













## IITs, mindfulness & mirage of mental health

THE IIT-Kanpur has recently collaborated with The Art of Living Foundation to establish a wellness programme. The foundation, as it is reported, has agreed to conduct a series of specialist sessions incorporating breathing exercises, mindfulness practices and meditation. And this is to improve the 'mental resilience, and stress management capabilities' of young students.

I understand why the IIT authorities are deeply concerned about the mental health of their students. A recent RTI query has revealed that in the past five years, 37 students died by suicide across 11 of the 23 IITs. It is, therefore, not surprising that even the IIT-Guwahati has announced a series of healing practices —say, counselling sessions, morning walks with faculty members and 'stress-escape' workshops. However, as a keen observer of the contemporary educational landscape in India, I have no hesitation in saying that a set of discrete counselling sessions, breathing exercises and mindfulness practices are inadequate to cope with the heightened psychic anxiety and existential anguish of these young minds who are trapped in a 'war zone' characterised by the life-killing virus of hyper-competitiveness and social Darwinism.

The problem is not just one's 'disturbed' self; the problem is the very structure of society — its scarcity of resources and unevenness, or the reduction of education into an ideology of meritocracy: a rat race for achieving what technocapitalists regard as 'success'. You cannot dissociate your 'disturbed' self from the neurosis of the larger society. Think of the three reasons why mental stress or loneliness is inherent in the very logic of the IIT phenomenon. First, if you really keep your eyes open, you realise that the very process of getting admission into one of the IITs is inherently tension-ridden. It is not like walking with a great teacher and exploring the domains of science and mathematics with heightened intellectual zeal and curiosity.

Instead, from the tyranny of coaching centres to the never-ending mock tests: there is no creative ecstasy or joy in this journey. By the time the 'lucky' ones pass through the obstacles — from JEE Main to JEE Advanced, many of them are already psychologically wounded and spiritually impoverished. Second, it is wrong to believe that life is really 'settled', and everything becomes rosy when one joins one of the IITs. There is no end to the stress inherent in the hyper-competitive academic culture. The craving for good grades, the pressure to learn the ever-changing 'skills' the market demands and the constant anxiety over the ultimate destiny — say, appropriate placement and salary package, create a social milieu in which there is no friendship, no creative ecstasy. Everyone is a solitary, egotistic warrior!

And third, as the IITs are over-hyped in a society in which most of our colleges and universities have been systematically devalued or destroyed, it becomes exceedingly difficult for an IITian to escape the public gaze. We begin to see an IITian as a mythical product: a super-intelligent technologist achieving everything we love to mythologise as 'success': a lucrative job, a high position in a techno-corporate enterprise, frequent foreign trips and ceaseless social and economic mobility! In fact, in our society madly obsessed with 'success stories', if you are an IITian, it is quite unlikely that people — including your parents — will see you as just human; you have to continually prove your 'superhuman' qualities. Your 'ordinariness', it seems, is your sin! Indeed, this impossible expectation tends to dehumanise many of them. It is, therefore, obvious that if we do not address these issues, we cannot bring sanity among these young, lonely, tension-ridden competitors simply by asking them to meditate, do breathing exercises and practice mindfulness. Even if it gives some sort of temporary relief — a 'feel good' moment, no fundamental change is likely to take place in their life-trajectories.

## Trump putting US soft power in jeopardy

The government must mainstream natural, organic and regenerative farming to realise food and ecological security.

In the 1990s, the New York Times carried a report about a Chinese delegation touring Broadway in New York. The visitors' goal was to learn how that fabled theatre district worked and how it could be reproduced in Shanghai or Beijing. The Chinese understood well that US power was not just in its military, but also in its vibrant culture.

The hallmark of power is the ability of a country to shape the policies of others. This can be through hard power — military and financial — but it is often more easily done through soft power, the attraction and persuasion you are able to exert because of your culture, values and ideology. For four years after World War II, the US had a monopoly of nuclear weapons. These were the years in which it launched the Marshall Plan to revive Europe and created the NATO military alliance to cement its global authority. But it also helped create the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Health Organisation, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs to provide global governance to deliver public goods in the areas of development finance, health and trade. These became instruments of US soft power along with the steadily rising American prosperity that supercharged its cultural appeal around the world. The shutdown of USAID, America's principal aid-giving agency, has brought out just how dramatically the Trump administration plans to gut the ways in which US has exercised power around the world so far.

USAID was the largest donor of official development assistance in the world. The \$70 billion it provided annually was spread out among countries where it had strategic interests, such as Ukraine, Jordan and Palestine, and where it provided humanitarian assistance — Sudan, Yemen, South Sudan, Afghanistan and so on. Tempering hard power with soft has been an established strategy of the US that other countries, including India, have sought to follow. In the 1950s and 1960s, USAID played a significant role in helping India's development goals in the fields of health, agriculture, food and education. But this was a clever means of deflecting Indian unhappiness arising out of its policy of arming Pakistan.

American soft power exerted itself not only through the dollars and cents of its foreign aid funding commitments, but through four main pillars. First, the cultural influence of its entertainment and media industries and its education system that led the world in innovation and technology. The second was the political example of its commitment to democracy, equality and human rights, as well as its vibrant civil society. The third was the power and perceptions it derived from the policies of the institutions it helped create — the UN, World Bank and so on. The fourth, its dynamic consumer-oriented economy ensured that the US has retained its status as the



largest economy in the world since WWII. These exerted a pull among students and researchers, businessmen looking for opportunity, artistes and performers as well as workers who flocked to the US in ever larger numbers, through legal or illegal means. Around the world, the US was admired for its democratic system, its prosperity and technological leadership. Its culture and fashions were widely imitated and there was a perception that its policies contained a dash of altruism absent from those of other big powers. Today, all this is being turned inside out. The 'America First' policy of the Trump administration seeks to put US interests ahead of everything else. The US President's attempt to overturn the verdict of the 2020 elections or attack the vaunted judicial system has hit important institutions of democracy. Under attack within the US are universities, research institutions, charities, the media and even the Church — all of whom are being asked to conform to the demands of the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement. Trump's threat to defund universities for alleged transgressions undermines the intellectual freedom that has characterised American culture. Besides undocumented aliens, the Trump administration is making life difficult for foreigners in general, visa holders, tourists, permanent resident or Green Card

holders. These actions strike at the very heart of American soft power. Around the world, American soft power has been envied. Today, Shanghai and Beijing have Broadway-like theatre districts. Besides culture, China has reached out to foreign countries to promote Chinese language through Confucius institutes and scholarships to attract students, another hallmark of soft power. India is another country that uses a mix of soft and hard power to navigate complex foreign policy challenges. This country is a major destination for foreign students. It is easy to claim that soft power can be given short shrift in our hyper-realist era. But the reality is that hard power by itself cannot achieve what a combination of hard and soft power, or "smart power" can do. Else, China or Russia would be seen as the more desirable countries in the world. Instead, whether it is the rich countries, or middle-income ones, the US is the more preferred option, as it has been for millions of migrants seeking to improve their lives.

Despite Trump, the US is likely to retain its primacy around the world — through its films, music and technology. But by undermining trust among allies and altering the global perception of US values and goals, the MAGA policy is bound to damage America's global image and diminish its long-term influence.

## Anti-dumping duties

Long-term plan against cheap imports needed

India's imposition of anti-dumping duties on five Chinese imports marks yet another chapter in its long-running trade friction with Beijing. With a ballooning trade deficit of \$85 billion in 2023-24, New Delhi has once again signalled its intent to safeguard domestic manufacturers from predatory pricing by Chinese exporters. The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) recommended these duties on Soft Ferrite Cores, vacuum insulated flasks, aluminium foil, trichloro isocyanuric acid and poly vinyl chloride (PVC) paste resin. These products were allegedly being dumped at artificially low prices. This move is not unprecedented. Earlier this month, the DGTR recommended a 12 per cent provisional safeguard duty for 200 days on certain steel products to protect domestic players from a surge in imports. As of January 28, 2019, India had imposed anti-dumping duties on 99 Chinese products, including chemicals, petrochemicals, fibres, yarn, machinery items, pharmaceuticals, rubber and steel items, to protect its

domestic industries from unfair trade practices. While such measures risk inflating costs for domestic



consumers, anti-dumping duties are permissible under

the World Trade Organisation (WTO) framework. Article 6 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) allows countries to counteract dumping to ensure fair competition. Thus, India is well within its rights to take corrective measures. However, anti-dumping duties are only a temporary fix. Chinese exporters often find ways to circumvent such restrictions by rerouting shipments through third countries. Indian industries must use this protective window to boost their competitiveness rather than rely indefinitely on trade barriers. A more sustainable approach requires deeper reforms — enhanced domestic production capacities, technology upgradation and a focussed strategy to reduce dependence on Chinese imports. As the India-China trade imbalance continues to widen, policymakers must balance protectionist measures with long-term industrial self-sufficiency.

## Rohingyas in camps and the politics of votebank

The BJP today has gained deep roots into the anti-Muslim consolidation and the Rohingya is the cheapest collateral.

And we are here as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night. —Matthew Arnold, Dover Beach  
The preceding lines are even more telling. The poet despairs that a world that ought to have been a "land of dreams" has "neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain." This is true about any place in the world today where the authoritarian regimes' playbook has stripped language of all verity and normalised fear. But let us look in the back lanes of our capital, Delhi, that is now governed by the BJP and a parallel LG office of the same hue. Both the power centres are competing hard to please the masters in polarising the political vocabulary by identifying the 'other'. What better alibi than the Rohingya to turn to?

Even the initial 'outrage', if any, has dissipated over the persistent state of harassment on Rohingya refugees living in Delhi's Madanpur Khadar, Shram Vihar, Khajoori Khas and Vikaspuri. Soon after the formation of the new government and following Union Home Minister's review of Delhi's security calling out Rohingyas and Bangladeshis as a threat to national security, on February 24, a large number of police vehicles arrived in Madanpur to round up women, children and the elderly.

