



# THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL

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## NATION

JD(U)-BJP 'conspiring' to get Tejashwi Yadav 'murdered', says Rabri Devi



## GAMES

Joe Root overtakes Ponting to become second highest run scorer in Test history at Old Trafford



**Cinema** Hulk Hogan's iconic roles beyond wrestling

**Edit** Centres of learning turning into centres of sexual assault



**JUSTICE VARMA** | Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju clears the air

## IMPEACHMENT MOTION TO BE MOVED IN LOK SABHA

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday said that the impeachment motion against Justice Yashwant Varma, in whose official residence a huge pile of burnt notes was recovered following a fire call in March this year, would be initiated in the Lok Sabha where 145 MPs had signed for the motion.

The Opposition had initiated a move in the Rajya Sabha by submitting a notice of impeachment with 65 signatures on Monday to then Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, an announcement on which by him in the House is seen by some as a reason behind his sudden resignation as Vice-President.

As speculation was rife on which House would initiate the proceedings, Parliamentary Af-



We shouldn't remain in any doubt, proceedings to remove Justice Yashwant Varma will begin in Lok Sabha. ...On Justice Yashwant Varma, we had clearly said that if there is corruption in the judiciary on that matter, we all should work together and move a motion together

Kiren Rijiju, Parliamentary Affairs Minister



Justice Yashwant Varma

fairs Minister Kiren Rijiju cleared the air by announcing after a Business Advisory Committee meeting of the LS that, "We shouldn't remain in any doubt, proceedings to remove Justice Yashwant Varma will begin in Lok Sabha."

He added that all the parties would move unitedly on the

issue. "On Justice Yashwant Varma, we had clearly said that if there is corruption in the judiciary on that matter, we all should work together and move a motion together."

But not giving a timeline, he added that other matters would be taken after the discussion on Operation Sindoor.

Incidentally, the issue of the Opposition submitting a notice of impeachment to Dhankhar and his announcement of having received one with 63 signatures had not gone down well with the Centre as it had already collected 145 signatures to move the motion in the LS. Meanwhile, it is learnt that

the LS Speaker, in concurrence with the RS, will upon formal submission of the "removal motion" form a three-member committee comprising a sitting Supreme Court judge, a High Court judge and a noted jurist to probe the charges against Justice Varma. Impeachment of the judge would only be proceeded with in case sufficient reasons are found in the report to proceed against the judge.

Sources said the impeachment notice given by the Opposition in RS would be junked, since there was no need for withdrawal as it was never adopted by the House.

The Centre is also learnt to have obtained the signatures of some Opposition MPs on the impeachment notice moved in LS. Rijiju said the government has spoken to some leaders.

## In Male, Modi affirms 'neighbourhood first'

Ashwin Ahmad  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a warm welcome at Velana International Airport in Male on Friday, marking the second leg of his foreign tour following a high-level meeting with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer in the UK to finalise the contours of a Free Trade Agreement.

Accompanied by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Modi was received at the airport by Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu in a symbolic gesture of goodwill. The visit, which lasts till Saturday, comes at the personal invitation of President Muizzu, who is hosting his first official state guest since assuming office in November 2023.

"Deeply touched by the gesture of President Muizzu to



come to the airport to welcome me. I am confident that India-Maldives friendship will scale new heights of progress in the times to come," Modi tweeted upon arrival.

Following a ceremonial reception, the two leaders held one-on-one and delegation-level talks. Key announcements followed the discussions, including the extension of a ₹4,850 crore Line of Credit by

India, the initiation of talks towards a Free Trade Agreement, and a push for UPI adoption across the Maldives to bolster tourism and retail.

"To speed up our shared investment, we will soon finalise the Bilateral Investment Treaty. Talks on the Free Trade Agreement have also begun," Modi said at a joint press briefing.

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## Mahua: 56L infiltrators? What was MHA doing?

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra on Friday launched a blistering attack on the Narendra Modi government, demanding the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the Election Commission's (EC) revelation that 56 lakh names were being struck off Bihar's electoral rolls as part of its Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

Speaking to reporters at the steps of Parliament, Moitra questioned how such a large number of allegedly ineligible voters had managed to find their way onto the rolls. "If the Central government believes that 56 lakh people have infiltrated Bihar, what was the Home Ministry doing all this while?" she asked pointedly.

The EC had released the data on Wednesday, listing 56 lakh deletions which include 20 lakh deceased individuals, 28 lakh voters who had migrated to other states, 7 lakh people registered in multiple locations, and 1 lakh voters who were uncontactable. The data has sparked a political storm, with Opposition parties questioning both its accuracy and the mo-



Mahua Moitra

tives behind the exercise. Moitra alleged that the EC was acting as an extension of the ruling BJP, rather than functioning as an independent constitutional body. "Never before in India's history have we witnessed such a sweeping deletion of names. The Chief Election Commissioner speaks more like a BJP spokesperson than a neutral official," she charged.

She also raised concerns over the sudden escalation in numbers, pointing out that the figure for untraceable voters had jumped from 11,000 to over 1 lakh within 24 hours. "This raises serious doubts about the transparency and intent behind the entire exercise," Moitra said.

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## Deadlock ends, Op Sindoor debate Monday

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

The impasse in Parliament over discussions on Operation Sindoor and related international developments appears to be nearing an end. A meeting of the Lok Sabha's Business Advisory Committee (BAC) on Friday decided that the matter will be taken up for debate in the Lower House on Monday.

Earlier this week, the BAC had allocated 16 hours for the discussion.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced, "Today, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla convened the BAC meeting, and it was reiterated that we are ready for a discussion on Operation Sindoor. It has now been decided that there will be a special discussion on the Palghat terror attack and Operation Sindoor on Monday, July 28."

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## Rahul owns mistake on caste census delay

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday called for a national caste survey based on the model followed in Telangana, calling it a "milestone for social justice in the country."

