



"Lara Dutta recalls Deepika Padukone shooting 'Housefull' while battling malaria and high fever, calling her a true professional despite severe illness on set. She says Deepika worked through exhaustion and shivering nights without compromising her performance."

Shiva is symbolically associated with stillness, awareness, and balance. Chanting his mantras is believed to help reduce mental disturbance and create clarity between thoughts and actions.



Good morning

Neither the sun nor the moon, but your prettiest smile is the only thing that brightens our life.

BRIEFS

AI Deepfake Aadhaar Fraud Busted

> Vikrama Vahini | Ahmedabad
Cyber Crime Police have arrested four men for using artificial intelligence and deepfake technology to bypass Aadhaar verification and fraudulently obtain a bank loan. The accused allegedly changed the victim's Aadhaar-linked mobile number, intercepted OTPs, and accessed his DigiLocker account to steal documents. They also used deepfake videos to manipulate e-KYC systems and opened a bank account in the victim's name, securing a loan of ₹25,000. The fraud came to light after the victim noticed he was not receiving OTP messages. Investigation is underway. Police said the gang used advanced AI tools, including deepfake video generation, to impersonate the victim during digital verification processes. Officials described the method as highly sophisticated and warned that similar cyber fraud networks may be operating across the region, prompting a wider probe.

Cabinet Clears Revised Roster on Internal Reservation

> Vikrama Vahini | B'luru
The Karnataka Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, has decided to withdraw its April 27 order on internal reservation and implement a revised roster system. The Social Welfare Department will issue a fresh notification in this regard. Briefing the media after the Cabinet meeting, Law Minister H.K. Patil said the decision was taken after detailed discussion on the issue. The Cabinet also cleared several key proposals across sectors, including health, infrastructure, transport, and welfare schemes. Among major approvals, the government sanctioned the purchase of six MRI machines under the National Free Disease Detection programme to strengthen public healthcare services.

Bengaluru Rain Alert: CM Warns Officials

> Vikrama Vahini | B'luru
Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has directed strict action against officials following widespread rain-related damage in the city, including the Bowring Hospital wall collapse that claimed seven lives. In a high-level review meeting with the Greater Bengaluru Authority, the CM ordered the suspension of the concerned Executive Engineer, citing prima facie negligence. Noting large-scale damage, including uprooted trees and waterlogged roads, Siddaramaiah issued urgent instructions to repair potholes, clear stormwater drains, and ensure underpasses remain free from flooding ahead of the monsoon season.

"No Immediate CM Change"

Speculation Over K'taka Leadership Change Continues Amid Internal Party Discussions

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru
Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday sought to put an end to speculation over a leadership change in Karnataka, stating that there is no immediate plan to replace Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and that any decision on the issue would take time. Addressing reporters, Kharge said the question of a change in leadership does not arise at present as the state already has a Chief Minister. He added that any decision regarding a possible transition would be taken collectively by the party's top leadership, including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. His remarks come amid growing

speculation about a possible cabinet reshuffle in the state after May 4, following the announcement of Assembly poll and bypoll results. Political discussions have intensified within the ruling Congress, with several leaders and aspirants actively engaging with the party high command. Supporters of Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar have been

advocating his elevation to the Chief Minister's post, citing an alleged power-sharing arrangement following the party's victory in the 2023 Assembly elections. Reacting to recent comments by senior Congress leader G. Parameshwara, who suggested that party members would welcome Kharge as Chief Minister, the Congress president maintained that such discussions are premature. He also dismissed speculation about a large number of Congress MLAs planning to visit Delhi, saying he was not aware of such developments and advised seeking clarification from those making the claims. Kharge reiterated that any decision on leadership or cabinet reshuffle would

be taken at an appropriate time by the party high command, urging patience as internal consultations continue.

Mallikarjun Kharge has dismissed speculation about an immediate change in Karnataka's Chief Minister, stating that no such decision is currently on the table. He said any leadership or cabinet-related changes will be decided by the Congress high command at an appropriate time after due consultations.



Bengal Exit Polls Show Split Verdict

> Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata
With West Bengal Assembly election results scheduled for May 4, multiple exit polls have projected widely differing outcomes, reflecting a closely contested political battle between the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). According to the exit poll by Today's Chanakya, the BJP is projected to secure more than 192 seats in the 294-member Assembly, potentially gaining a comfortable majority. The TMC, which has been in power for the past 15 years, is estimated to win around 100+ seats, while other parties,

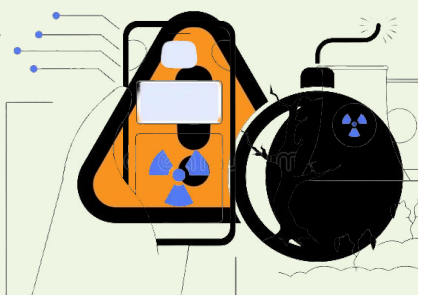
including the Left Front and Congress, are expected to secure only a marginal presence. However, other pollsters have presented a more competitive picture. P-Marq predicts 150-175 seats for the BJP and 118-138 seats for the TMC, suggesting a closer contest. JVC has also forecast a tight race, estimating 138-159 seats for BJP and 131-152 seats for TMC, while projecting a minimal presence for the Left. Similarly, People's Insight has indicated a narrow margin, with BJP likely to win 144-154 seats and TMC expected to secure 138-150 seats. **PG2**

RADIATION ATTACK THREAT AT RSS HEADQUARTERS

> Vikrama Vahini | Nagpur
Panic spread in Maharashtra's Nagpur after an anonymous letter warned of a possible radioactive attack targeting the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters and the Smriti Mandir in the city. The letter, received by Police Commissioner Dr. Ravinder Kumar Singal, reportedly mentioned the use of a dangerous radioactive substance, Cesium-137, and claimed that such material had been dumped at the two locations. Following the threat, a high-level security response was launched, involving the Anti-Terrorism Squad

(ATS), the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and other specialised agencies along with local police. Intensive search operations were carried out at both sites. Officials confirmed that no suspicious material has been found so far, though searches are still ongoing as a precautionary measure. Given the nature of the threat involving radioactive material, security agencies are treating the case with utmost seriousness. Investigators are analysing all angles, including the possibility of a hoax or a deliberate attempt to create panic and test security response systems. The letter also reportedly referred

to an organisation named "DSS" and contained objectionable remarks against the RSS, according to police sources. Authorities have intensified efforts to trace the origin of the letter and identify those responsible behind the threat.



