THE INSIDES SPEAK

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Ajit Pawar plane crash:

CID questions VSR Ventures officials

The Maharashtra Crime Investigation Department (CID) on Thursday questioned senior officials from VSR Ventures, the operator of the Learjet 45 aircraft that crashed near Baramati on January 28, killing Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others.



A CID officer confirmed the questioning but did not disclose further details as the process was still ongoing.

The Baramati crash initially led to an accidental death report being filed at the Baramati Taluka police station. The case was later transferred to the Pune CID, which is examining whether criminal negligence or sabotage contributed to the tragedy. The CID had earlier sent a set of questions to VSR Ventures as part of its ongoing probe, according to the PTI.

A preliminary **22**-page report by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau **(**AAIB**)** noted that visibility at the time of the crash was below the required level. The report also highlighted safety lapses, including fading runway markings and loose gravel on the airstrip near Baramati.

Ajit Pawar's son, Jay Pawar, recently shared a video on social media allegedly showing Rohit Singh, owner of VSR Ventures, dozing off in the chief pilot's seat during a flight. Jay Pawar has called for Singh's immediate arrest and demanded that all VSR Ventures aircraft be grounded until the inquiry is completed, as per the PTI.

NCP allegations

NCP **(**SP**)** MLA Rohit Pawar has accused certain parties of shielding VSR Ventures from scrutiny. He reiterated doubts raised earlier about the official investigation and claimed the AAIB's preliminary findings vindicate concerns about operational lapses, the news agency reported.

CID's focus of probe

Last month, CID had said that its probe into the Ajit Pawar plane crash in Baramati will examine whether the tragedy was caused by sabotage or criminal negligence. The plane crash had claimed the life of Former Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and four others. Addressing a press conference, Sunil Ramanand, Additional Director General (CID), said the investigation is being carried out in a thorough and professional manner.

"The purpose of the CID probe is to determine whether there was any foul play in the crash. It will also examine whether there was any criminal negligence. Thirdly, the investigation will ascertain whether any criminal act, including illegal omission, led to the incident," Ramanand said. He added that once the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) completes its report, the findings will be incorporated into the CID's inquiry.

Man trying to break up Holi dispute fatally attacked in Bhiwandi



Bhiwandi : A **44**-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death with a wooden board when he tried to intervene in a dispute during Holi celebrations in Bhiwandi city in Thane district, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday morning at a residential society in the Kasheli area, an official said.

"Umesh Bira Saw was playing Holi when a minor dispute broke out between Chandan Prakash Hariram Saw, Karukumar Hariram Saw, and another person. When he tried to settle the matter, the Saw brothers assaulted him," the official said. The accused duo allegedly hit the victim on his head, eyes, hands and legs with a wooden board, causing severe injuries that led to his death, he added.

Police registered a case under sections **103(1)** (Murder) and **3(5)** (Common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at Narpoli police station and are conducting an investigation. No arrests have been made so far. Eight held for robbing man of Rs **5** lakh by posing as cops. In another case, police have arrested eight persons for allegedly robbing a Pune-based man of Rs **5** lakh by posing as police personnel near a railway station at Kalyan in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said

The incident occurred last week, they said.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Kalyanji Gete said the complainant was lured to Kalyan by the accused with a promise of exchanging his Rs 5 lakh cash for higher denomination currency of Rs 7 lakh, earning him a benefit of Rs 2 lakh. "When the complainant reached Vitthalwadi railway station with Rs 5 lakh, the accused came in an SUV, posing as police personnel and fled with his cash," Gete said. A case was registered at Kolsewadi police station on February 27 under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). "Through technical analysis and swift coordination with other police units, we intercepted the SUV at Somatane Phata toll naka (on the old Mumbai-Pune highway), and arrested four accused within five hours," the official said. Four more accused were nabbed subsequently on Sunday near Ahilyanagar-Shirdi road, he said. "We have seized Rs 2.36 lakh in cash, two SUVs and nine mobile phones from the accused. Search for other accused is underway," Gete added.

Two jail staffers held for accepting bribe in Maharashtra's Thane



Two staff members of a district jail in Maharashtra's Thane have been arrested for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs **1,500** to permit a man to meet an undertrial prisoner. Officials from the Anti-Corruption Bureau **(**ACB**)** detained Satish Tanaji Bhosale **(55)**, a prison subedar, and Sharad Nana Panpatil **(39)**, a jail constable, on Monday.

Both were posted at Aadharwadi Kalyan District Jail at the time of the alleged offence. Inspector Sunil Karote of the Thane ACB said the two were caught while accepting money from the complainant. The complainant had visited the jail on **25** February to meet a friend who was lodged there as an undertrial prisoner. According to officials, staff on duty in the interview room initially demanded Rs **1,000** as the visitor was not related to the inmate. It was further alleged that Bhosale sought between Rs **4,000** and Rs **5,000** to facilitate the meeting.

West Bengal man held by Mumbai Police for sending over 50 BOMB THREAT EMAILS ACROSS INDIA

Maharashtra : The Maharashtra Police have arrested a **28**-year-old man from the North **24** Parganas district in West Bengal for allegedly issuing more than **50** bomb threats to institutions and public infrastructure across India, reported the IANS.

According to officials, the accused, identified as Sourav Vishwas, is suspected of sending a series of threatening emails over the past five days targeting several locations including schools, metro stations and the stock exchange in Mumbai and other cities.

Authorities said the messages were intended to trigger panic and spread fear among the public.

Police officials stated that the emails were sent to establishments across Mumbai, Delhi, Gujarat, and other parts of the country.

