, difficult to prepare for, they sometimes have a wild build-up and are difficult to tackle. A very unpleasant team," said Nagelsmann.

Nagelsmann also praised Jamal Musiala for his performance on the day. The youngster had a big impact on the game, as he scored a goal as well. The German boss said that you don't need to tell Musiala what to do as he just goes out and does it. When you see Jamal, you don't tell him what to do, he can just do it. He played an exceptionally good game today. He had an enormous influence," said Nagelsmann.

Nagelsmann also said that his side cannot afford to slow down now after the win and should look for another 3 points to ensure they get out of the group. "I am far from being a warning voice. It makes little sense to slow down too much now," said Nagelsmann.

"Yeah, absolutely. And congratulations to Team USA. They've done amazingly well when you talk about globalisation of the game. This is it USA qualifying for Super Eights. They deserve to be there. They had beaten Pakistan in the round match. So they are there. And for Pakistan was the plan EK 601 to Dubai and then to the respective cities. And then we see what happens from there onwards," Akram said in a video posted by the ICC on their social media handle.

## Pakistan's poor performance in T20 World Cup

Pakistan's only win so far in the tournament has been against Canada. They will also face Ireland in the Group A match on June 16, Sunday at Lauderhill in Florida. However, the flashflood warnings and the rainy weather conditions might not let the game happen. The former Pakistan players have come down heavily on captain Babar Azam, for his own form as well as the team's overall performance. This is the earliest Pakistan have ever been knocked out of a T20 World Cup, having played just 3 games before their fate was sealed.



## Will Australia make major changes for Scotland clash Vice-captain Matthew Wade reacts

**Matthew Wade has hinted that Australia could make a few changes to their lineup for the game against Scotland on June 16. Wade feels they could give the chance to players who could be important in the remainder of the campaign.**

Australia vice-captain Matthew Wade has said that they could make a few changes to their lineup for the clash against Scotland on June 16, Sunday. The Aussies have already booked their spot in the Super 8s, but the match still has a lot of importance in the context of Group B. Both Scotland and England are chasing the final spot in the

group to the Super 8s. A lot of discussion has been about Australia's team lineup for the game, with Josh Hazlewood having hinted earlier they could try to help Scotland and knockout England. Wade, while talking at the press conference, said that there could be a few changes, with players like Cameron Green and Ashton Agar potentially getting a chance before the Super 8s stage.

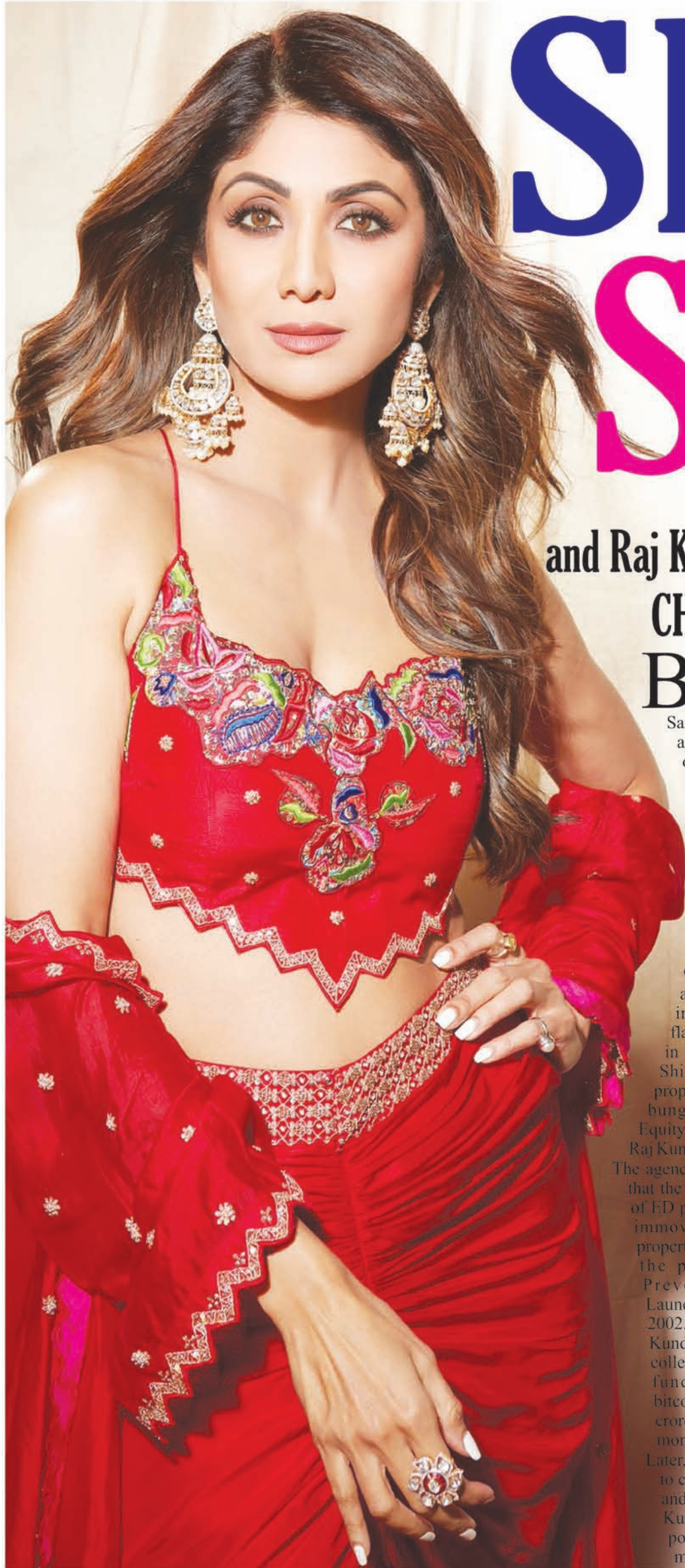
"Potentially. No, I'm not sure on the 11 whether or not some guys will have a rest. We haven't been in this position before, so I'm sure it'll be spoken about to maybe get some games into the guys that potentially might play down the road Green and Agar those guys may play a role as the tournament goes on so yeah, I'm sure to be spoken about whether or not the guys pull the trigger and