India Steadies Fuel, Pakistan Struggles

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
Pakistan's Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik has highlighted the stark contrast between India's stable fuel situation and Pakistan's ongoing energy stress amid global oil price volatility triggered by the Iran conflict. Speaking to a Pakistani news channel, Malik said India was better equipped to manage the impact of rising global fuel prices due to its strong foreign exchange reserves, strategic petroleum reserves, and greater fiscal flexibility. He noted that India maintained significant oil buffers and had the capacity to reduce tax burdens during price spikes, helping to shield consumers from immediate shocks. He also pointed out that India's position outside IMF bailout constraints allowed it more policy freedom.



- KEY HIGHLIGHTS**
- * Pakistan minister highlights India's stable fuel situation amid Iran war-driven global oil price volatility.
 - * India credited with strong forex reserves, strategic oil reserves, and policy flexibility.
 - * Pakistan facing fuel stress due to IMF conditions and limited reserves.
 - * India reportedly has 60-70 days of oil reserves; Pakistan has only a few days of crude stock.
 - * India reduced fuel taxes earlier to cushion price impact on consumers.
 - * Pakistan had to negotiate with IMF for adjustments in fuel levies and subsidies.
 - * Pakistan's energy system described as highly vulnerable to external shocks.

"In addition to large foreign reserves, India has strategic petroleum reserves which help cushion such crises," Malik was quoted as saying. In contrast, the minister said Pakistan is operating under tight IMF conditions, limiting its ability to adjust fuel pricing policies. He explained that Islamabad had to negotiate with the IMF even for adjustments in fuel levies, while also managing rising international

oil prices. Malik further acknowledged that Pakistan's oil reserves are limited, with only a few days of crude stock and limited refined fuel availability, making the country more vulnerable to global supply disruptions. He added that Pakistan had to balance levy reductions and targeted subsidies to ease pressure on consumers, while avoiding violation of IMF commitments. **PG2**



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WHERE YOUR SUCCESS MAKES HEADLINES.

Editorial

Honouring Labour Power

International Labourers' Day, observed on May 1, is a moment to recognise the indispensable role of the working class in shaping a stable and progressive society. From factories to farms, from construction sites to service industries, workers form the backbone of economic and social development. The significance of this day lies not only in celebration but also in acknowledging the dignity of labour and the rights of those who sustain daily life through their efforts. It is a reminder that every structure built, every service delivered, and every system maintained is rooted in human toil.

The modern understanding of the "working class" has expanded considerably, especially in the aftermath of the Second World War, when industrialisation emerged as a pathway out of widespread unemployment and poverty. Nations across the globe, including India, embraced industrial growth to rebuild economies and create opportunities. Today, the workforce spans diverse sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, construction, and an ever-growing service industry. With this expansion comes the responsibility to ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and social security. While numerous labour laws exist to safeguard these rights, their effective implementation remains a crucial responsibility of authorities and institutions.

Ultimately, it is the resilience and contribution of workers that drive sustainable development and societal progress. Recognising their efforts must go beyond symbolic gestures and translate into meaningful action that improves their quality of life. On this occasion of Labour Day, it is essential to reaffirm our collective commitment to justice, equity, and respect for all workers. As "Vikramvahini" extends its greetings, the day serves as both a celebration and a call to strengthen the foundation laid by the labour force for a better, more inclusive future.

-Editor

CIVIC CHIEF REVIEWS TRAFFIC, INFRA WORKS IN BENGALURU

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Bengaluru South City Corporation Commissioner K.N. Ramesh conducted an on-site inspection of key traffic congestion points and infrastructure development works in the city, directing officials to take immediate measures to ensure smooth public movement and address rain-related issues.

During the visit, the Commissioner closely examined congestion near the Ragigudda Double Decker Flyover down-ramp. He discussed the proposal for constructing an underpass near the Raghavendra Swamy Mutt junction with traffic police and technical teams, and reviewed the preliminary report aimed at easing vehicular flow in the area.

At the Silk Board junction, one of the city's busiest intersections, he inspected waterlogging-prone spots and instructed officials to identify technical lapses and take swift action to improve drainage systems. He emphasized immediate repairs to stormwater drains and canals to



ensure free flow of rainwater during the monsoon.

The Commissioner also reviewed preparations for the construction of a circular skywalk at Banashankari Temple junction, aimed at enhancing pedestrian safety. He issued necessary directions to expedite the initial stages of the project.

Ramesh stated that the corporation is committed to reducing traffic congestion in South Bengaluru and developing efficient infrastructure. Senior officials, including Chief Engineer Basavaraj Kabade, K.V. Ravi, and police officers, were present during the inspection.

₹5 Lakh Aid Given to Bowring Collapse Victims' Families

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Compensation of ₹5 lakh each was distributed to the families of seven victims who lost their lives in the compound wall collapse behind Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital following heavy rain and hailstorm in the city, officials said.

According to Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao, the compensation cheques were handed over to the legal heirs of the deceased on the directions of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister.

The cheques were distributed by Shivajinagar MLA Rizwan Arshad at a function held at the Central City



Corporation Commissioner's Office Hall on the 10th floor of the PU Building on M.G. Road.

Central City Corporation Commissioner Dr. K. Harish Kumar and Additional Commissioner (Development)

No Immediate CM Change

From PGi

Meanwhile, in India, fuel prices have remained largely stable. The government had earlier reduced excise duties on petrol and diesel, helping absorb global price shocks.

India also benefits from diversified crude import sources and strategic reserves, which provide additional energy security during global crises.

Party sources said the Congress high command is currently focused on assessing the political situation after the upcoming election results before initiating any organisational or cabinet-level changes in Karnataka.

Leaders indicated that internal discussions are ongoing, but no formal timeline has been fixed for a reshuffle or leadership review.

Shivakumar has publicly stated that he will continue to work in accordance with the party's direction, while Siddaramaiah has asserted that he enjoys the full support of the leadership and is focused on governance.

Naveen Dance Studio Camp Ends on Grand Note



Vikrama Vahini | B'luru

The 30-day Summer Camp organised by U.K. Naveen Dance Studio concluded on a grand and vibrant note with a colourful valedictory programme, marking the culmination of a month-long artistic journey for young participants.