The Rohingyas have been living on the edge for years, but this time, the fear and intimidation brought back memories of the genocide back home. They were taken to police stations for biometric verification and threatened to not resume any work or face deportation. In the continuing crackdown, some have reportedly been forced to sign documents in languages they don't understand. Many have been taken to undisclosed locations without legal representation. It is safe to conclude that the actions of the authorities violate international human rights.

The last time I visited the Madanpur camp, there were approximately 36 Rohingya families living in extremely poor conditions. The other families have moved to

rented accommodation, though now there is pressure on their landowners to vacate them. Despite possessing valid UNHCR cards that give them refugee status, their settlements have been repeatedly attacked, gutted and demolished. They have no access to any sanitation facilities and their power connection is often suspended. They are denied Aadhaar cards or access to formal work or even the right to give birth in government hospitals. If they manage to access healthcare, they are denied birth certificates. It is a story of absolute dispossession. The recent police crackdown is robbing them of their last spot of hope. They have been cautioned not to venture from the makeshift homes, saying that surprise checks will be carried out.

Coinciding with Ramadan, this renewed operation of surveillance and intimidation has taken away any remaining agency. The students need to continue their education and the families must step out to earn and get food on the table. Fleeing from genocide in Myanmar, they are faced with a harsher fate of being hunted down as 'illegals'. Even the feeble reportage on media has faded, the civil society that once uttered a few sentences are invisible and the political elite on either side wants them as trophies of 'othering'. The UNCHR has virtually given up on them. The judiciary is looking the other way and the executive is taking orders. We are no longer bewildered because of the normalisation of the regime's draconian actions that are now upon citizens. Who will mourn the refugees! Detention and deportation may have assumed fresh meanings with images of chained Indian deportees and students being sent back by the purveyors of the "new world".

India is already home to several detention centres housing asylum seekers, refugees and migrants abetted by the

Foreigners Act 1946, part of a set of archaic laws that regulates immigration in India. There are no detention time limits in India, leaving detainees subject to indefinite detention. As per the UNHCR 2024 data, 676 Rohingya refugees are in detention centres across India, with more than half being women and children. These



holding areas are jail-like facilities where Rohingya people are cut off from outside interactions and legal aid. These detentions exist in Delhi, Jammu, Hyderabad, West Bengal and Assam. They are also detained in Bangalore, Kochi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Matia Transit Camp in Assam is the country's largest detention centre, where around 103 Rohingya women, children and men are detained along with another 171 detainees who are Bangladeshis or Indians declared as foreigners.

Delhi has two such centres. The level of political and executive engagement around Rohingyas has been absurd. In 2023, the police in Jammu accompanied a Rohingya couple who lost their 40-day-old infant in the detention centre and the couple was made to watch the burial with handcuffs!

It is hardly surprising that the Rohingya is a soft Muslim target for the right wing government. But the visceral hatred may also serve as a strategic tool to consolidate its vote bank, thereby establishing the relationship between political ideology and refugee policies. The 'other' or the 'outsider' shall not be allowed to take your land or job. A very Trumpian and far-right rhetoric heard across continents today. Hate speeches against Rohingyas account for a significant percentage. Even the previous Delhi government did nothing to support their cause and the opposition to the ruling BJP has not cared to raise this issue. This is directly connected to the Modi government's CAA, which provoked mass protests and excludes Muslim migrants from obtaining Indian citizenship. This could have been a point of departure for the opposition to challenge the prejudices of the ruling party by forcing the release of refugees, stop deporting them against international laws and contain hate against a people fleeing genocide.

If the Congress in yesteryear was accused of consolidating the Muslim vote bank, the BJP today has gained deep roots into the anti-Muslim consolidation and the Rohingya is the cheapest collateral.

## Sensex falls over 300 points: Why is market down despite FII buying, GDP growth

New Delhi. Dalal Street has turned red for the first time in the past seven days despite FIIs returning to buying ways and strong macros of the economy. IMF data showed that India's GDP has grown 105% in the past 10 years and will soon overtake Japan's economy to become the 4th largest economy. This data also failed to woo investors on Wednesday as Sensex dropped nearly 400 points after opening flat. The S&P BSE Sensex was down 342.44 points to 77,674.75, while the NSE Nifty50 lost 69.90 points to 23,598.75 as of 12:24 pm.

### WHY IS MARKET FALLING?

"Indian markets have bounced back very quickly in the last seven trading sessions. So some kind of profit booking is warranted on the market and that is the reason we can see some kind of profit booking in the medium to short term," said Kranthi Bathini, director of equity strategy at WealthMills Securities.

He added that we are nearing the financial year-end, inducing some profit booking. "As the Trump tariffs are going to come into effect there is some kind of uncertainty in how these things are going to lead in the first week of April. That is the reason we can see some kind of caution by the traders. So traders are trying to be on the sidelines and be on cash," said Bathini. In today's afternoon trading session, IndusInd Bank emerged as the top performer, surging 3.64% and leading the market's gainers. M&M followed closely with a 1.32% increase, while Power Grid Corporation and Adani Ports also showed positive momentum, rising 1.05% and 0.62% respectively. Tata Motors and TCS continued the upward trend with gains of 0.30% and 0.20%.

On the flip side, several stocks found themselves in the red. Zomato took the biggest hit, plummeting 2.76%, followed by Bharti Airtel with a 1.06% decline. Infosys, Asian Paints, and Maruti also struggled, losing between 0.82% and 1.04%. NTPC, Axis Bank, and Kotak Bank experienced declines ranging from 1.43% to 1.89%.

The market continues to display volatility.

Nifty's sectoral indices showed a mixed performance. Nifty Media experienced the sharpest decline, falling 1.55%, while Nifty Realty saw a marginal dip of 0.01%. Nifty IT and Nifty Financial Services also slipped, dropping 0.34% and 0.52% respectively. Nifty Private Bank and Nifty Healthcare Index were also in the red, with losses of 0.07% and 0.90%.

## IndusInd Bank shares rise as lender seeks recruiters to hire top executives

New Delhi. IndusInd Bank shares jumped in early trade on Wednesday after reports indicated that the private lender is set to start a formal search process to fill top managerial positions, including CEO.

The shares of IndusInd Bank rose as much 3% in early trade and were up 2.15% to Rs 650.75 on the BSE at around 9:51 am. The formal search process to fill the top managerial positions at IndusInd Bank is set to begin in April, and the private lender is planning to assign the task to two large global recruitment firms, Egon Zehnder and Korn Ferry, reported Moneycontrol. The recruiters will be tasked with finding a replacement for Sumant Kathpalia, the bank's current MD and CEO, Arun Khurana, deputy MD and executive director and Gobind Jain, who resigned as CFO on January 17. The report added that a new chief compliance officer and chief operations officer may also be appointed.

In total, the recruiters are being roped in to fill 8 official positions. IndusInd Bank stock has been hit hard over the past month after a series of developments. On March 7, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently extended Kathpalia's term as bank CEO and MD by just a year, less than what the bank's board had recommended. And then on March 10, the bank revealed lapses in its derivatives accounting. Shares of the private lender are down 6% in past five trading sessions and over 32% this year. And then on March 10, the bank revealed lapses in its derivatives accounting. Shares of the private lender are down 6% in past five trading sessions and over 32% this year. High operated through digital platforms without a tax nexus under conventional international tax principles.

### WHY IS INDIA REMOVING GOOGLE TAX?

"The removal of this levy marks a shift in India's digital taxation framework and is perceived as a strategic move to ease trade frictions with the United States, which had persistently objected to the tax as being discriminatory against American technology giants such as Google and Meta," said Kumar.

## Judge orders a June trial for US government's felony case against Boeing

New Delhi. A federal judge in Texas has set a June trial date for the US government's years-old conspiracy case against Boeing for misleading regulators about the 737 Max jetliner before two of the planes crashed, killing 346 people. US District Judge Reed O'Connor did not explain in the scheduling order he issued on Tuesday why he decided to set the case for trial. Lawyers for the aerospace company and the Justice Department have spent months trying to renegotiate a July 2024 plea agreement that called for Boeing to plead guilty to a single felony charge. The judge rejected that deal in December, saying that diversity, inclusion and equity policies the Justice Department had in place at the time might influence the selection of a monitor to oversee the company's compliance with the terms of its proposed sentence. Since then, O'Connor had three times extended the deadline for the two sides to report how they planned to proceed. His most recent extension, granted earlier this month, gave them until April 11 to "confer on a potential resolution of this case short of trial." The judge revoked the remaining time with his Tuesday order, which laid out a timeline for proceedings leading up to a June 23 trial in Fort Worth. The Department of Justice declined to comment on the judge's action. A Boeing statement shed no light on the status of the negotiations. "As stated in the parties' recent filings, Boeing and the Department of Justice continue to be engaged in good faith discussions regarding an appropriate resolution of this matter," the company said.

# India's Organised Retail To Surpass \$600 Billion By 2030, Capture 35 Per Cent Of Total Market

**However, the supply landscape remains fragmented and is expected to remain so, with regional and unbranded brands expected to contribute over 70 per cent of the market by 2030, the report mentioned.**

**Bengaluru.** India's overall retail sector is poised to become more than \$1.6 trillion opportunity by 2030, offering immense headroom for sustained growth for the organised retail industry, according to a new report on Wednesday.