go for it, I'm not sure, but we'll wait and see tomorrow I suppose," said Wade. T20 World Cup Coverage | Points Table | T20 World Cup 2024 Schedule | Player Stats

Australia playing the way we want to play Wade said that the team is enjoying their run so

far and claimed that they're focussed on the process. The Aussie vice-captain said it has been pleasing to see the team playing the way they want. "Yeah, we're having a good time. We're like, this environment now is, we're not a result driven team, we're more about the process and going away, going about it the way that we want to play in big tournaments and that's what we're doing, that's the pleasing thing. Yeah, the results are great and it's good to have a few wins, but more pleasing that we're going out, we're executing, we're playing the way that we want to play. Whether or not, you know, we'll be on the other side of it at some stage, I'm sure. And it's more about reflecting on what we're doing and how we're going about it rather than the Xs and O's, I suppose," said Wade.



# Shilpa Shetty

## and Raj Kundra In Fresh Trouble, Accused of CHEATING Trader In Gold Scheme

**B**ollywood actress Shilpa Shetty and her businessman husband Raj Kundra have landed in fresh trouble. The couple has now been accused of cheating a trader in a gold scheme. As reported by NDTV, bullion trader Prithviraj Saremal Kothari has moved to the Mumbai Sessions Court demanding action against Shilpa and Raj. Reportedly, Kothari has alleged that Shilpa and Raj orchestrated a scheme under their company and asked traders to invest in it, promising lucrative returns on gold investments. The scheme was named 'Satyug Gold' and allegedly assured investors of gold delivery at a fixed rate irrespective of market fluctuations. Kothari claimed that he invested in the scene but did not receive the promised gold upon reaching the maturity date on April 2, 2019. He further claimed that he invested over Rs 90 lakh in the scheme. Kothari also submitted a cover letter signed by Shilpa Shetty and an invoice issued by Satyug Gold Private Limited in court to support his allegations. The court has now ordered Mumbai police officials to investigate the case. This is not the first time that Shilpa and Raj have landed in legal trouble. In April this year, ED seized Raj Kundra's properties worth Rs 97.79 crore. The attached properties include a residential flat in Mumbai's Juhu, in the name of his wife Shilpa Shetty. Another property is a residential bungalow in Pune and Equity shares in the name of Raj Kundra, the ED said.

The agency said in a statement that the Mumbai zonal office of ED provisionally attached immovable and movable properties of Kundra under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. It was alleged that Kundra along with others collected huge amounts of funds in the form of bitcoins (worth Rs 6,600 crore in 2017) from the "gullible public with the false promises of 10 per cent per month return in the form of bitcoins".

Later, the couple issued a statement via their lawyer and argued that they were ready to cooperate with the concerned authorities. They hoped for "fair investigation" and stated that they had full faith in the Indian judiciary system. In 2021, Raj Kundra was also arrested in connection to the alleged creation and uploading of pornographic films on mobile applications. He was granted bail after almost two months.



## Natasa Shares Shocking Cryptic Post Amid Hardik Pandya Split Rumours: 'I Can't Wait Until Morals...'



**C**ricketer Hardik Pandya's wife, Natasa Stankovic, has once again shared a shocking cryptic post on her Instagram story amid the ongoing rumours about their alleged separation. Natasa on Thursday took to her social media account to share a quote by acclaimed Hollywood actor Denzel Washington. "With so many things coming back in style, I can't wait until moral, respect and intelligence become a trend again," read the quote shared by Natasa on her Instagram story. Natasa on Wednesday shared some "happy moments" with son Agastya Pandya on her official Instagram account. The actress shared a series of photos and videos of her candid moments with her son. In the first picture, Agastya can be seen holding her mom close as they take a nap together. Another photo shows Natasa taking a mirror selfie in the elevator. She also posted a video of her son doing push-ups, while another video showed her doing dance workout in the gym. Sharing the post, Natasa wrote, "Some happy moments." On the other hand, Hardik Pandya debuted his new haircut as he gave a glimpse of the same on his Instagram story. Natasa Stankovic and Hardik Pandya's divorce rumours have been making headlines for a long time now. The couple has not issued any official statement regarding the same as of now.