Investigators believe the suspect issued more than **50** threats within a short span, forcing security agencies to increase vigilance at several sensitive locations, as per the IANS.

Mumbai threat prompted immediate Response



Officials from the Dindoshi Police Station in Mumbai said that on February **27** at approximately **8.46** a.m., an email warning of bombs being detonated within two days was sent to various schools and metro stations in Mumbai, the news agency reported.

The message triggered an immediate security alert, prompting authorities to launch a detailed investigation and register a case.

During the probe, investigators carried out technical analysis and email tracking to identify the origin of the message.

The digital trail eventually led police to New Barrackpore in West Bengal, where the suspect was located.

A special team from the Dindoshi police was dispatched to the region to apprehend the accused.

Link to earlier threat in Ahmedabad

Investigators later discovered that a similar threatening email had been sent to authorities in Ahmedabad on February **16**.

The Ahmedabad City Cyber Police had registered a case and detained the suspect on March **1**, following which Mumbai Police took him into custody as part of their investigation.

Police are currently questioning the accused to determine whether the threats were meant as a prank or if they were part of a larger conspiracy involving other individuals or networks.

Authorities from Dindoshi police are also completing legal procedures to obtain custody of the accused to continue the investigation into the bomb threat emails targeting several establishments in Mumbai.

EDITORIAL

THE MIDDLE EAST INFERNO

In the shadow of perennially shifting alliances, the recent eruption of hostilities between Iran and a coalition led by Israel and the United States marks a pivotal moment in the geopolitics of the Middle East. With the targeted assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the region stands at a cruel crossroads where retaliation and survival intersect, creating a tumultuous environment that threatens to engulf much of the Gulf. Though Iran has long been viewed as a formidable leader in shaping regional politics, its ambitions now wield a dangerous, double-edged sword. Perceived by Iran as the vassal states of the US, the six Gulf Arab monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) find themselves ensnared in the conflagration, suffering immensely in the face of Iranian vengeance. Diversification Of Hydrocarbon Sector Having spent over a decade as an Editor of various media groups in the Gulf region, I witnessed the massive diversification out of the hydrocarbon sector and the transformation of some of these Gulf states from close quarters. During the first Gulf War of the 1990s, the Middle East practically lived off hydrocarbons: oil and gas. In sharp contrast today, about 77 per cent of the UAE's economy is based on non-hydrocarbon sectors: finance, technology, tourism, real estate, sports and education. The corresponding figures for Oman are 73 per cent, 66 per cent for Qatar and 57 per cent for Saudi Arabia. In the Global Financial Centre Index (GFCI) 38 Rank, for 2025, Dubai was ranked 11th out of 38 leading financial hubs globally, ahead of Frankfurt, Washington DC, Geneva, Tokyo, Zurich, Boston, Paris and others. To achieve such a remarkable structural transformation, all the Gulf countries have projected an image of safety and stability, as champions of "soft power." The days of relative stability, stretching from the 1990s to 2020, appear as a utopia of the past. In sharp contrast, today the Gulf countries, pounded by Iranian drones and missiles, appear as a desert inferno, wherein each missile and drone strike sends ripples through the global energy supply and shakes the very foundations of regional economies.

Iran's Fight For SurvivalIran's response to the unprovoked aggression has been vehement and uncompromising. The drone strikes -- targeting oil refineries, embassies, and even iconic landmarks -- serve not only as acts of defiance but as desperate measures in a fight for survival. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial artery for global oil transport, sends shockwaves through international markets, driving gas prices to unprecedented heights. The earth beneath the rich sands of the Gulf no longer feels stable; instead, it reverberates with the cries of economies on the brink, as investment flees and the prospect for growth dims. The Spectre Of War The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, once a beacon of energy wealth, finds its giant oil refining facility at Ras Tanura under siege, its economic backbone threatened by Iranian hostility. With every attack on US embassies across the region -- be it in Riyadh or Kuwait -- the landscape of safety and security that Gulf states had long cultivated crumbles. The closures of strategic sites are akin to death knells, resonating through the halls of power and striking fear into the hearts of investors. Half of Dubai, once a flourishing hub of tourism and commerce, is scrambling for exits, as the spectre of a protracted war looms large. Ironically, the Gulf monarchies -- despite their relative wealth, sovereign wealth funds and modernised economies -- possess much more to lose in this newly minted chaos. Over the past quarter-century, they have diversified their economies away from a sole reliance on fossil fuels, yet the very infrastructure that allows this transformation is now vulnerable to threat. UAE's economy, for instance, is now predominantly non-hydrocarbon, driven by finance, tourism, and technology. Yet, when drones strike AWS facilities and disrupt critical services, the progress they made appears ephemeral, caught in the crossfire of escalating conflict. Psychological Toll On Gulf Monarchies

The psychological toll on these nations is profound. The attacks sow seeds of doubt about safety and stability -- qualities that were once a bedrock of their relationship with the United States. The image of the Gulf as a sanctuary for expatriates and tourists disintegrates under the weight of a sullied reputation. Faced with an uncertain horizon, nations like Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE and Oman must urgently advocate for peace, seeking to quell the flames of unrest that threaten their very existence. In the bitter aftermath of the US strikes on Iranian soil, as nearby populations -- fearing for their lives -- experience devastation firsthand, the reciprocal hostility from Iran cannot be understated. Missiles launched toward Israel disrupt the very fabric of what was assumed to be a stabilised region.

Mumbai Customs seizes 44 kg of hydroponic weed from airport;

METHAQUALONE, GOLD AND GEMS ALSO RECOVERED



Mumbai : Mumbai Customs officers at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport have made significant seizures of narcotics, precious gems, gold jewellery, and undeclared currency between February 24 and March 2.