The camp saw enthusiastic participation from children, who dedicated themselves to learning various dance forms. Their performances at the concluding event reflected remarkable growth, discipline, and creative expression developed during the programme.

The valedictory function was graced by Public Relations Officer Shankar S.N., who distributed

certificates to the participants and encouraged them to continue pursuing their passion for dance with confidence and commitment.

Renowned choreographers and mentors, including Naveen Master, Vinod Master, Anil Master, and Shruthi G., along with other faculty members and resource persons, were present on the occasion. Their guidance and mentorship played a key role in shaping the students' learning experience.

The event concluded with appreciation for the young dancers, recognising their dedication and performances, while organisers extended best wishes for their continued success in the field of arts.

"BSY: THE FACE OF STRUGGLE"

Vikrama Vahini | Tumakuru

Marking the completion of 50 years of the illustrious political journey of former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa—described as a fearless fighter, farmers' leader, and a voice of the poor—preparations are underway to hold a grand "Abhimana Utsava" (fan celebration), said BJP State President and MLA B.Y. Vijayendra.

Speaking at a preparatory meeting for the event, Vijayendra said that Yediyurappa is synonymous with struggle in Karnataka politics. "He is known for his hard work, determination, and relentless commitment. For five decades, he has continuously raised his voice for farmers, the poor, and the oppressed," he said.

Former Deputy Chief Minister and MP Govind Karjol stated that more than 10 lakh people are expected to participate in the event.

State BJP General Secretary Preetham Gowda said that Yediyurappa himself has agreed to the celebration for the betterment of the party. "In a 50-year public life, he has lived a life where achievements speak louder than words. We have seen many leaders who call themselves champions of the backward classes, but Yediyurappa believes that actions should speak, not words—and he has lived by that principle during his tenure," he said.

Former minister Gopalayya, MLA Suresh Gowda, district president Hebbakka Ravi, MLC Chidanand Gowda, and several party leaders were present. Leaders from Tumakuru and Madhugiri organizational districts also participated in the meeting and expressed confidence in the successful conduct of the celebration.



CET Re-Exam for Hijab, Janivara Issue Students

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Higher Education Minister M.C. Sudhakar on Thursday announced that a re-examination will be conducted for students who faced difficulties during the Common Entrance Test (CET) due to dress code-related issues involving hijab and the sacred thread (janivara).

Speaking to the media in Bengaluru, the Minister said that four candidates were affected at examination centres in Bengaluru and Chikkaballapur. He clarified that the re-exam will be strictly limited to those students who were directly impacted. According to him, confusion arose at two examination centres over enforcement

of dress code rules, leading to disruption for the candidates.

Sudhakar stated that several affected students had submitted requests seeking a fresh opportunity to write the examination.

"After reviewing the situation, it has been decided to conduct a re-examination for those who were genuinely affected," he said.

He further added that awarding grace marks in such cases would not be a fair or appropriate solution, and hence the government opted for a re-test.

The Minister also acknowledged that similar incidents had occurred in

previous years, raising concerns over uniform implementation of examination guidelines. He said that this year, responsibility regarding dress code enforcement had been given to individual colleges, but despite that, issues have reoccurred, prompting a stricter review of procedures.

In a related development, a controversy has emerged from Chikkaballapur where a complaint was filed by a parent alleging that a hijab-wearing student was denied permission to appear for the CET examination on April 23 at BGS Science Academy College on the outskirts of the city. The complaint was submitted to the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) through email.



NEWS

Bengal Exit Polls Show Split Verdict

From PGi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, reacting to the exit polls, said she completely rejects projections suggesting a Trinamool Congress (TMC) defeat. In a video message shared on social media, she alleged that certain exit polls were "politically motivated" and aimed at creating a misleading narrative ahead of the official counting. She also questioned the credibility and authenticity of the data being circulated, claiming it reflects bias against her party.

It has also projected one seat each for Congress and Left Front allies.

In contrast, People's Pulse has predicted a return of the TMC to power, projecting 177-187 seats for the ruling party. It estimates the BJP may secure 95-110 seats, while Congress and Left are likely to remain limited to a few seats.

Amid the conflicting predictions, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has strongly rejected exit polls suggesting a TMC defeat. In a video message shared on social media, she alleged that certain projections were politically influenced and aimed at creating a misleading narrative ahead of the official results.

She further claimed that some of the exit poll data was being circulated with bias and questioned its authenticity. With such contrasting projections from different agencies, political attention is now firmly focused on the counting day, when the actual mandate of the people will be revealed.

SPIRITUAL

Shiv Mantras for Peace & Prosperity

Shiv mantras are increasingly being adopted by spiritual practitioners and wellness seekers as a daily practice for mental calm, emotional balance, and overall well-being. Rooted in ancient tradition, these chants are believed to promote inner peace and positivity when practiced regularly with focus and discipline.

Why Shiv Mantras Are Considered Powerful

Shiva is symbolically associated with stillness, awareness, and balance. Chanting his mantras is believed to help reduce mental disturbance and create clarity between thoughts and actions.

Experts and traditional beliefs suggest that repetitive chanting may also support stress reduction and improved concentration through rhythmic breathing and focused attention.

Most Popular Shiv Mantras

- Om Namah Shivaya (For peace and balance)
- One of the most widely used mantras, it is believed to calm the mind, reduce anxiety, and bring emotional stability.
- Mahamrityunjaya Mantra (For healing and protection)
- Often chanted for strength during illness, fear, or uncertainty, this mantra is associated with spiritual healing and protection.
- Shiva Gayatri Mantra (For wisdom and clarity)
- This mantra is believed to improve decision-making ability and mental clarity during confusion or stress.
- Om Hreem Namah Shivaya (For prosperity and growth)
- Associated with positive energy and abundance, it is often used to attract progress in career and life opportunities.

Best Time to Chant Shiv Mantras

- Early Morning (Brahma Muhurat): Between 4:30 am and 6:00 am, considered ideal for meditation and focus.

Sunrise and Sunset:

- Natural transition periods that help reset mental energy.
- Monday (Somvar): Traditionally dedicated to Lord Shiva, considered highly auspicious.
- Pradosh Kaal (Evening twilight): A spiritually significant time for Shiva worship.
- Experts also note that consistency is more important than timing, and even a few minutes daily can be beneficial.