While essential categories will continue to drive the majority of spending, discretionary spending is expected to lead the next wave of expansion, said the report by Redseer Strategy Consultants. Offline and online organised retailers are actively solving for inefficiencies in the market through better sourcing strategies, improved application of technology and infrastructure innovations. As a result, organised retail is projected to become a \$600 billion+ segment by 2030, capturing over 35 per cent of the total retail market," the report noted. Amid regional diversity, price sensitivity and complex supply chains, 350 Indian brands have crossed the \$100 million revenue mark. However, the supply landscape remains fragmented and is expected to remain so, with regional and unbranded brands expected to contribute over 70 per cent of the market by 2030, the report mentioned.



"Scaling ahead will require organised retail models to also address the regional and unbranded consumption, in addition to the branded segment that they've traditionally targeted," said Kushal Bhatnagar, Associate Partner, Redseer Strategy Consultants. Offline and online players are adopting a mix of strategies, such as backward integration, private labelling, and supply aggregation, to target this opportunity, he mentioned. The heterogenous consumer preferences in

India have led to the emergence of extensive range of stock keeping units (SKUs), further underscoring the supply fragmentation. India's culture, language, and tastes change every few kilometers, leading to high SKU proliferation across categories such as snacks, spices, food grains, apparels, jewellery, and home decor. A large share of consumers favour small-ticket transactions, and prioritise affordability over other factors, while making purchase decisions, the report said. Multiple unorganised intermediaries exist at both sourcing and distribution levels, making efficient supply chain management a challenge. General trade (GT) has also thrived due to its accessibility, ability to enable small transactions, and deep integration with local supply chains. It effectively caters to hyper-local consumer preferences, said the report.

## India's GDP grows 105% in 10 years, now at \$4.3 trillion: IMF

New Delhi. India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown by 105% in the last ten years, doubling from \$2.1 trillion in 2015 to \$4.3 trillion in 2025. This strong growth has positioned India as the world's fifth-largest economy, behind the US, China, Germany, and Japan. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India is on track to surpass Japan by the third quarter of FY25 and could be just behind the US and China by 2027. India's economic growth in the past decade has outpaced several major global economies. While India's GDP increased by 105%, the US and China saw growth of 66% and 44%, respectively. Other developed nations, such as Germany, France, and the UK, recorded significantly lower growth rates. With Japan's GDP currently at \$4.4 trillion and showing no growth over the last decade, India is projected to overtake it within the next year. Germany, with a GDP of \$4.9 trillion, is the next target, and India is expected to surpass it by 2027, making



it the third-largest economy in the world.

India's rise to economic power has been marked by key milestones:

In 2007, India reached its first \$1 trillion GDP mark, taking 60 years to do so.

By 2014, GDP had doubled to \$2 trillion.

Despite the COVID-19 slowdown, India crossed \$3 trillion in 2021. The jump from \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion took just four years. At this pace, India could

continue adding \$1 trillion to its economy every 1.5 years, with projections suggesting it could become a \$10 trillion economy by 2032.

Currently, the US remains the world's largest economy with a GDP of \$30.3 trillion, followed by China at \$19.5 trillion. If India's rapid growth continues, it could narrow the gap with these two economic giants within the next decade.

## Unified Pension Scheme From 1 April 2025: How Much Pension Will Family Get After Death Of Central Govt Employee

New Delhi. Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) will be operational from 1 April, 2025. Declared last year by the Narendra Modi government, the UPS seeks to provide fixed pension security to employees working in central government offices. People who are in a government job and are already enrolled in the NPS will have the opportunity to choose UPS. A minimum assured payout of Rs.10,000 per month has been guaranteed under Unified Pension Scheme in case superannuation is after 10 years or more of qualifying service, subject to timely and regular credit of contributions and no withdrawals. What is the family payout under UPS? In case of death of the payout holder after superannuation, family payout @60% of the payout admissible to the payout holder immediately before his demise, shall be assured to the legally wedded spouse (spouse legally wedded as on the date of superannuation or on the date of voluntary retirement or retirement under FR 56(j), as may be applicable).

Unified Pension Scheme: PFRDA Regulations enable enrolment of three categories of central government employees. Check Major cut-off dates (i) an existing central government employee in

## Govt Asks Traders, Wholesales, Big Chain Retailers And Processors To Declare Wheat Stock Every Friday From 1 April



New Delhi. The Centre has asked Traders/Wholesalers, Retailers, Big Chain Retailers and Processors to declare wheat stock position w.e.f. 1st April, 2025 and then on, every Friday.

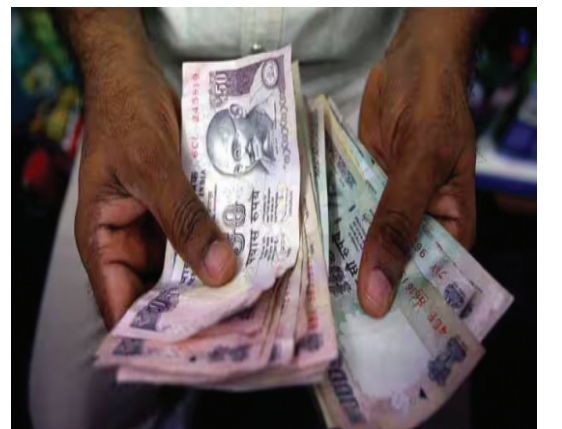
"In order to manage the overall food security and to prevent unscrupulous speculation, the Government of India has decided that Traders/Wholesalers, Retailers, Big Chain Retailers and Processors in all States and Union

Territories have to declare their Stock position of wheat on the portal (<https://evegoils.nic.in/wsp/login>) w.e.f. 01.04.2025 and then, on every Friday till further orders," said a Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution release. All the respective legal entities to ensure that stock are regularly and correctly disclosed on the portal. Wheat Stock Limit is expiring on 31.03.2025 for all

**All the respective legal entities will have to ensure that stock are regularly and correctly disclosed on the portal.**

categories of entities in States and UTs. Thereafter, the entities have to disclose the wheat stock on portal. Any entity which is not registered on the Portal, may register themselves and start disclosing the wheat stock on every Friday.

The Department of Food and Public Distribution is maintaining a close watch over the stock position of wheat to prevent speculation, control prices and ensure easy availability in the country.



service as on 1st April 2025, who is covered under NPS ;(ii) new recruit in the central government services, who joins service on or after the 1st day of April 2025 ; (iii) a central government employee who was covered under NPS and who has superannuated or voluntarily retired or has retired under Fundamental Rules 56(j) on or before 31st March 2025 and is eligible for UPS or the legally wedded spouse in case of a subscriber who has superannuated or retired and has demised prior to exercising the option for UPS. The enrolment and claim forms for all these categories of central government employees will be available online from 1st April, 2025 on website of Protean CRA .

## Provident Fund Claim Processing: EPFO To Integrate UPI, Expand Pension Access

**EPFO is also soon going to launch UPI and ATM-based PF withdrawals.**

New Delhi. The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is set to introduce UPI integration for claims processing, a move aimed at enhancing efficiency and reducing transaction time, Labour and Employment Secretary Sumita Dawra said on Monday. Speaking on the initiative exclusively with ANI, Dawra said EPFO currently has around 7.5 crore active members who maintain their PF accounts and contribute towards their pension. "We have undertaken significant work in this regard. Claims up to Rs1 lakh have been automated, self-correction mechanisms have been introduced, and unnecessary processes have been eliminated. Additionally, we have integrated databases, reducing the claim processing time to just three days," she said. Dawra further highlighted that,



for the first time, EPFO has established a centralized database. "Our next step is to incorporate UPI into the system. We have received suggestions from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) regarding this integration and have submitted a proposal to EPFO for consideration. After conducting the

necessary testing, we expect to roll out the UPI frontend for EPFO claims by the end of May. This will benefit all members, as they will be able to view their EPFO accounts directly in the UPI interface and make auto-claims. The approval process will be instant if the consumer is eligible, ensuring quick credit to their accounts,"

she stated. She added that stabilizing the centralized database will take around two to three weeks, following which the frontend for UPI integration will be made ready. On pension reforms, Dawra said, "There are 78 lakh pensioners in EPFO, and earlier, only a few banks were notified for pension disbursement. Last year, we sought advice from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and now we have implemented a centralized pension system. Pensioners are benefiting from this as they can now receive their pension from any bank." Highlighting the government's Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme, Dawra said, "The incentive announced in the Budget has been increased from Rs10,000 crore to Rs20,000 crore this time. This historic outlay will benefit everyone--first-time employees, existing workers, etc. The government has also ensured that platform workers receive health coverage, with all their charges covered under the online PMJAY scheme."



# US aerospace giant delivers first of Tejas Mk1A engines, ends 2-year delay

**The delay has affected the deliveries of 83 Tejas Mk1A fighter jets, a fact lamented by Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh on several occasions.**

last month to meet President Donald Trump. The first of the F404-IN20 engines was delivered to HAL on Tuesday, announced Shawn Warren, general manager (combat and trainer engines), GE Aerospace.

"It is an important milestone in our 40-year relationship with HAL and in our efforts to ensure a strong future for India's military by developing next-generation fighters while enhancing the country's defence manufacturing capabilities," Warren said.

The long-awaited engines, part of a \$716 million contract signed in 2021, come after a two-year delay, which had hindered HAL's production timeline and the IAF's fleet expansion plans.

HAL officials said the delivery marks a significant milestone, enabling it to boost the pace of assembly of Tejas jets. Sources within HAL revealed that the company had restructured its production line at its Bengaluru facility to accelerate the integration process.

A new parallel assembly line has been added, aiming to deliver at least 16 Tejas Mk1A fighters annually, fulfilling the IAF's contract for 83 jets by 2028.

"Despite the delay in engine delivery, we

The Tejas Mk-1A, an upgraded variant of the Mk-1, features advanced avionics, improved radar, and enhanced weapon capabilities. The jets will ease the pressure on the IAF, which has been looking to phase out older MiG-21 and Jaguar fleets.