According to a press note issued by Mumbai Customs Zone–3 Airport Commissionerate, the cases were detected through spot profiling and analysis of the advanced passenger information system (APIS).

Eight cases involving hydroponic weed were registered, leading to the recovery of 44.292 kg of the drug under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, from nine passengers arriving from Bangkok. The contraband has an estimated market value of Rs 44.29 crore. Additionally, 299 grams of an NDPS substance purported to be methaqualone were seized, with an estimated market value of Rs 74.75 lakh.

Other seizures made by Mumbai Customs

Customs officers also recovered:

Foreign and Indian currency equivalent to Rs 32.85 lakh

455 carats of natural and lab-grown diamonds valued at Rs 94.97 lakh

21 Kt gold broken jewellery weighing 160.79 grams, valued at Rs 21.51 lakh

1,203.69 carats of cut and polished emeralds, rubies, sapphires, amethyst, prasiolite, and other multi-coloured gems valued at Rs 15.16 lakh

Mumbai Customs Zone–3 said these seizures reflect the effectiveness of intelligence-based passenger screening in preventing smuggling of narcotics and high-value undeclared goods. Further investigations are underway to trace any larger smuggling networks. All arrested individuals are facing legal proceedings under relevant laws.

In a similar operation last month, Mumbai Customs Zone–3 officers made multiple seizures including gold, hydroponic weed, and illegal medicines at the city airport.

The officers said that the seizures were made between February 17 and 24. The operations were carried out using spot checks and APIS profiling, as well as intelligence-based interventions.

Three separate cases involved passengers arriving from Bangkok carrying hydroponic weed.

A total of 23.593 kilograms of suspected narcotic drugs were recovered, with an estimated market value of approximately Rs 23.59 crore.

Three passengers were arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, officers said. In three other cases, a total of 591.9 grams of gold was recovered from passengers. The recovered gold is valued at around Rs 85.35 lakh.

Cop injured after gang attacks him in Maharashtra's Thane, police slap MCOCA on suspects...



Thane : Police in Thane district of Maharashtra, have invoked the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) against four men accused of assaulting a local resident and injuring a police officer.

The case waas registered on Monday in connection with an incident that occurred on March 1 in the Kalwa East area.

According to police, the accused — Swapnil Madhvani, also known as Babu Kharkataya, and Sushil Kamble, alias Natya Bhai, along with their associates Bilal and Raju — allegedly attacked a man identified as Shafikul Sheikh.

An official from Kalwa police station said one of the accused reportedly brandished a knife in a public area, issuing threats and challenging anyone to lodge a complaint.

When officers attempted to apprehend the suspects, one of them allegedly attacked a policeman and slashed his right thumb with a blade.

The injured officer received medical attention, police confirmed.

Externed accused among the named

Police said that Madhvani and Kamble had already been externed from the limits of Thane district prior to the incident.

The four accused have been booked under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) as well as MCOCA.

Five booked for assaulting court official in Thane

Meanwhile, in an another incident, a case has been registered against five persons, including an 85-year-old man, for allegedly assaulting a woman court official during a flat foreclosure procedure in Thane, police said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred on Saturday afternoon at a housing society in the Mahagiri area, an official said.

Thane: Eight held for robbing man of Rs 5 lakh by posing as cops



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The incident occurred last week, they said.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Kalyanji Gete said the complainant was lured to Kalyan by the accused with a promise of exchanging his Rs 5 lakh cash for higher denomination currency of Rs 7 lakh, earning him a benefit of Rs 2 lakh, reported PTI.

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"Through technical analysis and swift coordination with other police units, we intercepted the SUV at Somatane Phata toll naka (on the old Mumbai-Pune highway), and arrested four accused within five hours," the official said.

Four more accused were nabbed subsequently on Sunday near Ahilyanagar-Shirdi road, he said.

"We have seized Rs 2.36 lakh in cash, two SUVs and nine mobile phones from the accused. Search for other accused is underway," Gete added. Man trying to break up Holi dispute fatally attacked

In another case, a 44-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death with a wooden board when he tried to intervene in a dispute during Holi celebrations in Bhiwandi city in Thane district, police said on Wednesday.

The incident occurred on Tuesday morning at a residential society in the Kasheli area, an official said.

Cranberry for skin and hair

Monika Khajuria

Considered as a super food, cranberry is an amazing fruit that is packed with various benefits. This glossy red fruit is loaded with nutrients and antioxidants that makes it beneficial not only for your health, but also for the skin and hair. Cranberry has been used for skin and hair for a long time now. You will find many beauty products these days that are infused with cranberries.



Including cranberries in your skin care and hair care can work wonders for your skin and hair care. But in spite of all its benefits, not many people are aware of the amazing benefits of this acidic berry. If you're also among those who are still deprived of this powerhouse of a fruit, then fear not. Today, we're here to tell you all about how this super food can help in your skin and hair care.

Benefits of cranberry for skin

1 Treats acne and blemishes

Cranberry can be really helpful to fight acne and blemishes. It has anti-inflammatory and anti-fungal properties that helps to soothe the skin and keep the acne causing bacteria at bay. It also contains vitamin C, which helps fight free radical damage and cleanse the skin.

You can take cranberry juice on a cotton ball and apply it directly on the acne and blemishes. Leave it on for 20 minutes and then wash it off with water.

2 It exfoliates the skin

Cranberry is acidic in nature and thus helps to clear the dead skin cells. It seeps deep into the skin and removes the toxins from the skin and hence exfoliates the skin.