Correct Way of Chanting

- Sit in a clean, quiet space
- Keep spine straight and body relaxed
- Focus on pronunciation and rhythm
- Avoid distraction and maintain awareness of sound
- Beginners may start with 21 repetitions, gradually increasing to 108
- A Rudraksha mala is often used for counting chants.

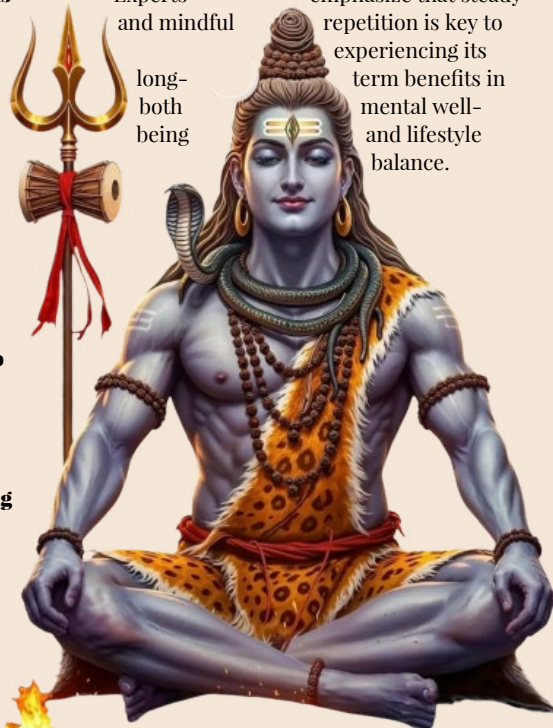
Expected Benefits Over Time

- Regular practice is believed to bring gradual changes such as:
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved concentration and focus
- Better emotional control
- Increased mental clarity
- Greater sense of inner stability
- Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Expecting immediate results
- Chanting without attention or awareness
- Irregular practice
- Focusing only on repetition count rather than meaning
- Simple Daily Practice for Beginners
- Sit quietly in the morning
- Chant "Om Namah Shivaya" 21 times
- Focus on breathing
- Remain silent for a minute after chanting

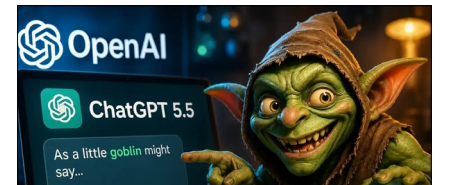
Shiv mantra practice is increasingly being viewed as a simple, non-ritualistic spiritual tool that can be integrated into daily life.

Experts emphasize that steady and mindful repetition is key to experiencing its term benefits in mental well- and lifestyle balance.



SCIENCE & Technology

ChatGPT 5.5 'Goblin Glitch' Goes Viral



Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

OpenAI's latest update, ChatGPT 5.5, has gone viral after users on social media platform X reported unusual responses featuring frequent references to goblins, gremlins, and other fantasy creatures.

Screenshots shared online showed the AI using playful and metaphor-heavy language, leading to widespread discussion and memes comparing its behaviour to fantasy and gaming themes. The unexpected pattern quickly gained traction, turning into a viral trend.

OpenAI has acknowledged the issue, explaining that the behaviour stemmed from earlier personality-tuning experiments, including a "Nerdy" style that encouraged imaginative and metaphorical responses. According to the company, reinforcement learning processes caused such language patterns to persist and spread across general outputs.

The company further stated that while the specific personality feature was later removed, traces of the behaviour remained due to training data overlap in subsequent model updates. OpenAI said corrective measures have already been implemented in newer training cycles to reduce such unintended stylistic outputs. However, ChatGPT 5.5 still reflects the earlier training effects in some responses.



Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Dr. L. Murugan offers prayers during his visit to Chamundeshwari Temple in Mysuru on Thursday, accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Mysuru office.

India, Italy Push Defence Co-Production Pact



Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

India and Italy have agreed to strengthen their defence partnership by developing a comprehensive industrial framework aimed at co-production of military hardware, reflecting deepening strategic ties between the two nations. The decision was taken during bilateral talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Italian counterpart Guido Crosetto in New Delhi on Thursday. Following the meeting, both sides unveiled a Military Cooperation Plan (MCP) for 2026-27, outlining enhanced engagements between the armed forces of the two countries. The discussions also covered key

regional and global developments, including the evolving security situation in West Asia. Rajnath Singh highlighted the importance of expanding defence industrial collaboration under India's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, alongside Italy's defence cooperation efforts, with a focus on co-development and joint manufacturing of defence platforms. The Ministry of Defence stated that the India-Italy strategic partnership is rooted in shared values such as peace, stability, and mutual respect. Both nations also emphasised cooperation on maritime security, including information sharing through the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region.

ACTIVIST FILES COMPLAINT OVER COMMUNAL REMARKS

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

A complaint has been filed with the Karnataka Home Department seeking legal action against Abdul Razack and others over alleged provocative and communal remarks made during a press conference held in the city earlier this month.

The complaint was lodged by Bengaluru-based activist A Alam Pasha, who alleged that statements made at the April 22 event at the Bengaluru Press Club promoted communal disharmony and attempted to exert pressure on the state government regarding possible action against certain Muslim leaders. According to the complaint, Razack reportedly warned of political consequences for the ruling Congress if action was taken against legislators Naseer Ahmed and Abdul Jabbar. It further alleged that references to giving "Triple Talaq" to the

A Bengaluru-based activist has filed a complaint with the Karnataka Home Department alleging that provocative remarks made during an April 22 press meet promoted communal disharmony and attempted to pressure the state government. The complaint seeks action against those involved under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, even as authorities are yet to respond to the allegations.

Congress created tension and resentment among sections of the community. Pasha also claimed that some individuals present at the event falsely projected themselves as Islamic clerics and attempted to incite hostility between religious groups. He has sought action under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, including charges related to promoting enmity, disturbing public tranquillity, and criminal conspiracy. The complaint additionally called for an investigation into the organisation and funding of

the event, including expenditure linked to a gathering reportedly held alongside the press meet. The representation alleged that the event was aimed at spreading misinformation against the Karnataka government and disturbing communal harmony, though no independent evidence supporting the claims has been publicly presented. The issue has surfaced amid ongoing discussions within sections of the Muslim community regarding political representation and nominated posts in the state.