Speaking at the "Bhagidari Nyay Sammelan" organised by the Congress, Gandhi said that while the party had done good work on issues related to Dalits, tribals, and women, such as the Land Acquisition Bill, MNREGA, Right to Food, the Tribal Bill, and the Niyamgiri struggle, it had fallen short when it came to the OBC community.

"One shortcoming remained in the Congress party and my work," he said. "I didn't protect the OBC community the way I



should have. The reason is that I didn't deeply understand the OBC issues at that time."

He added that the problems of Dalits are more visible and easier to understand, while those of OBCs often remain hidden. "If I had known about your issues and problems at that time, I would have conducted a caste-based census right then. That was my mistake, which I am going to correct," he said.

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## Pak threshold for talks: 'Less than 50 weapons'

PTI  
NEW DELHI

Vice Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Narmadeshwar Tiwari, on Friday highlighted the impact of India's recent Operation Sindoor, stating that fewer than 50 weapons were enough to bring an adversary to the negotiating table. He called the operation an important example for future military study.

Speaking during an interactive session at a seminar organised by the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) and the College of Air Warfare, Air Marshal Tiwari emphasised the cost-effectiveness of air power. "There is no greater example... what we did in Operation Sindoor," he said. "Fewer than 50 weapons can bring an adversary



There is no greater example... what we did in Operation Sindoor... Fewer than 50 weapons can bring an adversary to a talking table.

Air Marshal Narmadeshwar Tiwari  
Vice Chief of Air Staff



Air Marshal Narmadeshwar Tiwari

to a talking table." He added that the role of manned aircraft continues to be significant. "If you work out unmanned versus manned systems, I think manned still has a huge advantage and will remain for some time," he said.

The seminar, held in New Delhi, also saw the presence of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

General Anil Chauhan, former Air Force chiefs, and defence attaches from various countries.

Addressing the seminar at Subroto Park, General Chauhan confirmed that Operation Sindoor is "still ongoing" and said India's military preparedness must remain high at all times.

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## Govt clarifies Op Sindoor situation

In a written response to the query in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said India and Pakistan agreed on May 10 for a "cessation of firing and military activity as a result of direct contact between the DGMOs of both nations. This contact was initiated by the Pakistani side". Between April 22 when the Pahalgam terrorist attack happened and May 10, there were a "number of diplomatic conversations with various countries at different levels, including with the United States," the minister

said. "With specific regard to the US, it was conveyed to Vice President JD Vance on May 9 that India would 'appropriately respond' if Pakistan launched a major attack. The issue of our trade discussions did not come up in the context of conversations pertaining to the conflict," he added. As regards any proposal for third-party mediation, "our long standing position remains that any outstanding issue with Pakistan will be discussed only bilaterally. This has been made clear to all nations, including by the PM to the US President", he said.

Sona Comstar, reportedly died of a heart attack while playing polo on June 12. But his mother — a former chairperson of the Sona Group and widow of Dr Surinder Kapur — alleges the death is being "misrepresented" and that crucial facts are being concealed.

Speaking through senior advocate Vaibhav Gaggar, Rani Kapur has urged the Board of Directors to cancel the company's 29th Annual General Meeting (AGM),

scheduled for July 25. "She was coerced into signing certain documents under duress shortly after her son's passing," Gaggar said, calling the circumstances "deeply suspicious."

In a detailed letter to the board and shareholders, Kapur claimed she had been kept in the dark about key developments. "Despite repeated requests, no official account of the incident has been shared," she wrote, adding that she had also been denied access to financial

records and board-level communications.

The timing of the AGM — which includes resolutions proposing new board appointments — has also come under fire. Kapur alleged that individuals are falsely claiming to represent the Kapur family in order to influence corporate succession. "I have nominated no one, nor given consent to anyone to represent me," she clarified.

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## Sunjay Kapur's mom alleges foul play in his death

FPJ News Service  
MUMBAI

In a dramatic turn of events, Rani Kapur, mother of late billionaire industrialist Sunjay Kapur and former mother-in-law of actress Karishma Kapoor, has publicly challenged the official narrative surrounding her son's sudden death in London last month, calling it "far more troubling" than a simple cardiac arrest.

Sunjay Kapur, chairman of automotive tech giant

offgrid



Rani Kapur questions son's 'cardiac arrest', seeks Sona Comstra AGM deferment amid claims of coercion and concealment. Sona Comstra rubbishes her allegations.

## GOVERNOR'S INACTION ON BILLS

## SC ALLOWS KERALA TO WITHDRAW PLEAS

Online Report  
NEW DELHI

The SC on Friday allowed Kerala government to withdraw the two petitions filed by it in 2023 against the Governor over the delay in granting assent to the bills passed by the assembly. A bench comprising Justice PS Narasimha and Justice AS Chandurkar passed the order rejecting the objections raised by the Centre to the State's bid to withdraw the matters. Today,

Senior Advocate KK Venugopal, for the State, reiterated his submission that the State wanted to simply withdraw the petitions.

Live Law reports that the Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta suggested that the State's petitions could be tagged along with the President's reference on the issue of timelines for Governors to act on Bills, which is now before a Constitution Bench.

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# Birds no burden? State has no health data on pigeons

Dhairya Gajara

MUMBAI

The state of Maharashtra has no data available on health issues reported due to pigeon droppings or feathers, revealed the state's urban development department (UDD) in a reply to RTI query filed by animal activist Roshan Pathak.

Amid the debate over the closure of kabutar khanas and ban on pigeon feeding in the city, the Bombay High Court on Thursday noted serious public health concerns arising

from pigeon droppings. While it extended the interim protection against demolition of kabutar khanas, it called for medical data to assess the impact on citizens.

The RTI query also asked the state if any permissions were secured from the court before shutting down the pigeon feeding spots. The state replied that it is unable to provide the data as it is not available in their records.