3 Makes the skin firm

Rich in vitamins A and C, cranberries help boost the production of collagen, the protein that helps to retain skin elasticity. This makes sure that the skin doesn't become saggy and that it stays firm. It makes the skin look youthful.

4 For hyper-pigmentation

The antioxidant and astringent properties of cranberry helps to treat the issue of hyper-pigmentation.

5 Keeps infection at bay

Cranberry has antibacterial properties that helps to keep the bacteria and infection at bay. Applying the cranberry juice on the face cleanses the skin and makes it healthy.

6 An anti-ageing agent

Rich in vitamins C, B3 and B5, cranberry helps to fight premature ageing. The antioxidants present in it helps to fight free radical damage and hence helps to reduce the fine lines and wrinkles on the face and make it look young & dewy.



7 A glowing skin

Cranberry helps to promote healthy skin cells and fight free radical damage. Dead skin cells and radicals make the skin dull and gloomy and thus cranberry helps to brighten your skin and provide that healthy glow to it.

8 Unclog the pores

Due to its acidic nature, cranberry is very efficient in unclogging the pores, thereby helping with acne and boils. This is especially useful for the oily skin. Applying the cranberry juice with a cotton ball and then washing it off after 20 minutes will do the trick.



Benefits of cranberry for hair



1 Moisturises the scalp

A dry scalp can lead to itchiness, flakiness and itchiness. Cranberries have a high water content and it helps to keep the scalp moisturised and hydrated. To achieve this, mash some cranberries in a bowl and gently massage them into your scalp. Leave it on for 30 minutes and rinse it off later.

2 Prevents premature graying of hair

The vitamins present in cranberry, especially vitamin C helps to prevent the premature graying of the hair and keep them healthy.

3 Repairs hair damage

The vitamin C present in cranberry is an antioxidant that helps to repair the damaged hair follicles. It thus helps to repair the damaged hair and make them healthy and strong.

4 Treats dandruff

Bacteria and oily skin are one of the main factors that lead to dandruff. Cranberry helps to fight both these issues. It has antibacterial properties that keeps bacteria at bay and it also helps to control excess oil. Hence, cranberries are helpful for treating dandruff. You can either apply the cranberry juice directly to your scalp or you can add it to your regular hair mask.

5 As a natural hair colour

This might fascinate all the people out there who want to colour their hair but are afraid of the chemicals that are used for that. This glossy red fruit can help to add that hint of red to your hair. Just mix ¼ cup of water with 1 cup of pure cranberry juice. After washing your hair, just rinse your hair with this mixture and let it be.



AI mining our works: Musicians

Musicians from ABBA, Radiohead and The Cure have joined actors and authors in signing a protest letter against the mining of their artistry to build artificial intelligence tools. Thousands of artists signed the letter released Tuesday - the latest public warning about AI tools that can spit out synthetic images, music and writings after being trained on huge troves of human-made works. "The unlicensed use of creative works for training generative AI is a major, unjust threat to the livelihoods of the people behind those works, and must not be permitted," says the petition. Among the signatories are Bjorn Ulvaeus of the Swedish supergroup ABBA, The Cure's Robert Smith and Thom Yorke and his Radiohead bandmates. Also signing were writers including Nobel-winning novelist Kazuo Ishiguro.

This India City Is Emerging As Fastest-Growing Ultra-Premium Residential Hub

New Delhi: India's luxury housing market has found a new leader in 2025, with Gurugram emerging as the country's fastest-growing ultra-premium residential hub, a report said on Monday.

The city recorded a massive Rs 24,120 crore worth of transactions in homes priced at Rs 10 crore and above during calendar year 2025, according to the latest High-End Luxury Housing Report released by India Sotheby's International Realty and CRE Matrix.

The numbers mark a watershed moment for Gurugram's property market. Around 1,494 homes priced at Rs 10 crore and above were sold in 2025 -- the highest ever recorded in a single year in the city.

The total sales value has jumped nearly six times in just two years, rising from Rs 4,004 crore in 2023 to over Rs



24,000 crore in 2025.

In terms of value, Gurugram has now outpaced Mumbai in luxury home sales in the Rs 10 crore-plus category, as per the report. The report showed that the ultra-luxury segment accounted for 24 per cent of the city's total residential market in value terms in 2025.

The average ticket size of homes sold in this segment stood at around Rs 16 crore -- reflecting strong demand from high-net-worth individuals and ultra-HNIs. The average home size was about 5,000 square feet, the report stated. Homes in the 4,000 to 6,000 square feet category dominated sales in value terms, while properties larger than 8,000 square feet contributed nearly 22 per cent of the total transaction value.

According to Tina Talwar, Area Director at India Sotheby's International Realty, this growth is no longer limited to traditional premium addresses.

"Emerging micro-markets such as Dwarka Expressway, Golf Course Road and Golf Course Extension Road are driving the next phase of expansion," Talwar added.

Trouble For Mumbai 'Melody' Road As Residents Complain Of "Constant Noise"



Mumbai : India's first 'musical' road in Mumbai has run into trouble, with residents complaining of disturbance to entire neighbourhoods due to the "loud continuous music".

In a letter to civic chief Bhushan Gagrani, over 650 families in the posh Breach Candy area have said the tune of AR Rahman's 'Jai Ho' plays from 6 am till midnight along the northbound stretch of the Coastal Road, which passes directly through densely populated residential areas.

The group of residents said he 'melody' road is "causing ignificant distress and serves no ublic necessity" at a time cities are working to create quieter, more veable environments. "Residents are unable to keep their windows pen. The sound enters homes as a constant, muffled but intrusive background noise," the letter to Gagrani stated.