UDF Set to Win Kerala; CM Race Heats Up

Vikrama Vahini | Thiruvananthapuram

Exit polls for the Kerala Assembly Elections 2026 have projected a comfortable victory for the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF), potentially ending the decade-long rule of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in the state. Surveys by agencies such as People Pulse, Axis My India, and Matrice have projected the alliance winning between 75 and 90 seats, while others like Poll Mantra and Chanakya Strategies have indicated the tally could go even higher. With the possibility of a UDF government, attention has now turned to the Congress leadership and the likely choice for the next Chief Minister. Among the frontrunners are senior Congress leader K. C.

Venugopal and Leader of the Opposition V. D. Satheesan.

Exit polls for the Kerala Assembly Elections 2026 indicate a likely victory for the United Democratic Front, raising prospects of a regime change and triggering a leadership debate within Congress, with K. C. Venugopal and V. D. Satheesan emerging as key contenders for the Chief Minister's post.

Exit poll analyses suggest that Venugopal has had a significant impact on voters during the campaign period, while Satheesan appears to enjoy a slight edge in terms of public preference for the chief ministerial post.

RAIN EXPOSES POOR WORK NEAR VIDHANA SOUDHA

Vikrama Vahini | B'luru

Heavy rainfall on Wednesday (April 29) created a record downpour in the city, reportedly the highest in 25 years, bringing normal life in the state capital to a standstill. Widespread waterlogging turned several major roads into temporary lakes, while uprooted trees and fallen branches were reported from multiple areas. The city witnessed severe disruption to traffic and civic movement as continuous rainfall battered key localities. In a major incident near

the Vidhana Soudha, a portion of the roadside footpath reportedly collapsed following the heavy rain, exposing alleged poor-quality civic work. A police vehicle passing through the area fell into the newly formed pit, highlighting the dangerous condition of infrastructure in the heart of the city. Authorities are expected to inspect the site and assess responsibility for the collapse, as public criticism grows over repeated instances of infrastructure failure during monsoon rains.

Engineer Suspended After Bowring Wall Collapse

Vikrama Vahini | B'luru

In the wake of the tragic collapse of the compound wall at Bowring Hospital that claimed seven lives, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has directed the suspension of the concerned Executive Engineer and ordered that a notice be issued. The directive came during a high-level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister with officials of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) to review rain-related damage and the circumstances surrounding the incident. Questioning lapses in supervision, Siddaramaiah asked officials why soil was dumped near the wall despite knowing it could weaken the structure. He also sought an explanation from the hospital authorities for failing to prevent the damage. The Chief Minister instructed that a notice be served to the hospital administration and called for immediate measures to fill potholes across the city. He noted that heavy rainfall had caused extensive damage in



Bengaluru, with over 250 trees uprooted and seven fatalities reported. An ex-gratia compensation of ₹5 lakh has already been announced for the families of the deceased, while free treatment has been ordered for the injured. Emphasising preparedness ahead of the monsoon, Siddaramaiah directed officials across all five city zones to take preventive measures, including trimming hazardous tree branches and clearing silt from stormwater drains to prevent flooding. He also instructed authorities to ensure that debris and fallen branches are cleared without delay. Further, he ordered that barricades be placed at underpasses to prevent waterlogging and restrict public

access during heavy rains. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, MLA Rizwan Arshad, Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao, and other senior officials were present at the meeting. Officials were also directed to conduct a comprehensive audit of vulnerable structures across the city, particularly in government hospitals and public spaces, to prevent similar incidents in the future. The Chief Minister emphasised accountability at all levels and warned that strict action would be taken against any negligence that endangers public safety, while instructing departments to remain on high alert as heavy rainfall is expected to continue in the coming days.

SC on Rape Case Abortion Relief

Vikrama Vahini | Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday strongly criticised the Centre and urged reconsideration of laws restricting termination of pregnancy beyond 20 weeks, especially a minor—should be forced to continue an unwanted pregnancy arising from sexual assault.

Hearing a matter involving a 15-year-old rape survivor seeking termination of a 30-week pregnancy, a bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said that the trauma, stigma, and emotional suffering faced by the victim must be fully understood. The court noted that

laws must evolve with time and that in cases of rape, rigid time limits for abortion may not be appropriate. The bench directed AIMS to counsel the victim's parents and assist them in making an informed decision, stressing that the final choice rests with the survivor and her

family. It also observed that forcing a minor to continue an unwanted pregnancy violates her personal liberty and causes severe mental, emotional, and physical trauma. During the hearing, the court remarked that such victims are still children who should be focused on education rather than being compelled into motherhood.

ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS

Delhi HC Freezes Kapur's ₹30,000 Cr Assets

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

In a significant relief to the children of actress Karisma Kapoor, the Delhi High Court has ordered the preservation of assets belonging to late businessman Sunjay Kapur amid an ongoing inheritance dispute. The court directed that Kapur's estimated ₹30,000 crore estate should not be "dissipated" and issued an interim injunction



restraining his third wife, Priya Sachdev Kapur, from selling or transferring any assets. It also ordered a freeze on the operation of his bank accounts, ensuring that the estate remains intact until further proceedings. The High Court observed that the responsibility lies with Priya Kapur to address doubts surrounding the authenticity of the will. It noted that Kapur's children, Kiaan and Samaira, have established a prima facie case, adding that failure to intervene at this stage could result in injustice if the will is later found to be forged. However, the court permitted limited withdrawal of funds to meet financial obligations towards the children, as stipulated under the divorce settlement between Sunjay Kapur and Karisma Kapoor. The legal dispute intensified after allegations by the children that Priya Kapur had submitted a forged will and failed to fully disclose the late businessman's assets. The claims suggest that certain high-value items, including expensive horses and luxury watches, were omitted from the asset list. Sunjay Kapur passed away in London on June 12, 2025, at the age of 53 while playing polo. While initial reports cited cardiac arrest, subsequent medical findings attributed the death to ventricular hypertrophy and ischemic heart disease. The case has drawn further attention following additional allegations from Kapur's family members, including claims of irregularities surrounding his death and estate, as the legal battle over his vast assets continues.