Earlier this year, Air Force chief AP Singh lamented that the IAF was yet to even receive the first batch of 40 Tejas aircraft ordered in 2009-2010. A video also went viral of him telling HAL officials that he had "no confidence" in the state-owned company.

In a statement, GE Aerospace cited supply-chain issues behind the engine delays.

"With no additional engine orders on the horizon, the production line for F404-IN20 was shut down. However, when HAL ordered an additional 99 engines in 2021, our team began the complex task of restarting the F404-IN20 production line, which had been dormant for five years," the statement said.



DELAY IN TEJAS FIGHTER JETS

**New Delhi.** After a two-year delay, US aerospace giant GE has delivered the first of 99 F404-IN20 engines to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A programme. The delays have in turn affected the deliveries of 83 Tejas Mk1A jets, a fact lamented by Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh on several occasions.

The issue was raised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the US

## Portion of Mumbai's Azad Maidan to be officially notified for protests, morchas

**New Delhi.** Following a direction from the Bombay high court, the Maharashtra government said that it would notify an area in the Azad Maidan ground to hold morchas, protests or agitations in South Mumbai.

The area had already been earmarked following an interim direction of the High court. However the court had directed the state to formulate rules and notify the area formally. The petition had been filed by Nariman Point Churchgate Citizens Association and others in 1997 objecting to rallies and demonstrations that were held near Mantralaya and the ruckus created in the neighbourhood. During the hearing on Wednesday, Additional Government Pleader Abhay Patki submitted



before the bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice MS Karnik that the state had finalised the rules under the Maharashtra Police Act and regulations for

controlling the morchas and that in two weeks time the state will notify the same in its official gazette by April 2, 2025. Patki also handed over a draft notification along with an affidavit through which the State apologised for the delay in this notification.

Advocate Shailesh Naidu appearing for the petitioners however sought some time to go through the documents as the petitioners could go through the exact area in Azad Maidan which would have been notified. The ground is used for Cricket practice, there is metro construction also happening amidst the protests being held on a daily basis. Naidu submitted, "All that we are saying that they identify the designated area or else we will have to come back though 28 years experience is a long time."

However the Chief Justice said, "There is no point in keeping a petition from 1997 pending any further. Every time such petitions come up for hearing, we feel guilty that this petition is coming up after 28 years. If you have a problem with the notification then challenge that."

Justice Karnik too said, "Let it get operational. There is no justification for keep this PIL pending." The bench directed that the notification be implemented in letter and spirit.

## Delhi HC issues notice to Parvesh Verma on plea challenging election from New Delhi seat



**NEW DELHI.** The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued notice to PWD minister Parvesh Verma on a plea challenging his election from New Delhi constituency in the 2025 assembly polls. Justice Jasmeet Singh issued the notice and sought response of the Election Commission of India (ECI) and 23 candidates, including AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit, who contested the elections from New Delhi. The plea was filed by a person who claimed that he was not allowed to file nomination to participate in the election process.

The high court listed the matter for further hearing on May 27. In the plea, petitioner Vishvanath Agarwal has sought a direction to declare the election to the New Delhi constituency null and void. He also sought to direct the ECI, which was represented by advocate Ankit Agarwal, to conduct fresh elections on the seat.

The petitioner claimed that despite being present in the returning officer's office before 3 pm on January 17 with all the requisite documents, he was not allowed to submit his nomination form, necessary to participate in the elections. Verma, who got 30,088 votes in the election, defeated former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, his closest rival in the fray, by a margin of 4,089 votes. Dikshit also contested the polls from the same seat. The Delhi Assembly polls were held on February 5 and the results were declared on February 8.

## Ex-ED chief Sanjay Kumar Mishra inducted into PM's Economic Advisory Council as secretary

**First appointed as the ED chief in 2018, Sanjay Kumar Mishra was given multiple extensions by the Centre while leading the agency, with the Supreme Court later declaring the third and final extension 'illegal'.**

**New Delhi.** Sanjay Kumar Mishra, former chief of the Enforcement Directorate, was inducted into the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) on Wednesday. A 1984-batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer from Uttar Pradesh, Mishra was appointed at the rank of Secretary.

The EAC-PM is an independent body tasked with the responsibility of updating and advising the Prime Minister on key economic issues. First appointed as the ED chief in 2018, Mishra was given multiple extensions



by the Centre while leading the agency, with the Supreme Court later declaring the third and final extension "illegal". Mishra oversaw several

high-profile cases, including probes into former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Sharad Pawar, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, current Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, and former West Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee, among others.

The appointment comes following the death of the Council's ex-chairman, Bibek Debroy, on November 1, 2024.

## Insensitive, inhuman: Supreme Court pauses 'grabbing breasts not rape' order

**The Supreme Court, which took suo motu cognisance of the controversial order by the Allahabad High Court, said the judgment showed lack of sensitivity.**

**New Delhi.** The Supreme Court on Wednesday paused a controversial order by the Allahabad High Court that held "grabbing breasts" and "breaking the strings of a girl's pyjamas" don't constitute rape or attempt to rape. The Supreme Court, which took suo motu cognisance of the order, which triggered an outrage, said the judgment showed a lack of sensitivity. The top court noted that the verdict was not at the spur of the moment and there was an application of mind as it was delivered four months after reserving the judgment.

"We are at pains to state that it shows total lack of sensitivity on part of the author of the judgment. It was not even at the spur of the moment and was delivered 4 months after reserving the same. Thus, there was application of mind," a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih said.



"We are usually hesitant to grant stay at this stage. But since the observations in para 21, 24 and 26 are unknown to cannons of law and show an inhuman approach, we stay the observations," the Supreme Court said. The Supreme Court sought the responses of the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh government on the issue. "We issue notice to the Union, the state of Uttar Pradesh and parties before the HC. The learned Attorney General and Solicitor General shall assist the court," the

court said. Interestingly, another Supreme Court bench refused to entertain a PIL filed against the controversial court order on March 24.

### WHAT ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT SAID

The Allahabad High Court's order came while it was hearing a plea by two people who were summoned by a trial court on rape charges. The accused, Pawan and Akash, allegedly grabbed the breasts of an 11-year-old girl. One of them broke the string of her pyjama and attempted to drag her beneath a culvert. Justice Ram Manohar Narayan Mishra ruled that mere grabbing of the breast doesn't constitute rape, but such an offence falls under the ambit of assault or use of criminal force against any woman with the intent to disrobe or compel her to be naked.

# China, India in talks to resume direct flights after 5 years: Chinese diplomat

**The Chinese Consul General has said that the two countries are in discussions to resume direct flights after a nearly five-year hiatus.**

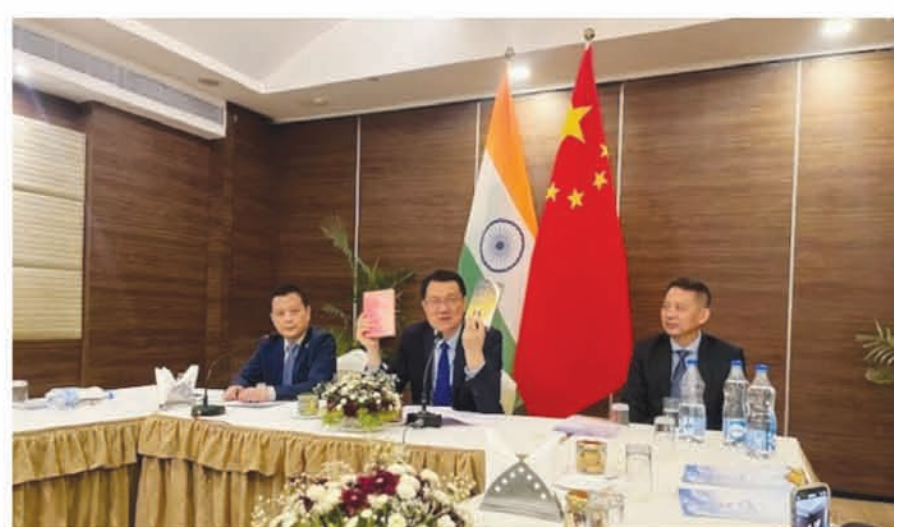
**New Delhi.** Signalling a thaw in China-India relations, Chinese Consul General in Kolkata, Xu Wei, stated that the two countries are in constant talks to resume direct flights, five years after the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent border clashes halted them.

"Before the pandemic, the two countries had launched direct flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Kunming to New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and other

cities, with 50 flights per week. The two sides are currently working on resuming direct flights between the two countries as soon as possible," Wei said at a press conference.

The announcement was first made by India's foreign ministry following top diplomat Vikram Mishra's visit to China in January. In the statement released after Mishra's visit, the foreign ministry said that both countries have agreed "in principle to resume direct air services between the two countries."

On Tuesday, Wei expressed confidence in the ties between the two nations, stating that a string of events will be held to commemorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations while adding that "the spring of China-India relations is arriving". "In another week, on April 1, it will be the day marking 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. This year, China and India will jointly hold some celebrations. We are happy to see



that the spring of China-India relations is arriving," he said. "We are willing to take the 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations as an opportunity to work with India to sum up past experience, forge a path forward, and advance China-India relations on the

track of sound and stable development," Wei added. According to sources, Chinese authorities are also hoping that India will give relaxation in the visa policy to Chinese people. They are also hopeful that trade between the two countries will go up.

## Chhattisgarh Chief Minister vows tougher law to curb religious conversions

**Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that a more stringent law to prevent religious conversions will soon be implemented in the state, a week after the BJP-led government was cornered by its own legislators in the state assembly over the issue.**



**New Delhi.** Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Wednesday announced that a stricter law to curb religious conversions will soon be introduced in the state, a week after the BJP-led government faced tough questions in the state assembly on the issue.