The RTI also sought information about whether the kabutar khanas are being planned to relocate to any



alternate place but the state did not provide any different reply. UDD, which is the parent department of the BMC,

passed the parcel to the civic body saying that the queries are related to the municipal corporation.

Pathak, who is the animal rights advisor at Pure Animal Lovers (PAL) Foundation, said, "It was only after receiving directions from the Maharashtra government that the BMC initiated action and now its parent body is saying that they do not have any data. Their absurd steps will lead to a lot of pigeons dying of starvation and only the state will be responsible for it. They are acting against these innocent birds as if they plan to eradicate them from the city. Rather than taking action against the rising pollution in

the city, which is scientifically proven to cause serious respiratory issues to humans, they are going all out against the pigeons."

Notably, BMC has undertaken a drive to stop pigeon feeding at kabutar khanas across the city after the state government directed the civic body to immediately shut down pigeon feeding points across the city. Starting with a drive to clear encroachments and demolish a small part of the Dadar Kabutar Khana, the civic body has now started imposing fines on feeders.

# SEC permits women dual name option

Ravikiran Deshmukh

MUMBAI

The State Election Commission (SEC), currently preparing for the upcoming local and civic body elections, has decided to allow women candidates to use both their names – before or after marriage – on electronic voting machines (EVMs), if they desired.

The decision offers a choice to the women candidates, but with a condition that the nomination paper can be filed as per their name in the voters' list.

The state has reserved 50% seats in the local and civic bodies for women. The decision by the SEC, issued recently, says that after filing the nomination, women candidates can submit an application to the returning officer and request to have their pre-marriage or post-marriage name along with the name in the voters' list. This application can be submitted before the withdrawal date of the candidature.

The desirable candidates will have to submit some documents, such as the marriage certificate and a gazette notification, if they have changed their name after marriage. If the gazette notification is not available, they can submit one of the 17 proofs prescribed by the SEC in 2011, says the order signed by Suresh Kakani, the secretary of the Election Commission.

The women candidates can request that both names

## IN BRIEF

1 SEC allows women candidates to use both their names – before or after marriage – on electronic EVMs

2 However, the nomination paper can be filed as per their name in the voters' list

3 Desirable candidates will have to submit some documents, such as the marriage certificate and a gazette notification

appear on the EVM, but that can be fit into the available space on the machine, the SEC has clarified.

When contacted, the Kakani said the decision will benefit the women candidates as they will have a choice to maintain their identity before the electorate. Some women candidates are known by their maiden names, but some of them with their changed names after marriage.

The state has 29 municipal corporations, 244 municipal councils and 147 nagar panchayats, 32 zilla parishads and 336 panchayat samitis due for the elections.

The seats reserved for women candidates in the corporations are more than 1370, whereas 3,885 seats are reserved in councils and nagar panchayats.

## Briefs

### Kokate gaming: Probe ordered

**Mumbai:** Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar on Friday said that he has ordered a detailed inquiry into the viral video of agriculture minister Manikrao Kokate playing a game on his mobile inside the Assembly. Deputy CM Ajit Pawar said he would speak to Kokate and will take an appropriate decision. Activists of Chhava Sanghatna, who were assaulted by NCP workers, met Pawar and demanded Kokate's ouster.

### No posts after retirement: CJI

**Amravati:** Chief Justice of India BR Gavai on Friday said that he will not accept any post after retirement. He was speaking after being felicitated at Darapur. "I will get more time after retirement, so I will try to spend more time in Darapur, Amravati and Nagpur," he said. Gavai would be retiring in November this year.

### Ceiling falls in Mantralaya

**Mumbai:** A small portion of the ceiling collapsed in the 7th floor office of government's general administration department (GAD) in the Mantralaya complex on Friday, though no one was hurt in the incident. The incident took place in the afternoon when a meeting was underway at the GAD office located in the state secretary's Annex building.

# RTI uncovers serious lapses in transparency

## MUTP FUND

Kamal Mishra

MUMBAI

A routine Right to Information (RTI) application filed by commuter rights activist Samir Zaveri has exposed serious lapses in transparency and inter-agency coordination regarding the state government's financial contributions to the Mumbai Suburban Railway system under the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP).

Zaveri submitted his RTI application on June 19, seeking detailed information from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) about the total amount paid by the state towards train procurement and infrastructure development in the Mumbai suburban rail network.

Under MUTP, funding for railway projects is split equally between the state and the Indian Railways, each bearing 50% of the cost. The projects include the purchase of new train sets, upgrading existing infrastructure, and expanding the suburban railway network. However, Zaveri's request has been bounced between departments without a definitive answer.

On July 14, the Urban Development Department

informed him that his RTI request had been transferred to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), stating the information fell under their jurisdiction. Just a week later, on July 21, MMRDA sent a letter to Zaveri forwarding his application yet again, this time to the Central Railway office at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT).

"This raises serious concerns," said Zaveri, reacting to the continued deflection. "Despite the fact that the Maharashtra government has paid the Railways for the purchase of trains for the Mumbai suburban section, no authority has so far provided a detailed breakdown or official record of the actual amount paid."

Zaveri criticised the apparent lack of accountability and the absence of a centralised record-keeping mechanism for such substantial public expenditure. "I am shocked by the absence of a central database or statement from the Government of Maharashtra detailing such a massive expenditure. We are talking about hundreds of crores in taxpayers' money," he said.

Zaveri has vowed to escalate the matter further and said he plans to file additional RTI applications and approach higher authorities if necessary.

## INFRA PUSH | The minister shared this info in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha

# ‘Centre approved ₹52,724cr for city railway network’

Kamal Mishra

MUMBAI

The Central government has already approved a massive investment of Rs52,724 crore for the upgradation and expansion of Mumbai's suburban railway network under Phases II, III and IIIA of the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP), the minister of railways informed the Rajya Sabha on Friday in a written reply to a member's question.