Last week, Natasa posted a selfie on her Instagram, showing her enjoying a cup of black tea. She can be seen donning a white shirt with a blue scarf, as she smiled for the camera. She wrote, "Hi (with a white heart emoji)". In the second slide, one can see Natasa holding a cup of black tea. She wrote, "Drinking (black tea emoji) while in the car wearing full white clothes (with smile emojis and folded hands emojis)." She also asked her followers, "Will I spill the tea?" Former Bigg Boss contestant and dancer Natasa Stankovic has been married to cricketer Hardik Pandya since May 31, 2020. The couple renewed their wedding vows according to the Hindu and Christian rituals in February 2023.

## Newlyweds Millie Bobby Brown And Jake Bongiovi Coffee Run Is Packed With PDA



**L**ove is in the air for the newly wedded couple Millie Bobby Brown and Jake Bongiovi. The duo recently got spotted for the first time nearly three weeks after getting married. As Millie and Jake went out for a coffee, their pictures made it to the Internet, creating a stir among fans. The romantic snapshots showcased the married couple taking a stroll in New York City and sharing a steamy kiss in between laughs. The Stranger Things star and the model were dressed in a sporty style for their casual day out. While Brown effortlessly rocked a deep V-neck white tank top with yellow shorts and white gym shoes, her husband Jake Bongiovi complemented her well in a white T-shirt and blue shorts. He elevated his look with a baseball hat in the shades of green and white and also wore a pair of white gym shoes.

In case you missed it, Millie and Jake said 'I do' to each other just a few weeks ago. Reports suggest the lovebirds exchanged wedding vows in an intimate ceremony attended by close friends and family members. According to The Sun, the couple opted for a low-key yet romantic celebration. A source close to the couple, during an interaction with the portal, revealed, "It was a very low-key, romantic affair with their closest family with them as they said their vows." That's not all. Millie and Jake are planning to host a star-studded ceremony later this year.

The beginning of Millie and Jake's relationship can be traced back to 2021 when the couple made it Instagram official through a wholesome post. Subsequently, they were seen making appearances at various events together including the BAFTA Film Awards and the premiere of Millie's show on Netflix. It was in 2023 when Millie referred to Jake as her "partner for life." This was followed by a dreamy proposal from her husband a few months later. The Stranger Things star broke the news of her engagement on Instagram with the caption, "I've loved you three summers now, honey, I want 'em all."

# Farida Jalal

## Reveals Akshay Kumar Reads Dialogues Off White Board On Set: 'Pehle Aisa Nahi Tha'

**A**khay Kumar, a highly successful Bollywood superstar, is renowned for his strong work ethic. Many of his close associates have commented on his punctuality and ability to work swiftly on set. In order to maintain such efficiency, he follows certain practices. Recently, veteran actor Farida Jalal unveiled one of these methods, mentioning that Akshay reads his lines from a whiteboard placed behind the camera during shoots. Farida Jalal, who has worked alongside Akshay in multiple films, confirmed actor Bhumi Pednekar's statement about Akshay's unique approach to dialogues. She mentioned that this wasn't always the case, indicating a shift in his working style over time, "Pehle aisa nahi tha (he was not like that before)," she stated.

the actress further revealed, "I have done so many films with him. Elaan, Aflatoon, Dil To Pagal Hai, he was not like that at all. Ab ho gaya, he's done so many films, won so many awards, he has (learnt and said) so many dialogues. Ab hota hai (it happens), give him that much, otherwise he is so perfect. How he does it? It is a talent that you don't come to know that he is reading out his dialogues. Hats off to him, I won't be able to do it. I would never be able to read the dialogues and act at the same time, but he manages and does it well. Give it to the man, very good, kya baat hai (that's great)." Akshay Kumar's co-star Bhumi Pednekar, who shared the screen with him in 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha' and 'Raksha Bandhan', previously shed light on Akshay's unique method of using cue cards for his dialogue delivery. Bhumi emphasized that Akshay's ability to seamlessly incorporate this practice into his acting was a testament to his skill and considered it an art form. She clarified that although Akshay does memorize his lines in advance, he utilizes cue cards during



filming. According to Bhumi, Akshay explained that this helps him stay present in the moment, revealing an interesting aspect of his acting process.

At 75, Farida Jalal's illustrious career boasts iconic roles as a mother figure to Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan. She portrayed Shah Rukh Khan's mother in beloved classics such as Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge and Kuch Hota Hai, endearing herself to audiences with her heartfelt performances.

Her on-screen magic wasn't limited to just one Khan; Farida also shared memorable moments with Salman Khan in films like Jab Pyaar Kisise Hota Hai and Dulhan Hum Le Jayenge. Her performances alongside these leading men have left an indelible mark on Bollywood, showcasing her versatility and timeless talent.