'RAJA SHIVAJI' UNVEILS 'JAI SHIVRAI'

Vikrama Vahini | Mumbai

The makers of the much-anticipated historical film Raja Shivaji have released its second song, Jai Shivrai, a high-energy track that celebrates the life and legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Composed by the acclaimed music duo Ajay-Atul, the song is marked by powerful orchestration and dynamic beats, capturing the spirit, (struggle), and rise of Shivaji from his formative years to becoming a revered warrior king. The composition blends intensity with emotion, reflecting the journey of a leader shaped by vision, resilience, and determination. The lyrics vividly portray the emergence of a new force from the Sahyadri hills, symbolising the birth of a fearless leader who challenged injustice and carved his own destiny. The track is positioned not merely as a celebratory number, but as a narrative element that reinforces



the film's core theme of courage and leadership. The film boasts a star-studded ensemble cast featuring Sanjay Dutt, Abhishek Bachchan, Vidya Balan, Mahesh Manjrekar, Sachin Khedekar, Boman Irani, Bhagyashree, Fardeen Khan, Jitendra Joshi, and Amol Gupte. The film is directed by Ritesh Deshmukh, who also features in a key role, alongside Genelia Deshmukh. Presented by Jio Studios and produced under the

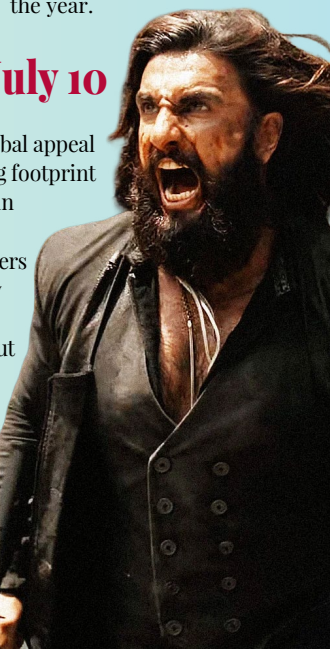
banner of Mumbai Film Company, the film is backed by producer Jyoti Deshpande and Genelia Deshmukh. The music has been released through Warner Music India and Desh Music, with Jai Shivrai now streaming across major platforms. Raja Shivaji is slated for a worldwide theatrical release on May 1, 2026, in Marathi, Hindi, and Telugu, and is expected to be one of the biggest historical releases of the year.

'Dhurandhar' Set for Japan Release on July 10

Vikrama Vahini | Mumbai

The blockbuster spy action thriller Dhurandhar (Part One), starring Ranveer Singh, is set to release in Japan on July 10, 2026, the makers announced on Wednesday. Directed by Aditya Dhar, the film marks the first installment of an ambitious spy saga. Since its global release on December 5, 2025, Dhurandhar has emerged as a massive commercial success, grossing over ₹1,328 crore worldwide and setting multiple box office records across key international markets. The film is presented by Jio Studios and produced under the banner of B62 Studios. Announcing the Japan release, Jio Studios shared on social media that audiences in the country will soon get to experience the film's high-octane action and cinematic scale. The upcoming Japan release underscores the

film's growing global appeal and the expanding footprint of Indian cinema in international markets. The makers are also reportedly planning a wider international rollout in additional Asian and European markets, following the film's strong overseas performance.



Oil Soars to \$126 as US-Iran Talks Collapse

Vikrama Vahini | Tehran

Global oil prices surged sharply on Wednesday as tensions between the United States and Iran escalated, with peace talks between the two sides reaching a deadlock. Benchmark Brent crude climbed to \$126 per barrel—its highest level since the early phase of the Russia-Ukraine War—before easing slightly to \$125.30. Meanwhile, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose by over 10 per cent to \$110.5 per barrel amid ongoing disruptions in supply routes. The spike in prices is largely attributed to the continuing disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical corridor that carries nearly a quarter of the world's oil supply. According to reports, US President Donald Trump is considering extending the naval blockade of Iranian ports as part of efforts to pressure Tehran into accepting terms more favourable to Washington. The move is also said to include evaluating possible military options. Iran, however, has dismissed US threats as "empty" and reiterated that it would continue to block access to the Strait of Hormuz for as long as it faces external pressure. Tehran has also warned of "unprecedented military action" if the blockade persists. Diplomatic efforts appear to have stalled, with no direct talks held since negotiations collapsed in Islamabad earlier this month. A fresh round of discussions expected over the weekend was reportedly called off after Iran declined to engage with US representatives. The escalating standoff has heightened concerns over global energy security, with markets reacting to the possibility of prolonged supply disruptions and further geopolitical instability in the region.

SPORTS

Kohli Creates T20 Asia Record

> Vikrama Vahini | Ahmedabad
Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) star Virat Kohli has etched his name in the record books once again after achieving a historic milestone during the IPL 2026 clash against Gujarat Titans. Although Kohli was dismissed for 28 runs off 13 balls in the match, he became the first batter in history to score over 12,000 T20 runs on Asian soil. He reached the landmark during his brief but impactful innings, further strengthening his legacy in T20 cricket.

Kohli has now accumulated 12,012 T20 runs in Asia from 340 innings, making him the only player to cross the 12,000-run mark in the region. No other batter is close to this record.

Pakistan's Shoaib Malik stands second on the list with 10,252 runs in Asia, while India's Rohit Sharma follows with 10,223 runs, highlighting Kohli's dominance in the format.

Overall, Kohli has scored 13,894 runs in 422 T20 matches, including nine centuries and 108 half-centuries. He has also struck more than 450 sixes and over 1,250 boundaries in the shortest format. In the ongoing IPL season, Kohli continues to be RCB's leading run-scorer. In nine matches so far, he has scored 379 runs at an average of over 54, including three scores of fifty-plus, showcasing consistent form.



Despite RCB's mixed campaign, Kohli's record-breaking performances continue to be a major highlight of the tournament.

GT vs RCB: Umpiring Storm, Kohli Furious

> Vikrama Vahini | Ahmedabad
A major umpiring controversy erupted during the IPL 2026 clash between Gujarat Titans and Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the Narendra Modi Stadium, after RCB skipper Rajat Patidar was controversially declared out.

The incident occurred when Jason Holder took a boundary-line catch off Arshad Khan's delivery. While replays appeared to show the ball touching the ground as Holder completed the catch, the third umpire ruled Patidar out, stating that the fielder had control of the ball.