Confirming that a more stringent anti-conversion law is in the works, Chief Minister Sai said, "Several states have tightened their laws, and the Chhattisgarh government will also introduce a stricter law against religious conversion soon. The government is considering it and will bring a strict law."

Referring to the existing Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Act, 1968, which is currently used to address cases of forced conversions, Sai further stated, "Action is being taken wherever complaints of religious conversion arise. There is already a law against it, but it will be made stricter."

**-Chhattisgarh plans to amend existing anti-conversion law soon**  
**-Vishnu Deo Sai says stricter law on religious conversions is under consideration**  
**-BJP MLA alleges prayer meetings used for forced conversions**

A week back, following the showdown in the budget session of the Chhattisgarh Assembly over religious conversions, the state Home Minister Vijay Sharma had also assured that the government would be bringing in a more stringent law to deal with the issue.

Sharma's response came after BJP MLA Ajay Chandrakar alleged on the floor of the Assembly that

"changai sabhas" (prayer meetings) were being conducted across the state to "lure innocent, helpless and poor people with various kinds of temptations to mislead and convert them". Chandrakar further claimed that several NGOs were receiving funds from foreign countries, with most of these institutions operating out of the Chief Minister's home constituency in Jashpur. He added that the highest number of cases had been reported from this area.

"There are many such NGOs in the state, which are registered on religious basis and are also getting funds from abroad. Nine out of 19 registered institutions in Bastar district and 15 out of 18 institutions in Jashpur district are being run by Christian missionaries," said the former state minister.

In his reply, the Home Minister informed the Assembly that the state government and its agencies are closely monitoring 153 NGOs receiving foreign funds.

## NEWS BOX

## Trump signs order seeking to overhaul US elections, including requiring proof of citizenship

NEW YORK. President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed a sweeping executive action to overhaul elections in the U.S., including requiring documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections and demanding that all ballots be received by Election Day. The order says the U.S. has failed "to enforce basic and necessary election protections" and calls on states to work with federal agencies to share voter lists and prosecute election crimes. It threatens to pull federal funding from states where election officials don't comply.

The move, which is likely to face swift challenges because states have broad authority to set their own election rules, is consistent with Trump's long history of railing against election processes. He often claims elections are being rigged, even before the results are known, and has waged battles against certain voting methods since he lost the 2020 election to Democrat Joe Biden and falsely blamed it on widespread fraud. Trump has focused particularly on mail voting, arguing without evidence that it's insecure and invites fraud even as he has shifted his position on the issue given its popularity with voters, including Republicans. While fraud occurs, it's rare, limited in scope and gets prosecuted. The order's documentary proof of citizenship requirement signals that the president is not waiting for congressional Republicans to pass their long-anticipated Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, or SAVE Act, which has aimed to do the same thing. Republicans have defended that measure as necessary to restore public confidence in elections. Voting in federal elections by noncitizens is already illegal and can result in felony charges and deportation. Voting rights groups have expressed concerns that the requirement could disenfranchise people. An estimated 9% of U.S. citizens of voting age, or 21.3 million people, do not have proof of citizenship readily available, according to a 2023 report by the Brennan Center for Justice and other groups. There are also concerns that married women who have changed their names will encounter trouble when trying to register because their birth certificates list their maiden names.

## Republicans eye actions against the courts and judges as Trump rails against rulings

WASHINGTON. Angry over the crush of court rulings against the Trump administration, Republicans in Congress are trying to slap back at the federal judiciary with proposals to limit the reach of its rulings, cut funding and even impeach judges, tightening the GOP's grip on government.

House GOP leaders say all options are under consideration as they rush to rein in judges who are halting President Donald Trump's actions at a rapid pace. In many cases, the courts are questioning whether the firings of federal workers, freezing of federal funds and shuttering of long-running federal offices are unlawful actions by the executive branch and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. In perhaps the most high-profile case, Judge James E. Boasberg ordered plane loads of deported immigrants to be turned around, raising the ire of Trump, who called for his impeachment, and billionaire Musk, who is funneling campaign cash to House Republicans backing impeachment efforts. The president calls the judges "lunatics." House Speaker Mike Johnson said Tuesday that "desperate times call for desperate measures" without mentioning impeachment. "We do have authority over the federal courts, as you know," the Republican speaker said. "We can eliminate an entire district court. We have power of funding over the courts, and all these other things." Not yet 100 days into the new administration, the unusual attack on the federal judiciary is the start of what is expected to be a protracted battle between the co-equal branches of government, unmatched in modern memory. As the White House tests the judiciary, trying to bend it to Trump's demands, the Congress, controlled by the president's own Republican Party, appears ready to back him up.

## Columbia student protester can't be detained for now as she fights deportation, judge rules

NEW YORK. A Columbia University student from South Korea who is facing potential deportation for her involvement in a pro-Palestinian protest can't be taken into immigration detention for now, a federal judge ruled Tuesday. The order marks at least a temporary reprieve for Yunseo Chung, and a setback for the Trump administration's efforts to throw noncitizens out of the country for participating in campus protests. The students say the government is targeting them for advocating for Palestinian rights. "As of today, Yunseo Chung no longer has to fear and live in fear of ICE coming to her doorstep and abducting her in the night," Chung attorney Ramzi Kassem said after court, referring to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. As a Manhattan federal judge considered Chung's case Tuesday, another federal jurist in Syracuse considered the case of Cornell University doctoral student Momodou Taal. He also faces potential deportation after being at a protest. In Chung's case, U.S. District Judge Naomi Reice Buchwald said government lawyers have not yet laid out enough facts about their claims to detain the student while her case plays out. Chung, 21, came to the U.S. at age 7 and later attained legal permanent residency, known colloquially as a green card.

# Taiwan deports Chinese woman for supporting Beijing's plans to conquer state

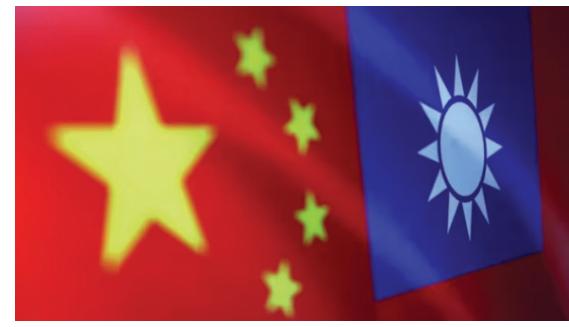
**Deported Liu Zhenya was influencer in Taiwan, praised Beijing's plans to take over island**

**Liu denied charges, said leaving "out of respect for Taiwanese law"**

**Liu is married to Taiwanese man and have three kids, boarded plane alone**

Taipei. Taiwan on Tuesday deported a Chinese woman back to her country after she posted praise online for Beijing's ambitions to conquer the self-governing island democracy by force. China, which considers the island a wayward province that split from it amid the civil war in 1949, has been vastly expanding its navy and missile force with an eye to bringing Taiwan quickly to heel or blockading the high-tech island, with potentially dire

effects on the global economy. Liu Zhenya, a full-time influencer who posts under "Yaya in Taiwan," was charged with violating rules governing Chinese living in Taiwan who are "considered a threat to the national or social stability," according to the Interior Ministry. At a news conference called minutes before her flight to China, Liu repeated her denials of the charges, saying she was leaving "out of respect for Taiwanese law," based on her lawyers' advice. "It's not because I did anything wrong," she said. The move by the strongly pro-independence administration of Taiwan's President William Lai Ching-te seemingly reflects a harder line against those who maintain Taiwanese passports or permanent residency, while also cheering China's plans to bring the island under its control. Lai has in recent weeks repeatedly warned of China using spies and propaganda, especially internet influencers, as well as military intimidation. Earlier in



the day, Liu protested outside Taiwan government offices, while trying to speak to an immigration officer. She was unsuccessful. About 50 people protested her presence while chanting: "Have a good trip home," and "Get yourself back to China." Police were present but no violence broke out.

The vast majority of Taiwanese reject China's demands and favour the current state of de facto independence, despite China's threats.

Liu, who is married to a Taiwanese man and has three children, appeared to board the plane alone. The couple haven't revealed their future plans. Under the regulations, she will have to wait five years to reapply for a Taiwan residency permit.

At least two other Chinese women with Taiwanese husbands are currently under investigation as the island moves to reinstate military trials and crack down on the recruitment of serving members of Taiwan's military as spies. Taiwan has also been boosting its defences with high-tech weapon systems from the U.S. and locally developed munitions, submarines and warplanes. Such a conflict could draw in the U.S., which is required under American law to respond to Chinese actions against the island. The two foes are divided by the 180-kilometre (110-mile)-wide Taiwan Strait.

## Trump accuses Putin of dragging ceasefire, Ukraine spots Russia's 'manipulation'

**Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy ganged up on Vladimir Putin hours after the White House announced that both Russia and Ukraine have**

**agreed to pause their attacks in the Black Sea.**

world. In a rare shift since beginning his second term in the White House, US President Donald Trump has now expressed the belief that Vladimir Putin is deliberately stalling efforts to finalise a ceasefire agreement with Ukraine, despite Washington's ongoing mediation. "I think that Russia wants to see an end to it, but it could be they're dragging their feet," Trump said in his interview with Newsmax. "I just want to see it stop. I also don't want to pay," Trump said. Trump's remarks came hours after the White House announced that both Russia and Ukraine have agreed to pause their

attacks in the Black Sea and begin negotiating terms for a broader ceasefire protecting energy infrastructure. The Kremlin also confirmed the agreement but noted



that it will take effect only when restrictions and Western sanctions on Russia are lifted. Russia also denied transferring the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant to Ukraine. Meanwhile, Zelenskyy accused Russia of 'manipulating' ceasefire agreements reached during talks between delegations from Moscow and Washington in Saudi Arabia. "Unfortunately, right on the day of the talks, we see how the

Russians have already started to manipulate. They are already trying to distort the agreements and actually deceive our mediators and the whole world," Zelenskyy said in a video address on Tuesday. "There are absolutely clear statements published by the White House. Everyone can see what is stated there. And there is something that the Kremlin is lying about again: that supposedly silence in the Black Sea depends on the issue of sanctions and that supposedly the date for the start of 'silence' on energy is March 18. Moscow always lies. And it depends on the world - on everyone who really needs peace - whether they will allow Moscow to lie again," he added. Zelenskyy also urged Western countries to impose further sanctions on Russia if the agreements reached fail. "Russia's stance is prolonging the conflict in Ukraine and that further sanctions and pressure should be imposed on Moscow should the agreements reached fail," the Ukrainian President said.