Breaking down the allocations, the minister stated that Rs8,087 crore has been allotted for MUTP-II, Rs10,947 crore for MUTP-III and the largest sum of Rs33,690 crore for MUTP-IIIA. The projects are being jointly implemented by the Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Ltd (MRVC), a public sector undertaking under the ministry of railways and the Maharashtra government, following a 50:50 cost-sharing model.

Under MUTP-III, significant infrastructure projects are underway, including the new Panvel-Karjat suburban corridor, quadrupling of the Virar-Dahanu rail line and construction of an elevated corridor between Airoli and Kalva.

Indian Railways has also



<b>Allocation</b>	
MUTP-II	<b>₹8,087 cr</b>
MUTP-III	<b>₹10,947 cr</b>
MUTP-IIIA	<b>₹33,690 cr</b>

<b>238</b>	New 12-car rakes sanctioned under MUTP-III and IIIA
<b>cost ₹19,293 cr</b>	
Projects will be jointly executed by Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Ltd and Maha govt on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis	

prioritised the heavily congested Churchgate-Virar corridor: Plans are in motion for multi-tracking the route, including four tracks between Churchgate and Mumbai Central, eight tracks from Mumbai Central to Borivali and six tracks between Borivali and Virar. On the CSMT-Panvel stretch, work has already begun for the construction of the fifth and sixth lines between Kurla and Parel.

"In a bid to further decongest the suburban rail system, 238 new 12-car rakes have been approved under MUTP-III and IIIA, at a cost of Rs 19,293 crore," the minister stated.

Apart from network expansion, the ministry of railways is working toward integrating suburban rail stations with metro networks. Presently, Andheri East and Ghatkopar railway stations are integrated with nearby metro stations.

# Fadnavis meets Union ministers, cabinet reshuffle rumours swirl

The CM meets Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman and JP Nadda to secure approvals and grants for key projects; collects accolades for fiscal prudence

Ravikiran Deshmukh

MUMBAI

The state political circles were abuzz with rumours of a cabinet reshuffle after Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, on Friday, met senior Union ministers in New Delhi to secure approvals and grants for some crucial projects. Fadnavis met Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, JP Nadda and Shivraj Singh Chouhan. He also held meetings with NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam and member Rajiv Gauba, among others.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA claimed as many as eight Maharashtra portfolios will get new ministers, including Assembly Speaker Rahul Narvekar, who could be replaced with Sudhir Mungantiwar. Raut's claim was linked with Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's statement on agriculture minister Manikrao Kokate, who has recently been caught in a series of controversies. However, Shrikant Shinde, the MP son of Deputy CM Eknath Shinde, denied any such plans.

Meanwhile, the CM discussed with Sitharaman five projects for which Maharashtra is seeking funds from global financial institutions. The state needs over \$3.5 billion as per a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). Sitharaman appreciated Maharashtra's fiscal prudence and directed the Department of Economic



Maharashtra Strengthening Coastal Resilience and the Economy Project (M-SHORE) (\$500 million from World Bank) to mitigate sea level rise along the coastline using nature-based solutions.	Maharashtra Urban WSS & Reuse Programme (\$500 million from World Bank) to treat 100% municipal wastewater and reuse it for industrial purposes	Cement roads in villages with population of over 1,000, (\$500 million each for coastal erosion prevention and municipal wastewater treatment and reuse)
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Affairs (DEA) to approve the multi-year pipeline for the Mukhyamantri Gram Sadak Yojana (\$1 billion from the Asian Development Bank) to connect villages with over 1,000 population to the core road network for last-mile connectivity (see box for other projects).

In the meeting with Nadda, the CM discussed a proposed fertiliser manufacturing plant in Nagpur district. The 12.7 lakh-tonne capacity project will be a joint venture involving GAIL, the fertilisers department and the state government. The state has requested a subsidy and the

Centre's support for the Rs10,000 crore project.

During his meeting with Chouhan, the CM requested a push for a Rs22,490 crore project to build 14,000km of cement roads in rural areas, with maintenance-free standards for 25 years. The state is looking for financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank.

At the NITI Aayog meeting, Fadnavis discussed several tech-driven and sustainable initiatives, including AI-based NCD (non-communicable disease) screening, Rs4,300 crore bamboo-based industrial cluster, Marathwada water

grid, Daman Ganga-Godavari river-linking project and skill development initiatives connecting ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes) with private industry.

NITI Aayog officials lauded the state's fiscal prudence – maintaining the limit of borrowings at 18% against the permitted 25% under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM), the CMO stated.

The meetings with Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh were courtesy calls where issues related to the state's ongoing Central collaborations were discussed, the CMO stated.

# HC junks ‘baseless’ pleas, penalises petitioners ₹1L each

FPJ News Service

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has dismissed two "totally baseless" petitions, filed by Umesh Bhole and Agri Sprayers TIM Association, challenging a Maharashtra Government Resolution (GR) dated March 12, 2024, regarding the procurement and supply of certain agricultural items. A bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Sandeep Marne, on July 22, also imposed a cost of Rs1 lakh each on the petitioners.

The petitions sought to challenge the special action plan aimed at enhancing productivity and value chain development for cotton, soybean, and other oilseeds. The GR provides for the procurement and distribution of five specific items – battery-operated sprayers, nano urea, nano DAP, metaldehyde pesticide, and cotton storage bags – through state agencies.

The bench held that no interference was warranted in the tender process executed for procuring these items, and found the allega-

## Pleas challenged govt's action plan aimed at enhancing productivity and value chain devpt for crops

tions of inflated prices and favouritism to contractors baseless. It also noted that the petitions were filed by an association of sprayer manufacturers, who lacked the legal standing to challenge the government's policy decision.

The petitioners had argued that these five items were previously part of a 2016 GR that allowed subsidies through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme, enabling farmers to purchase products from local markets at competitive prices. They claimed the new GR resulted in inflated rates and hurt farmers' interests.

However, senior advocate Venkatesh Dhond, representing the state, countered that the 2024 GR was issued under a new scheme with broader objectives focused on long-term productivity gains, and not just procurement.