Further, auditory distraction on a high speed road is matter of concern, the letter stated. It added that the civic body ignores serious civic concerns, like speeding super cars on the Coastal Road, to focus on avoidable interventions.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated the musical road stretch on February 11. The road features specially-installed grooves at a designated speed. This is the fifth such road in the world and the first of its kind in India.

Horse Handler In Mumbai Gets 2 Years In Jail For Girl's Death Due To Fall



Mumbai : A sessions court here on Tuesday sentended a horse handler to two years' rigorous imprisonment for the tragic death of a six-year-old girl in 2017. Janhavi Mistry, daughter of Mahendra Mistry, CEO of a private firm, died after falling from a horse during a joyride in South Mumbai.

Sessions judge Avinash Kulkarni convicted horse handler Sohan Jaiswal guilty under Indian Penal Code section 304-II (culpable homicide). The reasoned order was not available yet.

According to police, the girl, during a joyride on horseback while visiting a park, was thrown off and fell between the legs of the animal.

She suffered severe injuries and died in hospital. Prosecutor Anand Sukhdeve examined six witnesses, including the girl's parents. Jaiswal did not have a license to offer horse rides and failed to provide safety gear to the girl, the prosecution said.

The defence argued that the poor state of the road which had potholes and cracks caused the horse to trip. A horse is not under the control of humans, it argued. The court, however, held Jaiswal guilty.

"Intel Failure": Bombay High Court Raps Navy Over Skyscraper Near Base

Mumbai : The Bombay High Court on Friday came down strongly on multiple stakeholders in the controversy surrounding the construction of a high-rise project near INS Shikra in south Mumbai, observing both a "failure of Naval Intelligence" and possible lapses by the civic administration in allowing the structure to come up to a substantial height without resolving security concerns.

A division bench of Justices Ravindra Ghuge and Abhay Mantri was hearing a petition filed by the Commanding Officer of INS Shikra challenging the allegedly illegal high-rise Jadhavji Mansion constructed close to the sensitive naval air station and heliport in Colaba. The petition had described the construction as "illegal and unauthorised" and lacking the mandatory defence clearance



required for buildings near military installations.

The court noted that the building had already reached ground-plus-19 floors, exceeding 69 metres, by 2024 despite its proximity to a sensitive naval air station and heliport used for defence operations and VVIP movement. The bench remarked that authorities should have been alert to developments in such a high-security zone and questioned how such extensive construction went unnoticed for years. The bench also asked why the Navy had opposed only this building when several other high-rises exist close to the base, some described in court as being at a "stone's throw distance."

In an interim direction, the court said that construction beyond 53.07 metres, roughly the height earlier linked to sanctioned plans, will be permitted only at the developer's "own risk and consequences" until further orders. It cautioned that if, at the conclusion of the final hearing, it finds that a No Objection Certificate from the Indian Navy was legally required, it may order demolition of the additional floors constructed above the permissible limit.

Middle East Impact: Over 1,000 Food Containers Stuck At Mumbai's Jawaharlal Nehru Port

Mumbai : Mumbai's Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust is facing the heat of the ongoing war in the Middle East region. As tensions between the Arab countries, Israel, Iran, and the US grow, disruptions of maritime vessel movements have also gotten consequentially affected, as several containers are stranded at the port.



Currently, there are more than 1,000 export containers stranded at the JNPT. These containers include consignments of grapes, onions, papaya, etc. Amongst the stranded containers, 150 contain onions from Nashik. Reports suggest that each container carries an average of 29-30 tonnes of onion, taking the total amount of stranded onions to 5,400 tonnes.

The consignments were primarily meant for Gulf countries, most of them routed through Dubai. However, due to the prevailing war-like situation, the Dubai market has reportedly been shut temporarily. The story is not very different for Indian containers, which had already reached the gulf, as 370 containers that had already reached Dubai are also said to be stuck there. The same route is used for exports to certain European countries, which have now also been affected.

The biggest concern is for the exporters dealing with perishable goods. These exporters are facing mounting financial pressure.

Containers, which are currently parked at the port and kept plugged in to maintain refrigeration, are costing approximately Rs 8,000 per container per day.

On Camera, Vendors Apply Rat Poison To Fruits In Mumbai

Mumbai : Two fruit sellers in Mumbai's Malad West area have been arrested after a video appeared to show them applying rat poison to fruits offered for sale. The incident came to light on Wednesday when police from Malad took action following a complaint from a local resident, accompanied by video evidence. Officers recovered a substance identified as Ratol -- a commercially available rat-killing product containing toxic chemicals such as yellow phosphorus -- from the vendors' roadside stall, which has since been sealed.

The accused, named in police reports as Manoj Sangamlal Kesarwani (42) and Rahul Sadanlal Kesarwani (25), both residents of Rajanpada in Malad West, were produced before the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Borivali later the same day.

According to the police, the vendors admitted to using the substance to deter rats from damaging their stock overnight. But health officials and experts have warned that applying such



a highly toxic compound to edible items poses severe risks, including vomiting, abdominal pain, organ damage and potentially fatal poisoning if ingested.

The video, which circulated rapidly on social media platforms, captured one of the vendors handling bananas while appearing to spread the cream-like product, heightening alarm among residents already vigilant about street food hygiene.

Local residents have called for stricter and more frequent inspections by food safety authorities, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), to prevent similar practices. Police have registered a case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Harassed In Mumbai, But India Remains A Favourite, Says Travel Vlogger Ines Faria

Mumbai : A foreign travel vlogger who alleged harassment in Mumbai has thanked the police for their swift response and described the episode as a "one-off incident", saying it has not changed her view of India as a welcoming destination.