## Japan awards longest-serving death row inmate \$1.4 million

**The payout represents 12,500 yen (\$83) for each day of the more than four decades that Iwao Hakamada spent in detention. It is a record for compensation of this kind, Japanese media said.**

TOKYO. A Japanese man wrongly convicted of murder who was the world's longest-serving death row inmate has been awarded \$1.4 million in compensation, an official said Tuesday. The payout represents 12,500 yen (\$83) for each day of the more than four decades that Iwao Hakamada spent in detention, most of it on death row when each day could have been his last. It is a record for compensation of this kind, Japanese media said. The former boxer, now 89, was exonerated last year of a 1966 quadruple murder



after a tireless campaign by his sister and others. The case sparked scrutiny of the justice system in Japan, where gaining a retrial is notoriously hard and death row inmates are often informed of their impending death just a few hours before they are hanged. The Shizuoka District Court, in a decision dated Monday, said that "the claimant shall be granted 217,362,500 yen (\$1.44 million)," a court spokesman told AFP. The same court ruled in September that Hakamada was not guilty in a retrial

and that police had tampered with evidence. Hakamada had suffered "inhumane interrogations meant to force a statement (confession)" that he later withdrew, the court said at the time. Hakamada's legal team said the money falls short of the pain he suffered between his 1966 arrest and his release in 2014, when he was granted a retrial. "I think the fact that he will receive it... compensates him a little bit for all the hardship," lawyer Hideyo Ogawa told a press conference. "But in light of the hardship and suffering of the past 47 or 48 years, and given his current situation, I think it shows that the state has made mistakes that cannot be atoned for with 200 million yen," he said. Decades of detention -- with the threat of execution constantly looming -- took a major toll on Hakamada's mental health, his lawyers have said, describing him as.

## Oscar-winning Palestinian director detained, kicked, punched by Israeli soldiers

Jerusalem. Only a few weeks ago, Hamdan Ballal stood on a stage in Los Angeles accepting an Oscar for the film "No Other Land," a documentary depicting his West Bank village's struggle against Israel's occupation. On Tuesday, Ballal - his face bruised and clothes still spotted with blood - recounted to The Associated Press how he was heavily beaten by an Israeli settler and soldiers the night before. The settler, he said, kicked his head "like a football" during a settler attack on his village. The soldiers then detained him and two other Palestinians. Ballal said he was kept blindfolded for more than 20 hours, sitting on the floor under a blasting air conditioner. The soldiers kicked, punched or hit him with a stick whenever they came on their guard shifts, he said. Ballal doesn't speak Hebrew, but he said he heard them saying his name and the word "Oscar." "I realised they were attacking me specifically," he said in an interview at a West Bank hospital after his release Tuesday. "When they say

'Oscar', you understand. When they say your name, you understand." The Israeli military did not immediately respond to the claims that Ballal was beaten by soldiers. The settler whom Ballal identified as his attacker, Shem Tov Luski - who has threatened Ballal in the past - denied he or the soldiers beat him and told the AP that he and other Palestinians in the village had thrown stones at his car. He said he didn't know Ballal was an Oscar winner. The Israeli military said Monday it had detained three Palestinians suspected of hurling rocks as well as one Israeli civilian, who was soon released. Ballal denied throwing stones.

The attack took place Monday night in the southern West Bank village of Susiya. It's part of the Masafer Yatta region featured in "No Other Land," which depicts the Palestinian residents' attempts to fend off settler attacks and the military's plans to

demolish their homes. At around sunset, as residents were ending their daylong Ramadan fast, roughly two dozen Jewish settlers along with police entered the



village, throwing stones at houses and breaking property, witnesses say. Around 30 soldiers arrived soon after. Jewish Israelis in an activist group supporting the villagers showed video of themselves also being attacked, with settlers hitting their car with sticks and stones. Ballal said he filmed some of the damage caused by the settlers.

Then he went to his own home and locked it, with his wife and three young children inside.

"I told myself if they will attack me, if they kill me, I will protect my family," he said. Ballal said Luski approached with two soldiers. He said Luski hit him on the head, knocked him to the ground and kept kicking and punching him in the head. At the same time, one soldier hit him on the legs with his gun butt, while the other pointed his weapon at him, he said. Lamia Ballal, the director's wife, said she was huddling inside with their children and heard him screaming, "I'm dying!"

Luski told the AP that he and other settlers had come to the village to help a fellow settler who said he was being attacked by Palestinian stone-throwers. He said dozens of masked Palestinians attacked his car with stones, including Ballal. "He broke my window, threw a stone at my chest," he said.



Security alleged Chung engaged in concerning conduct, including when she was previously arrested by police during a protest at Barnard College that DHS termed "pro-Hamas." Chung has not yet been arrested by federal officials. Immigration agents made multiple visits to her residences looking for her. US District Judge Naomi Reice Buchwald on Tuesday issued a temporary restraining order against the government that prevents Chung from being detained, court records showed. Actions against Chung form part of a pattern of government efforts against pro-Palestinian voices critical of Israel's military assault on Gaza, her lawsuit said. Columbia protester Mahmoud Khalil, who was arrested this month and is legally challenging his detention, is also a lawful permanent resident. Trump, without evidence, accused Khalil of supporting Hamas, which Khalil denies. Badar Khan Suri, an Indian student at Georgetown University, was detained last week. A federal judge barred Suri's deportation.

US officials have asked Cornell University student Momodou Taal to turn himself in, his attorneys say, adding his visa was being revoked.

## NEWS BOX

## Improved' Shreyas Iyer ready to play all formats for India: Sourav Ganguly

**New Delhi.** Former national captain Sourav Ganguly said that Shreyas Iyer has grown by leaps and bounds, making him the 'most improved batter' in the last 12 months. On Tuesday, March 25, Iyer played a match-winning knock in Punjab Kings' (PBKS) 11-run win over Gujarat Titans (GT) at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. Iyer scored an unbeaten 97 off 42 balls, laced with five fours and nine sixes. After posting a challenging target of 244 for the Titans to chase down, the Kings restricted their opponent to 232 for five. Ganguly reckoned that the 30-year-old Iyer has upped his game enough to play all three formats for India. Taking to X, Ganguly, also a former BCCI president, wrote, "Shreyas Iyer the most improved batsman in last 1 yr. ready for all formats. Great to see his improvement



after a few issues on length." Shreyas has been a regular part of India's ODI setup of late, but has struggled to hold on to his spot in Tests and T20s. Shreyas was also the top run-scorer in India's campaign in the Champions Trophy where the Men in Blue won after beating New Zealand in the final. 'Ecstatic, to be honest' Meanwhile, Shreyas' joy knew no bounds after his masterful knock against the Titans. After hitting Kagiso Rabada for a four down the ground on his very first ball, Shreyas didn't look back. "Ecstatic, to be honest. Getting 97\* in the first match is always the icing on the cake. No better feeling to be honest. It was important for me to go ahead and adapt. I got four off the first ball, and that gave an immense boost," Shreyas said in the post-match presentation ceremony. Shreyas will be looking to continue his impressive form when the Kings lock horns with Rishabh Pant's Lucknow Super Giants on April 1 at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow.

## IPL 2025: Fan rants about quality of Hindi commentary, Harbhajan Singh responds

**New Delhi.** Former Indian cricketer Harbhajan Singh responded to a fan who expressed concerns about the quality of Hindi commentary in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025. Harbhajan, one of the Hindi commentators in the tournament, is joined by Virender Sehwag, Navjot Singh Sidhu, Shikhar Dhawan, Suresh Raina, Robin Uthappa, Ambati Rayudu, and others. The fan pointed out that, in the past, Hindi commentary by the likes of Maninder Singh and Arun Lal was more informative. However, the current commentators tend to focus on sarcastic one-liners, which makes it difficult for viewers to fully connect with the game. Harbhajan took the feedback positively and promised to improve the quality of Hindi commentary moving



forward. Replying to the complaint, Harbhajan wrote, "Thank you for the input. We will work on it." Mohammad Kaif, Piyush Chawla, RP Singh, Pragnan Ojha, Sanjay Manjrekar, Sanjay Bangar, Varun Aaron, Sunil Gavaskar, Ajay Jadeja, Jatin Sapru, Anant Tyagi, Saba Karim, Deep Dasgupta, Aakash Chopra are the others in the Hindi commentary panel.

The IPL, in the meantime, has got off to a splendid start with as many as 119 sixes being hit in the first five matches. On Tuesday, the Gujarat Giants (GG) and Punjab Kings (PBKS) were involved in a closely-fought affair at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. The Kings, featuring a powerhouse lineup of five all-rounders, set a formidable total of 243/5 in their first innings. They then held their ground, successfully defending the target by limiting Shubman Gill's GT to 11 runs short.

Captain Shreyas Iyer led with a stellar batting performance, while coach Ponting's tactical brilliance played a key role in keeping Punjab's defense tight, especially against the explosive Jos Buttler in the second innings.

The IPL now moves to Guwahati where Ajinkya Rahane's Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) will be up against Rajasthan Royals (RR) on Wednesday, March 26 at the Barsapara Stadium.