# HC raps BMC over illegal footpath stall

Urvi Mahajani

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has pulled up the BMC for failing to act against a blatantly illegal stall set up on a footpath despite its earlier demolition in 2019. The court has directed the civic chief to initiate inquiries against officers who allowed the stall uncheked for nearly six years.

The HC was hearing a petition filed by Nirvana CHS in Kanjurmarg East raising serious grievance of an encroachment on the footpath by Gaurab Pandey allegedly selling paan, bidi and gutkha. The society complained that the stall was re-erected by Pandey, after being removed by the BMC in 2019.

"Such lawlessness cannot be

permitted," the bench of Justices Girish Kulkarni and Arif Doctor remarked.

The BMC informed the court that a notice under Section 314 of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act was issued to Pandey on July 23, directing removal of the stall within 48 hours. Surprisingly, the notice was received by the respondent's father.

The court observed, "It is astonishing that even an electricity connection was granted to this illegal structure," and expressed concern that "only when aggrieved citizens approach the court is action finally taken."

The court has asked for a compliance report within six weeks and listed the matter for hearing on September 4.

## Over 1.3 cr vehicles used Atal Setu since launch

Over **1.3 crore** vehicles have used the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), also known as Atal Setu, since it opened to the public on January 13, 2024, with private cars accounting for the lion's share of the traffic (91%).



From Jan 13, 2024, to July 24, 2025

Private cars	MAV (3 axle)
<b>1,20,86,076</b>	<b>4,15,872</b>
LCV/minibuses	MAV (4-6 axle)
<b>1,71,711</b>	<b>2,85,117</b>
Buses / 2-axle trucks	Oversize vehicles
<b>2,02,864</b>	<b>1,537</b>

**TOTAL 1,31,63,177**

The bridge, country's longest sea link, has significantly cut down the travel time between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai from an hour to under 20 minutes

**First day of op**  
**28,176**  
Vehicles used the bridge

**₹54.77 lakh**  
generated in toll revenue

## Toll charges

Sewri to Chirle (single trip)	<b>₹250</b>
Sewri to Ulwe	<b>₹200</b>
Return trip for passenger cars	<b>₹300</b>
Daily pass	<b>₹500</b>
Monthly pass	<b>₹10,000</b>



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BE CAUTIOUS | 100 mm rainfall led to waterlogging; road, air traffic in tizzy

# Orange alert after Friday rain fury



Western Express Highway

Vijay Gohil



Andheri subway was shut thrice on Friday

**FPJ News Service**  
MUMBAI

As the city was gearing up for the weekend, heavy downpour on Friday led to waterlogging in several low-lying areas and disrupted road and air traffic. Many neighbourhoods were drenched in more than 100 mm rains.

The intensity of the downpour can be gauged by the fact that the Andheri subway, which has earned the notoriety of a chronic flooding spot, had to be shut thrice due to inundation. The local train and BEST services mostly remained unaffected. Of 481 dewatering pumps, 340 of them were operated across Mumbai.

Rains are expected to continue lashing the city as the India Meteorological Department has placed Mumbai and Thane under orange alert, warning of heavy rainfall today (Saturday), while a red alert has been sounded for Palghar.

As per local forecast for the

**340**  
Dewatering pumps  
operated across Mumbai  
**Up to 10 minutes**  
CR local train delay

next 48 hours, the clouds will be generally cloudy with possibility of heavy to very heavy rain in the city and suburbs. Occasional gusty winds reaching 40-50 kmph are also very likely. The maximum and minimum temperatures will be around 29°C and 24°C, respectively.

The intense spells started on Thursday night and continued the entire day on Friday. The suburbs were more hit than the city areas. In a period of 12 hours (from Thursday 7pm to Friday 7pm) the weather stations which received more than 100 mm rains include: Malpa Dongari, Andheri (122 mm); K-West ward office, Andheri West (112 mm); Aarey Road (107 mm); Nariyalwadi, Santacruz (109 mm), BKC fire station (103 mm), Ramabai Nagar, Ghatkopar (105 mm),

Tagore Nagar, Vikhroli (102 mm) and Powai (103 mm). The uninterrupted rains slowed down air traffic, with multiple flights recording departure delays; an average 34 minutes. According to Flightradar24, the Mumbai airport recorded a disruption index of 2.8 signalling minor problems with some delays or a few cancellations.

IndiGo said that it was “doing everything possible” to keep the schedules intact, while Akasa Air requested travellers to plan additional travel time to reach the airport due to traffic and congestion.

Meanwhile, Mumbai’s suburban railway services did not witness significant disruption. A Western Railway spokesperson confirmed that locals were running normally. However, his Central Railway counterpart said that suburban trains were experiencing delays of eight to 10 minutes. A BEST official said that while some bus routes experienced waterlogging, the majority of services ran as per schedule.

# End to months of darkness, Eastern Freeway finally fully lit



New street lights

**Devashri Bhujbal**  
MUMBAI

Several months after reeling in darkness, the Eastern Freeway, which connects south Mumbai from P D’mello Road to the eastern suburbs at Ghatkopar-Mankhurd Link Road, finally has all its street lights working. Following a series of reports in the FPJ, the BMC’s mechanical and electrical (M&E) department ensured all non-operational lights were fixed.

On June 26, the FPJ had first reported that several sections of the 16.8-km signal-free corridor were in the dark due to defunct street lights, making it very risky to drive. The BEST then sent a team for inspection and repaired lights at 12 spots. However, the 200-metre sec-

tion on either side of the tunnel near the Chembur exit remained dark due to delay in installing new bulbs by the M&E department.

On July 16, the FPJ reported that replacement of as many as 80 LED bulbs was delayed, with the officials saying that it would take at least a month to change the bulbs. The work was completed in less than 10 days.