Ines Faria, who has been travelling across the country for the past two months, shared a video on Instagram recounting how a man repeatedly approached her for selfies and allegedly followed her despite being turned down. The video drew widespread attention online.

Mumbai Police have since registered a case against the accused. Officials also reached out to Ms Faria after the footage surfaced.

Speaking to NDTV, Ms Faria said she was upset by the experience but stressed that it was the first time she had faced such behaviour during her stay in India. She expressed gratitude to Mumbai Police for getting in touch and offering support.

The solo traveller said that throughout her journey, most Indians she encountered had been kind and welcoming. She added that India remains among her top travel destinations and that she would continue to recommend the country to others.

Ms Faria emphasised that the incident should not define perceptions about India, calling it an isolated case. Her remarks have been widely shared on social media, with many users appreciating her balanced response.

The case has once again brought attention to tourist safety, while also highlighting the importance of prompt police action and support for visitors.

3 Mumbai Teens Kill 14-Year-Old Friend, Dump Body In Lake

Mumbai : Three minors have been detained for allegedly killing their 14-year-old friend and dumping his body in Vihar Lake in an attempt to make the crime appear as an accidental drowning, Mumbai Police said on Monday.

The incident came to light after the post-mortem report ruled out drowning and revealed that the victim, identified as Siddharth Londhe, died due to a severe head injury caused by a blunt object. According to police, there was no water found in his lungs or abdomen, confirming that he had not drowned.

The three accused, aged between 14 and 15, were produced before the Juvenile Justice Board and subsequently sent to the Dongri remand home. One of the accused was Siddharth's classmate, while the other two were Class 8 students from another school in



Bhandup. All four boys lived in the same locality in Bhandup West.

Siddharth, a Class 8 student, resided in Tulshet Pada with his parents and younger brother. His father works as an electrician in Andheri.

On February 22, Siddharth left his home around 3 p.m. after lunch, informing his parents that he was going out to play. When he did not return by evening, his family began searching for him and later approached the Bhandup Police, who registered a kidnapping case since he was a minor.

The following day, Siddharth's grey T-shirt and black slippers were found near Vihar Lake. The fire brigade was called, and his body was recovered from the lake later that evening. Initially, an Accidental Death Report (ADR) was registered, with police suspecting drowning.

During preliminary questioning, two of the boys told police that they had gone swimming and claimed Siddharth drowned despite their attempts to rescue him. As the post-mortem report was awaited, they were allowed to leave.

However, the post-mortem findings contradicted their statements. Police summoned the boys again and interrogated them separately,

Iranian Ship Sinks: How A 2016 Deal With US Could Spell Trouble For India

The coordinated action of the US and Israel against Iran has fast emerged as a watershed moment for security dynamics in the Middle East. On March 4, the US Department of War confirmed that a torpedo launched by an American submarine sank the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena off the coast of Sri Lanka, near Indian waters in the Indian Ocean. This attack has introduced a new naval dimension into the conflict, which has thus far remained limited to air power. Touted as the first major naval casualty in the Indian Ocean since the Second World War, the attack by the US on the Iranian warship is significant in many ways for the security dynamics in the Indian Ocean, as well as for India's own interests in the region.

Two Other Ships Waiting In Colombo

The IRIS Dena was subjected to the torpedo attack while it was returning to Iran after having recently participated in the Indian Fleet Review and Exercise MILAN in Vishakhapatnam in February 2026. Following the attack and destruction of the warship, in compliance with obligations under international laws, the Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force promptly initiated search and rescue efforts. At least 87 people on board the ship have died as a result of this attack. While those who have been rescued are being treated in Sri Lanka, two other Iranian warships have reportedly taken refuge in Colombo. Given that this took place close to India's territorial waters, and soon after the warship and its personnel participated in an exercise hosted by the Indian Navy, a rethink must be set in motion in New Delhi about what this development entails and how it can best be navigated.

The LEMOA Agreement

However, what appears to somewhat complicate matters for New Delhi is the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed between India and the US in 2016,



designed to facilitate logistical support, supplies, and services between the two countries for refuelling and replenishment. In a nutshell, the agreement mandates the scope for the US to use Indian facilities and bases to replenish and refuel its naval assets, and vice versa. At this juncture, when the US Navy's actions must cause unease in India, New Delhi must cautiously balance future demands for the use of Indian facilities from the US. Given President Trump's emphasis on ensuring that its partners live up to the expectations and demands of Washington, New Delhi must tread carefully on how to ensure that it does not become a party to this conflict, even indirectly. This is especially crucial at a time when India's neighbourhood finds itself at the cusp of being embroiled in this conflict. Importantly, speculations remain rife on whether Pakistan may join the conflict given its security pact with Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the torpedo strike in the Indian Ocean has prompted many to believe that the conflict is now playing out in India's backyard.

While India and the US have significantly advanced maritime cooperation in the context of the wider Indo-Pacific to establish and sustain a rules-based order in the region, the latest US attack appears to have turned the Indian Ocean into a new flashpoint in Washington's actions against Iran. This significantly risks escalation of tensions in the Indian Ocean, rendering the sea lines of communication and maritime trade routes vulnerable to disruption, resulting in adversarial implications for New Delhi, whose interests remain deeply anchored in preserving a free and open order in the region. Escalating securitisation of its maritime neighbourhood remains a significant challenge for India.