## IPL 2025 Early impressions: Punjab Kings out for blood with army of all-rounders

**New Delhi.** Ricky Ponting's Punjab Kings gave a tremendous account of themselves in the opening match of the Indian Premier League. Punjab, a perennial struggler in the tournament, slammed their way to a massive total of 243 runs, which they later defended, owing to a tactical masterclass from their coach. Punjab's eternal struggle is related to their constant chopping and changing of staff and management. In the 2024 season, Punjab handed the reins of captaincy to Shikhar Dhawan. They were forced to drop Dhawan midway through the season due to a shoulder injury, from which he mysteriously did not recover for the rest of the season. Sam Curran was handed the reins from Dhawan but was let go before the mega-auction in 2024. Punjab, once again with the biggest purse, rebuilt once again under the tutelage of Ponting - one of the strongest characters in the history of world cricket. And that character showed in the very first match of the tournament when they stamped their authority on Gujarat Titans on Tuesday.

## Army of All-Rounders

The success in the first game was directly related to a tactical call, which many called out during the auction time - the buying of a host of all-rounders in the mega-auction.

With the emergence of the Impact Player rule, the use of multi-dimensional players in the tournament has been minimised. Teams now use players with more specialisations to get the best out of their batting/bowling unit. However, in Punjab's case, Ponting bought all-rounders with nearly matching skill sets. The likes of Azmatullah Omarzai, Marcus Stoinis, Marco Jansen, and Glenn Maxwell are tremendous with both bat and ball. As a unit, there is minimal bias between batting and bowling in the Punjab side, which showed in the first game of the tournament. Ponting used the army of all-rounders as insurance. If one failed, the other would rise up to the occasion. With the bat, they had ample firepower on the night. Even though their all-rounder army failed, two specialists, Shreyas Iyer and Shashank Singh, lit up the stage for the side. But once again, do not discount the insurance that the all-rounders provided, which allowed the players to play with intent from the very first ball.

## Ricky Ponting's Tactical Calls

In the second innings of the match, things seemed to have gone a little haywire for Punjab as they conceded 169 runs in the first

14 overs of their match. Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler were taking the bowlers to town, and GT were looking well set to chase the improbable target of 244 runs.

Ponting took a massive call to field his Impact Player late in the game. He had kept himself



flexible in introducing a player depending on the flow of the game, a cover, once again given by the insurance of the all-rounders, who had already bowled at least one over by then. It was at this juncture that Ponting brought in Vijaykumar Vyshak - the former Royal Challengers Bangalore pacer. Vyshak came in with a single plan: bowl wide, and force the batters to hit towards the longer side of the pitch. Shreyas Iyer later revealed

that it was Arshdeep Singh who formulated the plan on the pitch, to restrict the GT batters. "Arshdeep played an important role in that (the wide yorker plan). He came in and said the ball is actually reversing a bit, so the saliva on the ball is helping the bowlers a bit, I guess. He got Sai, and that changed the momentum for us. Then he came in and said let's start the wide yorkers earlier than trying it too late," Shreyas Iyer said after the match.

"He (Vyshak) is a funny character. He has got traits in him where he comes in with the right attitude. He bowled the yorkers straightaway. Kept his calm and composure," Shreyas added on Vijaykumar Vyshak. Brave Brand of Cricket Before the start of the tournament, PBKS coach Ponting had vowed a brave brand of cricket this season - something that the team has never been associated with before. "We are here to play a really dynamic and entertaining brand of cricket. And I know that we have got the players who can do that. We don't need to be afraid of anything. We can build a great culture in this team when things get underway. I can't wait for the first game to come around."

## D Gukesh draws from MS Dhoni: Chess, pressure, and the art of staying cool

**New Delhi.** World Champion D Gukesh bears a striking resemblance to MS Dhoni. The Grandmaster, the youngest world champion, remains a picture of calmness when seated across the 64 squares. Nothing unsettles him. Even the world's best, sitting opposite and plotting his downfall, fail to elicit the slightest emotion from him while he is at work. Sound familiar? D Gukesh himself credits MS Dhoni as a major inspiration for his approach to handling pressure in chess. From being a fan of the World Cup-winning former India captain to drawing life lessons from the Chennai Super Kings legend, Gukesh has learnt invaluable lessons from his 'idol'. Speaking at a special interaction with Chennai Super Kings from the MA Chidambaram Stadium, Gukesh spoke about the impact MS Dhoni has had on him and his game.

"MS Dhoni is one sportsperson I really admire. To this day, he is the one. How he



doesn't react to anything that happens. How he is able to calmly think in any situation. In the highest-pressure moments, he is able to think with a clear mind. I grew up watching that. It felt like I had to emulate it in my own craft," he said.

"In that sense, he really inspired me. I don't react to things much. I am good at handling pressure. In that way, he has really helped me in my career. Not only as an inspiration but in my game as well," he added. TAKING

## LESSONS FROM DHONI TO CHESS

Gukesh has displayed composure and calmness beyond his years-traits that have left the chess world in awe.

The 18-year-old from Chennai demonstrated his ability to handle pressure in the World Championship match against Ding Liren last year. After losing the first game, Gukesh fought back and pushed Liren to the limit, ultimately outclassing him in the final game.

In the decisive game of the 2024 FIDE World Championship, Gukesh showcased remarkable resilience against reigning champion Ding Liren. With the match finely poised at 6.5-6.5, the tension was palpable. However, Gukesh remained unfazed, mirroring MS Dhoni's signature calmness under pressure. As the game progressed, Ding, under immense strain, committed a critical error, allowing Gukesh to capitalise and secure victory.

## Explained: How Shreyas Iyer's Selfless Masterclass Helped Punjab Kings Beat Gujarat Titans

**New Delhi.** In a high-octane IPL 2025 clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Punjab Kings (PBKS) edged past Gujarat Titans (GT) by 11 runs in a nail-biting encounter. The highlight of the match was an extraordinary display of selflessness by PBKS skipper Shreyas Iyer, who, despite being on the brink of a century at 97\*, instructed Shashank Singh to continue attacking instead of rotating the strike. This bold decision resulted in PBKS amassing a match-winning total of 243/5, proving to be the turning point of the game. With one over left in PBKS' innings, Shreyas Iyer was stranded on 97\*, and all eyes were on him to complete a well-deserved century. However, rather than prioritizing his personal milestone, Iyer made a remarkable call. He urged Shashank Singh, who was on strike, to keep going for big shots against Mohammed Siraj rather than look for a single to get him back on strike. Shashank obliged with a blistering assault, scoring 23 runs in the last over, including five boundaries. PBKS ended with a formidable 243/5, putting immense pressure

on Gujarat Titans. Despite Iyer missing out on his century, his decision ultimately played a crucial role in securing the win. Last Over Blitz: Shashank Singh Takes Charge The final over saw Punjab Kings tearing into



Siraj's bowling, with Shashank Singh unleashing his power-hitting ability. The sequence of deliveries read: 19.1: FOUR - Shashank ramped a short ball over short third man. 19.2: Two runs - Flicked wide of deep mid-wicket. 19.3: FOUR - Sliced drive past cover. 19.4: FOUR - Cut hard past

sweeper cover. 19.5: WIDE - A wayward delivery down leg. 19.5: FOUR - Flicked past deep square-leg. 19.6: FOUR - Clever ramp over third man to finish the innings. PBKS had capitalized on the final over, taking their total to a daunting 243, a score that proved to be just out of reach for Gujarat Titans. Shashank Singh's Tribute to Iyer's Leadership Post-match, Shashank Singh lavished praise on his captain for putting the team ahead of personal accolades. "It takes a lot of heart and courage to say this because hundreds don't come easily in T20s, especially in the IPL. Shreyas came to me and said, 'Shashank, don't worry about my 100. Just go and hit every ball for a boundary or a six.' That gave me even more confidence." Shashank's innings of 44\* off just 16 balls (6 fours, 2 sixes) provided PBKS with the late flourish that ultimately made the difference. His partnership with Iyer yielded 81 runs in just five overs, setting GT a daunting target of 244.

highest total in IPL history of 286/6. Rajasthan posted a good reply in the second innings, scoring 242/6 in their allotted 20 overs. However, they might be tempted to make some changes in their bowling department, having the options of Kumar Kartikeya, Wanindu Hasaranga and Kwena Maphaka in their squad. But given that it's still early days in the tournament, Rajasthan might not go for an immediate knee-jerk reaction and might field in the same playing XI. Hence, it could well be possible that both teams go into the game with an unchanged team. Rajasthan Royals Predicted XI - Yashasvi Jaiswal, Riyan Parag (c), Nitish Rana, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Jofra Archer, Maheesh Theekshana, Tushar Deshpande, Sandeep Sharma, Fazalhaq Farooqi Impact Player - Sanju Samson Rajasthan Royals Squad: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubham Dubey, Nitish Rana, Riyan Parag (c), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Shimron Hetmyer, Jofra Archer, Maheesh Theekshana, Tushar Deshpande, Sandeep Sharma, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Sanju Samson, Kunal Singh Rathore, Akash Madhwal.

## Should've looked for boundaries instead of just sixes against Vyshak: Sai Kishore

- After being put in to bat first, Punjab posted a massive score of 243/5
- In reply, Gujarat came close to winning and scored 232/5 in their 20 overs
- Vijaykumar Vyshak bowled an economical spell of 0/28 in three overs

**New Delhi.** Gujarat Titans all-rounder R Sai Kishore feels that their batters could've tried hitting more boundaries against Vijaykumar

Vyshak in their first game of the Indian Premier League 2025 (IPL 2025) against Punjab Kings (PBKS). Gujarat lost the match by 11 runs as they were restricted to 232/5 in their allotted 20 overs chasing a massive target of 244. The game was set up nicely with Gujarat needing 75 runs from last six overs. However, Vijaykumar Vyshak bowled a brilliant spell in the death overs, giving just ten runs away in his first two overs, which brought the equation down to 57 runs needed from the last three overs. He ended up giving away 18 runs in his last over to finish with figures of 0/28 in three overs.