There is still an unlit area near the Chembur-end. As soon as motorists cross the tunnel and turn left towards Chembur, the area is totally dark because there are no street lights. The FPJ is taking up this issue also with the BMC. M&E department chief engineer Krishna Perekar and his deputy Vidhyadhar Mhatre could not be reached for comment.



# Court rebuke over flooding: KEM Hosp takes preventive steps, deploys workers

5 workers cleaning drains in shifts; 2 more dewatering pumps installed, taking count to six

**Devashri Bhujbal**  
MUMBAI

After the Bombay High Court pulled up the BMC-run KEM Hospital for waterlogging in its pediatrics section in May, the hospital administration has deployed workers for flood prevention.

Talking to The FPJ, an official from the Parel-based hospital said, “The deployment of workers started from mid-June and five of them work per shift. The storm water drains department has installed two more dewatering pumps, taking the count



May 26 situation

to six.” The labourers are hired on a monthly basis and deployed to clean drains everyday. The dewatering pumps are specially installed

near the pediatrics department, he added.

The official asserted that it’s rare that water accumulates in the hospital premises. “The

city experienced very heavy rainfall on May 26, which was very earlier than the usual monsoon onset. We have implemented flood prevention measures to ensure such incidents are not repeated,” the official said.

Due to heavy downpour on May 26, the waiting area of the paediatric department witnessed waterlogging, putting the patients and their family members at risk. However, the hospital administration had claimed that it was “water accumulation” and not waterlogging. In an affidavit submitted to the high court, it had

said that the services were not majorly affected.

However, the high court had expressed serious concern and directed the BMC to urgently inspect the hospital and suggest remedial measures. The court heard the matter following media reports showing patients sitting in ankle-deep water.

“This is a hospital and there has to be hygiene. Management cannot allow this to happen. This cannot become a recurring situation. KEM was once among the top hospitals in India,” the court had observed.

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## 4-yr-old falls to death from 12th floor

**Palghar:** A four-year-old girl died after falling from the window of a 12th floor flat in Vasai in Palghar district, a police official said on Friday. The incident took place at 8.30pm on July 22, the Naigaon police station official said.

“She had come with her mother to visit a relative. When they were set to return, the woman placed the child on a shoe rack near a window while she got busy with something. The child moved a bit and fell from the open window, which did not have grills, near the shoe rack,” he said. “The child died on the spot. An accidental death case has been registered and the post mortem report is awaited,” the official added.

A video of the incident went viral on social media soon after. —PTI

## Briefs

### Teen dies of ‘low BP’

**Mumbai:** A 19-year-old girl died outside the Nirmal Nagar College gate in Kandivali on Friday morning. A preliminary investigation revealed that the deceased, Harshita Pal, died due to low blood pressure. A post-mortem was conducted at Bhagwati Hospital in Borivali West, for which the report is pending. The Samta Nagar police have registered an accidental death report and recorded her father’s statement. Harshita had a history of low blood pressure and had previously fallen unconscious twice due to the condition. She was a third-year BSc IT student and resided in Hanuman Nagar, Kandivali East. A doctor noted that while people with low blood pressure are not always at risk, a sudden or severe drop can be life-threatening.

### Truck crushes woman & child

**Thane:** A 30-year-old woman, Sony Banoo, and her seven-year-old nephew, Abdul Siddique Ansari, died after being hit by a speeding truck in Bhiwandi on Thursday. The incident occurred on Bhiwandi-Kalyan Road near Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, where Sony had taken her nephew to visit a hospitalised cousin. The truck driver, Raju Kalge, 30, was driving recklessly and crushed them near the hospital gate. Both victims suffered severe injuries and were rushed to the hospital, where Sony was declared dead, and the child succumbed to injuries later. The driver has been arrested, and an FIR has been registered.

### 7 B’deshis held, to be deported

**Megha Kuchik**  
MUMBAI

The MIDC police arrested seven Bangladeshi nationals from Andheri East and Pune on June 24 for living illegally in India. The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court has ordered their deportation. Investigating officer Jagtap completed the probe in 10 days and filed a chargesheet. Within a month, the court convicted all seven and sentenced them to one month’s jail term along with a fine of Rs500. If the fine is not paid, an additional two-day imprisonment will be imposed.

Acting on a tip-off, sub-inspector Jagtap and his team raided the main gate of a gurdwara in Andheri East and detained Bayazid Ayub Sheikh, 47, a resident of Narela district, Bangladesh. He was found to be living illegally in India and was in contact with other Bangladeshi nationals. Under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner of Police Datta Nalawade, Sheikh was further interrogated. All were residing in India without valid documents. A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Passport (Entry into India) Act and the Foreigners Act.

## HALF THE FARE, NOT STRUGGLE | 42% of women surveyed reported no change in their travel behaviour after fare subsidy

# 50% fare subsidy misses key daily commute needs

**Kamal Mishra**  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra’s flagship ‘Mahila Samman Yojana’, which offers a 50% fare subsidy for women on intercity bus travel, has made a modest impact on women’s mobility and employment but falls short compared to states offering full-fare subsidies for daily intracity travel, according to a new study.

The report — “Beyond Free Rides: A Multi-State Assessment of Women’s Bus Fare Subsidy Schemes in Urban India” — was commissioned by the Sustainable Mobility Network in collaboration with Parisar and the Waatavaran Foundation and conducted by the economic research firm Nikore Associates. The study is based on over 2,500 surveys, along with multiple focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted across 10 cities in five states: Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal, and Maharashtra. In Maharashtra, 750 respondents — 600 women and 150 men — were surveyed in Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur.

Key findings of the study highlight the limited impact in Maharashtra.

“In Maharashtra’s three largest cities—Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur—42% of women surveyed reported no change in their travel behaviour after the introduction of the half-fare scheme. Only 10% reported being able to travel longer distances, compared to 32% in cities like Delhi and Bengaluru that offer free intracity bus travel,” stated the



File Photo

●● Maharashtra’s partial subsidies are a start, but daily city-level commuting support is what will really unlock economic and social mobility for women,

**Mitali Nikore**

report.