India Is The Biggest Player

Given the logic of geographical embeddedness, the security and stability of the Indian Ocean is a stated objective of India's maritime security strategy. Furthermore, given the vast differential between the capabilities and resources of India and other resident countries in the Indian Ocean, India is a principal maritime security actor in the region. The US attack on the Iranian frigate is arguably the closest the region has come to a traditional security conflict in decades. In such a context, it is essential for India to ensure that sustained efforts are made to preserve order and stability in the region. For this, New Delhi must continue to engage with all actors diplomatically to ward off further escalation of conflict in the Indian Ocean.

From Air To Sea?

In addition to these, a significantly critical trendline is appearing to be taking shape. The conflict between US-Israel and Iran is starting to play out in the maritime domain. Recent campaigns by Israel and the US against Iran have been propelled by air power and missiles. Iran's recent declaration of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz was the first introduction of the maritime domain into this ongoing conflict. However, as a result of the torpedo attack launched by the US on the Iranian frigate, the nature of the conflict seems poised to be altered significantly. The extent to which the navies will shape this conflict will be the big-ticket question going forward.

Nepal Elections: New Beginnings Or Same Old, Same Old?

Nepal is all set to vote tomorrow for its first election since the September 2025 'Gen Z' protests and the third after the promulgation of the 2015 constitution. The candidates will compete for 275 parliamentary seats, of which 165 members will be selected through the direct first past the post system (FPTP), whereas 110 will be selected through the proportional representation system. Of the 120 parties which had initially registered, 68 fielded their candidates, with a total of 3,406 candidates contesting in the direct FPTP election. The elections are happening almost two years before their previously scheduled date of November/December 2027 owing to the Gen Z protests which led to the resignation of the then Prime Minister, K.P. Sharma Oli from the helm and spearheaded an overarching overhaul in how politics is



practiced in the country. As the 18,903,689 voters prepare to vote tomorrow, expectations abound about the extent to which these elections will change the trajectory of Nepal's politics.

What's At Stake?

Politics in Nepal has generally been characterised as a 'game of musical chairs', a reflection of power switching hands amongst the three major parties and their leaders- the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) [CPN (MC)], led by Puspa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified-Marxist Leninist) [CPN (UML)] and its leader K.P. Sharma Oli and the Nepali Congress (NC) led by Sher Bahadur Deuba. Over the last three and a half decades, these parties and their leaders have hatched fragile coalitions with each other, hinged on flimsy and self-aggrandizing power-sharing arrangements in order to retain their control on the government. In 2017, the CPN (UML) emerged as the biggest party whereas 2022 saw the NC rising to the top. Ultimately by July 2024, the CPN (UML) and the NC were leading a coalition government with Oli as the Prime Minister. It was this government which was overthrown after the Gen Z protests.

HOW 12 'INSURERS' SITTING IN LONDON PARALYSED HORMUZ - ALL WITH A PHONE CALL?

Edward Lloyd used to keep a coffee house on Tower Street in the City of London since around 1688. The establishment was nothing remarkable to look at. Ship captains who had docked at Wapping would walk up to exchange intelligence: which vessel had come home safely from the Indies, which had not, where pirates had last been reported. Merchants and moneylenders followed. Those willing to shoulder a portion of a voyage's risk began writing their names and their accepted liabilities below the details of the insured - beneath - literally. Underwriters. From this arrangement of wooden tables and coffee cups grew Lloyd's of London and, over three and a half centuries, the entire legal and financial architecture of marine insurers that makes global seaborne trade possible.

In March 2026, the successors to those Tower Street underwriters did something more consequential than any naval fleet. They picked up the telephone.



When The Underwriter Hangs Up

Hours after Operation Epic Fury began on February 28, war risk underwriters started cancelling policies for transits of the Strait of Hormuz. Seven members of the International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs issued 72-hour cancellation notices on March 1. All twelve followed. The International Group covers approximately 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage. These clubs cover the full suite of liabilities, including cargo damage, crew injury, and environmental pollution. Without their backing, a vessel becomes an economic pariah. Ports refuse entry, cargoes go unloaded, banks withhold financing, charters evaporate. By March 3, maritime tracking platforms recorded zero active tanker transits inside the strait. Not because of Iranian mines. Not because the Fifth Fleet had sealed the approaches. Because the underwriter had hung up.

The numbers are worth stating plainly. The Strait of Hormuz handles roughly 20 million barrels of crude and petroleum products daily, a fifth of global demand forced through a tectonic bottleneck 21 miles wide between Iran and Oman. As much as 20% of all seaborne LNG passes through the same narrows. Baseline war-risk premiums before hostilities stood at 0.25 per cent of hull value, approximately USD 250,000 per voyage. Within 48 hours of the first strikes, rates had risen to 1% (a million dollars per transit), and for tankers with American or Israeli connections, no rate was available at any price. QatarEnergy halted LNG production at its facilities at Ras Laffan and Mesaieed after Iranian strikes. European benchmark gas prices rose nearly 50%. Asian LNG spot prices jumped 39%. As many as 150 vessels lay at anchor in open waters off Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, waiting for orders that did not come.

A Complex Web Of Insurers

The mechanism deserves examination, shorn of jargon. The International Group is not a free market. It is a tightly coordinated oligopoly. Twelve mutual clubs, administered from a London secretariat, whose pooling agreement shares liabilities above USD 10 million across the membership. Behind them sits a reinsurance layer, and behind that a retrocession market of roughly USD 41 billion that explicitly excludes war risks, it covers earthquakes and storms, not missiles and drones. When seven clubs cancelled simultaneously, no backstop existed to replace them. European insurance regulation (Solvency II) actively incentivised withdrawal, as geopolitical uncertainty rises, so do capital adequacy requirements, making it rational for firms to cancel rather than hold exposure while slowly raising reserves. The Red Sea disruption since late 2023 had already drained global war-risk buffers by the time Hormuz became a question.