His spell proved to be the game-changing factor as Punjab eventually won the match by 11 runs. Following Gujarat's loss, R Sai Kishore felt that they could've looked to hit more boundaries than just sixes against Vyshak to get closer to the target. "I think for the runs we gave, I think we came back very strong with the batting. I think we were on



course with Sai and Buttler going very well. I think in the end, in the last, I think 5 of overs. To be honest, Vyshak bowled brilliantly. I think all credit to Vyshak for the way he executed his yorkers. To be fair, I think those balls, it's very easy for me to say, but I think we could have tried to hit more boundaries

than just looking for sixes. I think that is a learning going forward, and we will do that," said Sai Kishore in the post-match press conference. Furthermore, the all-rounder commended the team for staying in the game till the last ball and losing by just 11 runs. Shreyas Iyer's 97 guides Punjab to 243. "We were on course in such games, I think it is very easy to just get away from the game pretty quickly, like 150 or 160. The best part was that we still lost the game only by 12 runs. It's a long tournament, it's a 14-game tournament. So I think competing well is very important. In this kind of a run chase to only fall short by 12 runs was very good. So that is the positive, but still saying that we should have won this game," he added. Thanks to their fight back, Gujarat managed to save their net run rate from getting affected massively as they're currently at -0.550. Batting efforts from Sai Sudharsan (74 off 41), Jos Buttler (54 off 33), Shubman Gill (33 off 14) and Sherfane Rutherford (46 off 28) kept them in the hunt.





# Neha Kakkar

## Breaks Down After Arriving 3 Hours Late In Melbourne Show; Crowd Shouts 'Go Back'

A video of Neha Kakkar breaking down in tears during her Melbourne concert has gone viral on Reddit. The singer, who arrived three hours late, apologized profusely to the crowd, but her emotional breakdown did not go down well with everyone. In the now-viral clip, Neha can be seen apologising to her fans. Fighting back tears, she said, "Guys, you are really sweet! You have been patient. Itni der se aap log wait kar rahe ho. I hate it, maine life mein kabhi kisi ko wait nahi karwaya hai. Aap itni der se wait kar rahe ho, I'm so sorry! It means a lot to me. I will remember this evening forever. Aaj aap log mere liye itna kimiti time nikaal kar aaye ho. I will make sure that I will make you all dance." While some members of the audience cheered and clapped to console her, others were clearly frustrated. The video captured angry voices from the crowd, with some



shouting, "Go back! Rest in your hotel." One man was heard saying, "This is not India, you're in Australia." Another added, "We have been waiting for three hours." A third voice mocked her by saying, "Very good acting! This is not Indian Idol. You're not performing with kids."

Prior to the Melbourne concert, Neha had performed in Sydney and shared glimpses of the event on her Instagram. She wrote, "Thank you #Sydney Tonight #Melbourne #NehaKakkarLive." Despite the backlash, Neha's loyal fans came to her defence on social media. One fan commented on her Instagram post, "Your voice, your energy, your presence, everything is just next level! You are the best ma'am." Another added, "The sweetest human ever ♥ ♥ It was an absolute privilege and dream to perform with you."

Neha recently celebrated Women's Day with close friends, including Dhanashree Verma and her sister Sonu Kakkar. The group enjoyed a lively celebration, dancing after cutting a cake. Dhanashree shared pictures from the celebration with the caption, "Only love, kindness, and respect. Always. Gratitude."

### Tamannaah Bhatia Seeks Blessings At Sri Peddamma Thalli Temple In Hyderabad Ahead of Odela 2 Release



Actress Tamannaah Bhatia is gearing up for the release of her upcoming supernatural thriller film 'Odela 2', which will hit the big screens in April. Ahead of the film's release, the actress was seen arriving at the Sri Peddamma Thalli Temple at Jubilee Hills in Hyderabad, to seek blessings. Tamannaah looked radiant as she was spotted by the paparazzi inside the temple premises. Tamannaah Bhatia was spotted by the paparazzi as she visited Sri Peddamma Thalli Temple in Hyderabad on Tuesday. After offering her prayers, the actress was seen exiting the temple premises. But before that, she politely posed for the photographers. She looked beautiful in a mustard yellow ethnic suit over which she draped a red and golden shawl. She tied her hair back in a neat bun adorned with gajra, and accessorized with huge earrings that complemented her ethnic look. She was seen holding a set of bangles in her hands. Check out the video below!

Tamannaah Bhatia jetted off to Hyderabad on March 22 for the promotions of Odela 2. She shared a picture from the airport and wrote, "Ready to be HYD bound for Odela 2." She was seen posing near a huge glass partition overlooking the tarmac, enjoying her coffee and the bright sunshine. Meanwhile, the makers also announced the release date of the film a few days ago, and dropped a new intense poster from the project. In the poster, Tamannaah, who plays a Shiva devotee in the film, is seen intently gazing into the camera with blood splattered across her face. "A presence to be felt #Odela2 on April 17th," she wrote, while announcing the release date. Directed by Ashok Teja, Odela 2 stars Tamannaah Bhatia and is produced under the Sampath Nandi Teamworks banner in collaboration with D Madhu of Madhu Creations. The film's ensemble cast includes Hebah Patel, Vasishtha N Simha, Surender Reddy, Naga Mahesh, Vuva, Vamshi, Bhupal, Gagan Vihari, and Pooja Reddy. With music composed by Kantara fame Ajaneesh Loknath and cinematography by Soundar Rajan S, the film is gearing up for a pan-India release on April 17th, 2025.

### Guru Randhawa Is All Set To Embark On A New Journey With Warner Music India



Guru Randhawa, known for his chart-topping hits like Lahore, Ishare Tere, Slowly Slowly and Tere Te, recently ventured into a partnership with Warner Music India, which is loved for its music scene in India. The singer is all set to release his first studio album since 2023. Together, with Warner Music India, Guru, who has more than eight million monthly listeners on Spotify and other streaming platforms, marked the beginning of an exciting project – his upcoming album, Without Prejudice. Additionally, Guru will also work with a new management team led by Gurjot Singh, founder of BeingU Studios. On Instagram, Guru Randhawa posted a picture to officially announce his partnership with Warner Music India for his new project, Without Prejudice. The musician is all set to reaffirm his place as a global music force with his upcoming studio album, which will feature nine electrifying tracks—Snapback, Sirra, New Age, Qatal, From Ages, Jaaneman, Kithe Vasde Ne, Surrey Connection and Gallan Battan.

All the songs will seamlessly blend Afropop and Indian pop, taking his creative vision to the next level. The first single from the album, Gallan Battan, alongside its music video, will be released on March 28. The album will also feature eminent artists like Kiran Bajwa, Zehr Vibe, NSeeB, Bob, B Randhawa and Prem Lata.

Talking about his new musical journey, Guru stated in a new conversation, "This album represents evolution—not just mine, but of the music I want to create and the audiences I want to connect with. Without Prejudice is about breaking barriers and embracing fresh sounds that speak to a global audience while staying true to my roots. With Warner Music India by my side, I'm thrilled to embark on this journey and bring something truly special to my fans," reported Koimoi. Jay Mehta, Managing Director, Warner Music India & SAARC, also talked about the collaboration between Guru and the music company. "Guru Randhawa has been instrumental in bringing Punjabi music to a global stage, and this album marks an exciting new phase in his journey. At Warner Music India, we're committed to supporting his artistic vision while helping him build a well-rounded brand—spanning music, live experiences, fan engagement, and more. We're thrilled to partner with him as he explores new creative avenues and deepens his connection with audiences worldwide," he said.

# Rasha Thadani

## 'Can't Live Without' New Friend Aaman Devgn

Rasha Thadani, daughter of actress Raveena Tandon, made her Bollywood debut with the period drama film Azaad opposite Aaman Devgn, nephew of Ajay Devgn. Helmed by Abhishek Kapoor, the film received decent reviews from audiences and critics alike. Now, as the film recently began its OTT journey on Netflix, one of Rasha's friends has cheered for the start kid for her first step in showbiz. Taking to Instagram, Rasha's friend shared a picture of a scene from the film featuring the actress and wrote, "Congratulations star @rashathadani." The

star Aaman. She revealed that while she initially thought she wouldn't get along with him they have now become inseparable. "Me and Aaman would have little fights almost every other day. Over small things like food. He would always try and eat my dodha," she said. When asked about her first impression of Aaman, she stated, "He came and I was like, 'We're not going to get along.'" But it's a funny story today; we make jokes and laugh about it. But now we're inseparable. "I can't live without him."

Recently, on Rasha's 20th birthday, her co-star Aaman extended a heartfelt wish to the Starkid and wrote, "Happy birthday to this sunshine girl who also doubles to be my bestie and partner-in-crime!!! Thank you for always being there. Here's to the most amazing best friend and first and forever co-star I could've asked for. Keep shining @rashathadani." Set in the pre-independence era, Azaad is about a horse rider, played by Ajay Devgn, who flees the clutches of ruthless English

soldiers. The story takes a turn when his horse goes missing, forcing him to collaborate with a young lad (Aaman Devgn) on a dangerous quest. Rasha plays a royal family member and Diana Penty plays Ajay Devgn's love interest.



Starkid also re-shared the post on her stories. Produced by Ronnie Screwvala and Pragya Kapoor, Azaad was released in theatres on January 17. The film also featured Ajay Devgn and Diana Penty in significant roles. Recently, in a recent video shared by Netflix, Rasha opened up about her bond with her co-