The decision triggered a heated reaction from Virat Kohli and RCB head coach Andy Flower, who were seen engaging in a visible argument with the on-field and fourth umpire, briefly halting the game. The video of the incident quickly went viral, with fans expressing strong criticism on social media and accusing the officials of a poor decision.

Kedarnath Fake Video Busted; Fraudsters Jailed

> Vikrama Vahini | Rudraprayag
The Kedarnath Yatra 2026 witnessed a major controversy after a misleading video went viral on social media, prompting swift action from the district administration, which confirmed that the footage was fake and unrelated to the ongoing pilgrimage.



The video, which showed horses and mules in poor condition, was circulated online with claims that it reflected the current situation along the Yatra route. However, officials clarified that the clip was over three years old and had no connection to the present arrangements.

Fake Video Debunked After Verification

Chief Veterinary Officer Dr. Ashish Rawat verified the tag number of the animal seen in the video and confirmed that it had not been registered for the current Yatra. Following the incident, District Magistrate

Vishal Mishra ordered a detailed inspection along the Gaurikund-Kedarnath route, covering key stretches such as Bhimbali and Lincholi. Teams of veterinary officials and sector officers conducted ground checks and confirmed that none of the animals shown in the video were present, establishing that the viral content was misleading.

Strict Warning Against Misinformation

The administration issued a strong warning against spreading false or unverified information,

stating that any attempt to defame the Yatra or create panic among pilgrims would invite strict legal action.

Officials reiterated that arrangements related to security, healthcare, sanitation, transport, and animal welfare are functioning effectively to ensure a safe pilgrimage experience for devotees.

Helicopter Ticket Fraudsters Sentenced

In a separate development, a local court sentenced three individuals involved in helicopter

ticket fraud linked to the Kedarnath Yatra. Judicial Magistrate Santosh Pachhimi of Ukhimath sentenced Vikas Kumar, Saurabh Singh, and Puneet Kumar to three years of rigorous imprisonment along with fines under Section 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code. They were also awarded six months' imprisonment under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy). The accused had duped pilgrims by falsely promising helicopter ticket bookings.

Yatra Continues Smoothly

Authorities stated that with strict monitoring, legal enforcement, and improved facilities, the Kedarnath Yatra is progressing smoothly. The administration emphasised its commitment to maintaining safety, transparency, and trust for the thousands of pilgrims undertaking the annual pilgrimage.

PUNE POLICE ORDER 3 US NATIONALS TO LEAVE INDIA

> Vikrama Vahini | Pune
Authorities in Pune have issued a "Leave India Notice" to three United States citizens, directing them to exit the country by May 10, 2026, after they were found allegedly engaging in religious preaching while on tourist visas.



a police station for questioning.

The incident took place on April 27 in Shukrawar Peth area, where the trio—aged 53, 65, and 66—reportedly approached a private cab driver and handed him religious pamphlets in English, Hindi, and Marathi. They allegedly attempted to persuade him to adopt their beliefs.

Driver Alerts Police
The cab driver, noticing police personnel nearby for a local rally, alerted them about the interaction. The three individuals were subsequently detained and taken to

Violation of Visa Rules
During a search, officials recovered several religious pamphlets from their possession. Verification of documents revealed that the three had entered India between April 19 and April 21 on tourist visas.

Under Indian immigration laws, individuals on tourist visas are not permitted to engage in "tabligh" activities, which include preaching, teaching, or distributing religious material for conversion or

promotion.

Expulsion Order Issued

Following an inquiry by the Foreigners Registration Office (FRO) of Pune City Police, authorities concluded that the trio had violated visa conditions. Acting under provisions of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, officials issued a directive asking them to leave the country.

Police said the individuals must comply with the order and depart India within the stipulated deadline.

Ongoing Monitoring

Officials have reiterated that strict action will be taken against any foreign nationals found violating visa norms, particularly in matters involving restricted activities under specific visa categories.

Father Saves Child from Train Gap

> Vikrama Vahini | Bangladesh
A dramatic act of bravery at Bhairab Railway Station in Kishoreganj, Bangladesh, has gone viral after a father rescued his one-year-old child who fell between a moving train and the platform.

The incident occurred on April 28 around 3:30 pm when the Titas commuter train bound for Dhaka began leaving the station. In a moment of panic while attempting to alight, the child slipped from the father's grip and fell into the narrow gap between the train and the platform.

Without a second thought, the father jumped onto the tracks to save his child.

Trial Halt Approved at Parakanahatti Station

> Vikrama Vahini | Hubballi
In a move aimed at improving passenger convenience, South Western Railway has approved an experimental stoppage for select trains at Parakanahatti (PRKH) railway station.

As per the announcement, Train Nos. 17331/17332 Hubballi-Miraj-Hubballi Unreserved (UR) Express and Train Nos. 17333/17334 Castle Rock-Miraj-Castle Rock Unreserved (UR) Express will halt at Parakanahatti station for one minute.

Revised Timings at Parakanahatti

- * Train No. 17331 (Miraj-Hubballi): 08:18 / 08:19 hrs
- * Train No. 17332 (Hubballi-Miraj): 15:57 / 15:58 hrs
- * Train No. 17334 (Castle Rock-Miraj): 21:33 / 21:34 hrs
- * Train No. 17333 (Miraj-Castle Rock): 13:44 / 13:45 hrs

Trial Period of Three Months

The experimental stoppage will be effective for a period of three months, from May 1, 2026 to July 31, 2026. Railway authorities will assess passenger response during this period before taking a final decision on continuing the halt.

The initiative is expected to benefit commuters in and around Parakanahatti by improving accessibility and connectivity.

Lalit Hotel Hit: HC Orders ₹1,000 Cr Payment

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
The Delhi High Court has delivered a major setback to The Lalit Hotel group by upholding the decision of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) to cancel the licence of its Barakhamba Road property and directing Bharat Hotels Limited, the parent company, to clear pending dues exceeding ₹1,063 crore.

The case pertains to a 6-acre land parcel allotted in 1982 to Bharat Hotels Limited for 99 years to develop a five-star hotel ahead of the Asian Games. At the time of allotment, the annual licence fee was fixed at ₹1.45 crore, with a clause to revise it every 33 years. However, authorities later found that the fee structure had not been updated in line with prevailing market rates. In 2014, the NDMC issued a notice demanding revised dues calculated at an annual licence fee of ₹98 crore, amounting to a total arrear of ₹1,063.74 crore. The council also cancelled the hotel's licence citing violations of lease conditions.