Donald Trump's response has been interesting. On March 4, he announced that the United States Development Finance Corporation (whose statutory mandate is to mobilise private capital in support of American foreign policy) would backstop political risk insurance for all maritime trade through the Gulf, at what he described as a very reasonable price. He also offered US Navy escorts. The move confirmed what the episode had already demonstrated:

The Tanker War of the 1980s is instructive by contrast. Between 1984 and 1988, roughly 500 merchant vessels were attacked in the Persian Gulf. Insurance premiums spiked. Flags changed. Yet trade continued, because war risk insurance itself did not withdraw entirely from the market. What changed in March 2026 is that the retrocession layer (the reinsurers' reinsurers) declined to carry the exposure at any price. As Skuld, one of the twelve clubs, put it in its notice: "reinsurers' appetite for war risk exposure is tightening, and in practical terms, it will result in reinsurers withdrawing capacity at short notice." The market ceased to exist. Operation Praying Mantis crippled Iran's operational naval capacity in eight hours on April 18, 1988. The International Group's clubs needed less than seventy-two hours in 2026 to close the same strait without firing a single shot.

The Economics Of Shipowners

To this, one further institutional layer must be added. The International Transport Workers' Federation and the Joint Negotiating Group designated the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, and the Strait of Hormuz a formal high-risk warlike operations area - triggering a bonus equal to basic wages for every day a seafarer spends in the zone, double compensation for death or disability, and a right to refuse sailing with repatriation at the company's expense. When the crews themselves acquire a legal right to refuse passage, the economics for shipowners shift entirely. No captain needed an IRGC warning to know the calculus had changed.

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Why India Should Be Very, Very Worried

India should be paying close attention. In the entire International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs, not one member is domiciled in India. The Russian crude episode after 2022 made this vulnerability plain. When the Price Cap Coalition (comprising Australia, Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) instructed P&I clubs to deny cover for cargoes traded above USD 60 a barrel, Indian shipowners and charterers associated with those clubs found themselves squeezed between their commercial interest and their insurer's compliance obligations. In 2023, the Finance Minister acknowledged the gap publicly, calling for a full-fledged, India-owned, India-based P&I entity. The acknowledgement has not yet become an institution.

India's energy security is contingent on decisions made in 12 mutual clubs coordinated from a London secretariat, none of which carries an Indian flag, and all of which (as the Russia episode established) follow Western foreign policy directives when instructed.

India is the world's third-largest oil importer. It has a coastline of 7,516 kilometres. It has one of the larger merchant fleets in Asia by deadweight tonnage. It has no seat at the table that counts.



Fragrance of Meghalaya Enchants Mumbai

A Grand Confluence of Spices Lights Up the Financial Capital

MUMBAI| India's financial capital experienced the rich aroma of the Northeast as the inaugural Meghalaya Spice Festival 2026 brought the essence of the hills to the heart of Mumbai. The landmark event showcased that spices nurtured in the pristine landscapes of Meghalaya are now poised to establish a strong presence in national and global markets. The festival positioned Meghalaya as an emerging organic spice hub of India.

A 140-member delegation — comprising farmers, entrepreneurs, cooperative leaders, and senior officials — traveled to Mumbai with a clear objective: to bridge the gap between producers and premium markets.

Addressing the gathering, Meghalaya Chief Secretary Dr. Shakil P. Ahmed emphasized the authenticity of the state's agricultural traditions. "Meet our farmers directly, and you will understand what quality and integrity truly mean. Our farmers respect nature — that is why our villages and rivers remain among the cleanest," he said.

Dr. Vijay Kumar D, Commissioner & Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, highlighted the growing international footprint of Meghalaya's produce. He noted that turmeric from the state has already reached markets in the United States, the Middle East, and Europe, while ginger exports have expanded to Singapore. "We seek partners who believe in sustainable agriculture and are committed to ensuring fair value for our farmers," he added.

The event witnessed the presence of Maharashtra's Additional Chief Secretary Vikas Chandra Rastogi, Secretary of the National Turmeric Board N. Bhavani Sri, and representatives from FICCI, underscoring its policy and business significance.

The Meghalaya government's strategy is clear — to build a premium domestic and global brand identity for its spices and ensure that this recognition directly translates into increased farmer incomes. The upcoming inauguration of the state's largest spice-processing unit will mark another decisive step in this direction.

More than just a festival, this was a market-link mission — a platform that brought together the entire journey from farm to global retail shelves. The fusion of Mumbai's commercial pulse with Meghalaya's organic heritage signals that India's Northeast is no longer known solely for its natural beauty, but also for quality, sustainability, and global competitiveness.

The Meghalaya Spice Festival 2026 has proven that when policy, nature, and enterprise come together, the fragrance spreads not just through the air — but across the economy itself.

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CCI Classic Snooker to commence from March 6

MUMBAI| The cream of Indian snooker stars, including 27-time IBSF World Champion Pankaj Advani who has clinched the last three titles in succession, will be the star attraction in the prestigious CCI Snooker Classic 2026, which is set to commence at the iconic Cricket Club of India's Wilson Jones Billiards Hall from March 6, 2026.

The tournament will start with the qualifying rounds, which will be played over three stages. Sixteen winners from the third stage will earn the right to challenge the 16 seeded player in the fourth stage, the main knockout draw.

With a total prize pool of ₹13.5 lakh, the tournament promises intense competition across first three stages. The knockout round promises to witness sensational battles for supremacy. The champion will earn a purse of ₹3.5 lakh, while the runner-up will receive ₹1.75 lakh.

The finals are slated to be played on March 22.

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