“The intercity focus misses the mark when it comes to everyday needs like commuting to work, school, or accessing healthcare,” said Ranjit Gadgil, Programme Director at the Pune-based think tank Parisar. “The recent fare hikes in Mumbai and Pune and subsequent ridership drops are clear signals that affordability continues to be a barrier.”

The employment outcomes were also muted: just 5% of women across the three cities in Maharashtra reported improved job access, with Mumbai registering only a 3% gain. In contrast, cities with fare-free urban bus travel reported average employment gains of 16%, with Bengaluru leading at 23%. Experts argue that while

the Mahila Samman Yojana is a positive step, its intercity focus limits its potential to transform women’s lives at scale.

“Maharashtra’s partial subsidies are a start, but daily city-level commuting support is what will really unlock economic and social mobility for women,” said Mitali Nikore, Founder and Chief Economist at Nikore Associates. “With the right investments in urban transport—fleet expansion, safer routes, and gender-sensitive services—we can drive equitable outcomes.”

The study also notes that across all cities with bus fare subsidies—partial or full—26% of women reported feeling safer in buses. Furthermore, more than one in four women in fare-free cities shifted to buses after fares were eliminated, signalling untapped demand.

Contrary to concerns about the financial sustainability of fare-free schemes, the report points to states like Delhi and Karnataka, where such programs have delivered strong returns through increased ridership, improved job

### IN BRIEF

**1 Beyond Free Rides by Nikore Associates, surveying 2,500 across 10 cities in 5 states, including 750 in Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur**

**2 50% fare subsidy for intercity bus travel; 42% of women report no travel behaviour change**

**3 Only 10% travel longer distances; 5% report better job access (3% in Mumbai) vs. 16% in fare-free cities (23% in Bengaluru)**

**4 Safety & Demand: 26% feel safer on buses; 25%+ shift to buses in fare-free cities**

access, and social benefits.

“Fare-free buses are not just about mobility—they empower women to take control of their lives, invest in their futures, and participate more fully in the economy,” said Bhagwan Kesbhat, CEO of the Waatavaran Foundation.

To truly make mobility equitable, the report recommends that Maharashtra expand the Mahila Samman Yojana to cover intracity bus travel. It also calls for supporting reforms such as investments in fleet capacity and frequency, reliable and accessible routes, gender sensitisation for transport workers, and infrastructure for safe first- and last-mile connectivity.

## Kalina drug case: No progress even after 11 months

**Megha Kuchik**  
MUMBAI

There has been no significant progress in the drug planting incident in Kalina involving four police personnel, even after almost 11 months. The Vākola police have neither taken any action against the four accused police personnel, nor have they filed the charge-sheet or properly recorded eyewitness statements. They have also not added additional NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) sections to the case, applying only bailable sections instead. As a result, the accused were granted anticipatory bail.

On August 30, 2024, four policemen allegedly planted drugs in the pocket of 31-year-old Dylan Estbeiro, an innocent man working at a livestock farm in Kalina, Santacruz East. The entire incident was captured on CCTV, exposing the four police personnel.

The incident dates back to August 30, 2024, when PSI Vishwanath Omble and three constables — Imran Shaikh, Sagar Kamble, and Yogendra Shinde (also known as Dabang Shinde) — in plain



Dylan Estbeiro



Yogendra Shinde

clothes from the Khar police station visited Shahbaz Khan’s livestock farm in Kalina, Santacruz East, where Dylan Estbeiro was working. They allegedly frisked Dylan and planted 20 grams of mephedrone in his pocket during a staged search, later accusing him of drug possession.

The entire incident was captured on CCTV, which was later reviewed and shared publicly by Shahbaz Khan. Following the release of the footage, Dylan was released by the Khar police. The video sparked public outrage, prompting then-Deputy Commissioner Raj Tilak Roushan to suspend all four officers on August 31.

Nearly three and a half months after the incident, the case was filed under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

## WATER CRISIS DEEPENS WITH RISING LEAKAGES



File Photo

**A**s the BMC invests in alternative water sources and infrastructure upgrades. With a daily supply of 3,950 million litres (ML) falling short of the 4,463 ML demand, the city’s aging pipeline network and rising water loss—now at 34%—exacerbate the crisis. Kurla and Andheri East remain the hardest hit, with thousands of leakage complaints reported in 2025 alone.

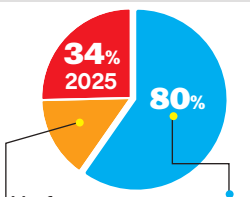
**2041 Projection**  
Demand to hit **6,900 ML/day**

**Supply vs. Demand**  
**3,950 ML/day vs. 4,463 ML/day.**



**JAN–JUN 2025**  
14,087 leakage complaints, Kurla (1,696) and Andheri East (1,336) worst-affected.

### Water Loss



Up from **20%** in 2009

**Infrastructure**  
Water from seven lakes, 650km mains, 6,000km pipelines, 95km tunnel network.

### TOP WARDS

Kurla (1,696), Andheri East (1,336), Chembur (932), Dongri (853), Worli (814) complaints

●● “Mumbai’s water pipelines... are hard to secure and maintain. Corrosion... worsens leaks.”

**Civic Official**

## Man alleges abduction, assault by partner

**Poonam Apraj**  
MUMBAI

A 48-year-old man working with a government company in the RCF area has filed a police complaint against his former classmate-turned-partner and seven others, including the partner’s son, accusing them of abduction and physical assault. The incident reportedly occurred near Chunabhatti and unfolded as a consequence of a failed romantic relationship.

As per the Chunabhatti police, the complainant had married in 2003 but allegedly battled domestic disputes. In 2018, he reconnected with an old female classmate. The two began talking regularly, eventually developing a romantic relationship. They decided to divorce their respective

**On July 23, the man and a friend were allegedly assaulted by the woman’s son on the Sion-Panvel Highway**

spouses and start a new life together.