In 2023, a single-judge bench of the Delhi High Court had overturned the cancellation order and ruled in favour of Bharat Hotels.

EC Probes 77 EVM Complaints; Re-Poll Decision Pending

> Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata
The Election Commission of India has launched a high-level inquiry after receiving 77 complaints related to alleged Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) malfunctions during the second phase of polling in West Bengal.



Special Observer, Subrata Gupta, to oversee the situation.

The complaints, reported from multiple constituencies including Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district, have raised concerns over the transparency and integrity of the electoral process. In response, the poll body has initiated a detailed investigation and deployed a

The Election Commission of India has launched a high-level probe into 77 complaints of alleged EVM malfunction in West Bengal, with a special observer deployed and a decision on re-polling to be taken after detailed verification of reports and evidence.

arrangements, and preservation protocols of the machines.

The Commission is currently examining CCTV footage and reports submitted by booth-level officers to verify the complaints.

West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Agarwal reiterated that the Commission is following a "zero tolerance" approach towards

any irregularities.

The deployment of a special observer is being viewed as a step to ensure impartiality and restore confidence in the electoral process. The Election Commission is expected to take a final decision on re-polling after reviewing the observer's report and completing its investigation.

US SLAMS PAKISTAN OVER IRAN ROUTE MOVE

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
The United States has sharply criticised Pakistan for allegedly facilitating Iran's trade by opening six overland transit routes, a move seen as undermining Washington's strategy to economically isolate Tehran amid ongoing tensions in the region.

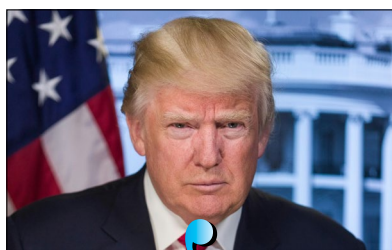
According to reports, Pakistan has officially notified six land routes to enable the movement of goods into Iran, allowing Tehran to bypass disrupted maritime trade through the Strait of Hormuz, where a US-led blockade has been in effect.

The development has drawn strong reactions from American analysts, with US national security expert Derek J Grossman accusing Islamabad of "double-dealing" Washington. In a post on social media, he said the move would help Iran evade US pressure and continue its oil and trade activities despite restrictions.

The decision is being viewed as a setback to the strategy of former US President Donald Trump, who has been advocating "maximum economic pressure" on Iran through sanctions and naval restrictions.

Pakistan's role as a mediator between the US and Iran has also come under scrutiny. International observers and diplomats have raised concerns over its neutrality, with some questioning its credibility in facilitating peace efforts between the two nations.

Earlier, Reuven Azar had expressed



Former US President Donald Trump reacted strongly to the development, stating that Pakistan's move "seriously undermines" American efforts to isolate Iran and enforce economic pressure. "We have been very clear about our strategy on Iran, and any country that helps them bypass our measures is not acting in good faith," Trump said. "Opening these routes only strengthens Iran at a time when we are trying to bring stability and accountability in the region. We will be reviewing this situation very closely."

doubts over Pakistan's reliability as a mediator, while Iranian officials too have indicated reservations about Islamabad's impartiality in negotiations.

Meanwhile, the US Navy's continued blockade of Iranian ports is part of a broader effort to pressure Tehran into negotiations over its nuclear programme and regional activities.

The situation has further escalated tensions in West Asia, with geopolitical uncertainties impacting global trade routes.

Khamenei Warns 'No US Role' in Hormuz Shift

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has announced plans to introduce sweeping legal and administrative controls over the Strait of Hormuz, signalling a major shift in the management of one of the world's most critical oil transit routes amid escalating tensions with the United States.

In a strongly worded statement, Khamenei accused the US of destabilising the region and exploiting key maritime corridors for strategic gain. He asserted that foreign powers "have no place" in the region and warned that those who interfere would face consequences.

"We will introduce new legal rules and administration for the Strait of Hormuz," Khamenei said, adding that the future of the region would be shaped without American presence and aimed at ensuring the security and welfare of regional nations.

The remarks come in the backdrop of heightened tensions following reports of a US naval blockade in the Strait earlier this month. The move is seen as part of broader geopolitical pressure linked

to Iran's nuclear programme and regional security dynamics.

The Strait of Hormuz, located between Iran and Oman and connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, carries a significant portion of global oil shipments, making it a highly sensitive and strategically vital corridor for global energy markets. Projecting Iran as a stabilising force in the region, Khamenei said the proposed changes would benefit Gulf nations by ensuring economic stability and regional cooperation. He emphasised that countries in the region share a "common destiny" and should work together without external interference.

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Trump-Putin 90-Min Secret Talks

> Vikrama Vahini | Washington

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a 90-minute phone conversation discussing key global issues, including the ongoing Ukraine conflict and rising tensions involving Iran.

According to reports, the leaders focused on efforts to de-escalate the Ukraine war, which has now entered its fifth year. Putin reportedly agreed to consider a temporary ceasefire around May 9, coinciding with Russia's Victory Day celebrations, a proposal supported by Trump.

The conversation also touched upon Iran's nuclear situation and broader instability in the Middle East. Kremlin sources said Putin expressed support for diplomatic efforts to extend ceasefire arrangements and praised Trump's approach in encouraging negotiations.

Both leaders reportedly shared concerns over Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's approach, suggesting that current policies are contributing to further escalation of the conflict.

The talks, described as significant and confidential, also covered other global security issues, marking a rare high-level engagement between Washington and Moscow amid



US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a 90-minute phone call discussing the Ukraine war, Iran tensions, and broader global security issues. The leaders reportedly explored a possible temporary ceasefire around May 9 and stressed diplomatic engagement to reduce escalating conflicts, including concerns over Ukraine's current approach.

ongoing geopolitical tensions.

The 90-minute conversation is being viewed as a rare diplomatic outreach between Washington and Moscow at a time of strained relations.

Analysts suggest that while no formal agreement has been announced, the discussion indicates possible backchannel efforts to explore limited de-escalation measures and revive dialogue on major geopolitical hotspots.