During this time, the woman allegedly asked the man for Rs15 lakh to buy a house, which he gave. After his divorce in 2021, he requested proof that the woman had also divorced her husband, but she allegedly avoided the subject. They started living together, but tension grew when the woman frequently clashed with the man’s aunt, who disapproved of the relationship. The woman later allegedly

demanding that the man name her as the nominee in his Provident Fund and transfer ownership of his ancestral home to her before agreeing to marry. Suspicious of her intentions, he refused. Eventually, in October 2024, both decided to end their relationship in the presence of their families.

The man stated that about 20 days later, one of the woman’s friends threatened him outside his building, a matter he reported to the Kalachowki police. The situation escalated on July 23 (Wednesday) night around 10pm when the complainant and a friend were allegedly assaulted by the woman’s son while they were travelling on a two-wheeler along the Sion-Panvel Highway.

The man claims that seven persons, including the woman,

assaulted him, stole his gold chain, wallet, watch, and ring, and forcibly put him into an auto-rickshaw. The woman and another masked person reportedly sat on either side of him in the rickshaw, which was accompanied by a car.

When he screamed for help, a cloth was stuffed into his mouth. He was allegedly taken to Junagar in Belapur, where he was pushed out. He managed to get help from a motorist and contacted his father and a female acquaintance.

En route to the Chunabhatti police station, the woman’s son reportedly tried to confront him again. He was finally left alone at around 1.30am. A case of kidnapping and assault has been registered against the woman, her son, and seven others. Further investigation is underway.



### Divine journey

A student pays homage to Sri Satya Sai Baba’s padukas as the Prema Pravahini Rath continues its 87-day journey across India. After visiting schools in Chembur, the rath will move to Sion and Wadala on July 27, and continue its journey across Mumbai till August 30

## Actor accuses producer for ₹25 lakh fraud

**Megha Kuchik**  
MUMBAI

The Oshiwara police have registered an FIR against Karan Singh Chauhan, 36, for allegedly cheating actress Ruchi Gujar, 27, of Rs25 lakh. Chauhan allegedly took the money under the pretext of investing it in the production of the movie ‘Solang Valley’ on the pretext of purported contacts with Sony TV. The case was registered on July 24.

As per the FIR, Gujar resides in Jogeshwari West. In 2023, she and Chauhan were living together. Chauhan, a native of Madhya Pradesh, has no fixed address but maintained an office in Andheri West at the time.

Gujjar alleged that Chauhan introduced her to one Nazia Shaikh, claiming she worked at Sony TV and would provide approval for his proposed serial. In June 2023, he told Gujar that the approval was expected soon and began asking her for money.

Between July 2023 and January 2024, she transferred Rs25 lakh in six instalments to Chauhan’s bank accounts. However, whenever she inquired about the serial’s progress, Chauhan gave evasive responses. Growing suspicious, she later contacted Nazia Shaikh, who denied giving any approval or being involved in such a project.

On being confronted, Chauhan claimed he had invested the money in the production of ‘Solang Valley’. He assured Gujar that once the film was sold, she would get her money back and her name would appear in the credits.

## Trapped by a click: How an Instagram reel led to extortion

**Somendra Sharma**  
MUMBAI

An innocent Instagram connection turned into a costly nightmare for a 23-year-old woman, ensnared by a scammer posing as a US businessman. What began as friendly chats soon spiralled into a tale of deception, as the man, claiming to be Rahul, proposed to her, only to exploit her trust by recording an intimate video call to fuel a blackmail scheme.

According to the police, the complainant worked at a jewellery shop in Borivali. Earlier this month, while browsing her Instagram account, she came across a reel about making new friends. The complainant clicked on the link in the reel, after which her phone number was connected to the WhatsApp of a man who identified himself as

**The scammer claimed to be at the airport on July 11; woman was coerced into paying for his release**

Rahul, claiming to be in the hotel and automobile showroom business.

The two began chatting regularly and became close friends. During one of their conversations, the accused proposed to the complainant, and she agreed. Thereafter, the accused repeatedly asked the complainant to engage in nudity over video calls. After initially refusing on several occasions, the complainant gave in to the accused’s demands and participated in obscene acts during a video

call. Rahul had told the complainant that he was coming to India on July 11.

On that date, the complainant received a call from the accused, who claimed he was at the airport and made her speak to a person on the phone who claimed to be a Customs official. The scammer then told the complainant that Rahul had entered India illegally and was carrying unauthorised items. The scammers demanded money from the complainant to release Rahul.

When the complainant refused to pay, the scammers shared an obscene video of her, which Rahul had previously recorded, and threatened to make it viral. Frightened, the complainant paid Rs1.1 lakh in 34 online transactions to various beneficiary bank accounts between July 11 and July 13.

## Navi Mumbai revamps police zones

**Raina Assainar**  
NAVI MUMBAI

A day after the state government approved a third police zone in Navi Mumbai, the city police finalised a comprehensive restructuring of jurisdictions under the Commissionerate.

The overhaul redistributes police stations across three zones—Vashi, Belapur, and Panvel—to streamline operations and enhance law enforcement coverage. Deputy Commissioner of Police Amit Kale, previously heading the Crime Branch, is now DCP for the newly created Zone II (Belapur). The existing DCPs for Zone I (Vashi) and Zone III

(Panvel) will retain their roles. Zone I (Vashi) includes seven police stations, split into Rabale (Rabale, Rabale MIDC, Koparkhairane) and Vashi (Vashi, APMC, Turbhe, Sanpada) divisions, each led by an ACP. Zone II (Belapur) comprises eight stations under Belapur (CBD Belapur, Zone III (Panvel) covers seven stations in Kharghar.



# Special committee to tackle surge in civic litigations

HC blames civic officials for avoidable court cases; panel set up while hearing a batch of petitions regarding a stalled but occupied Dadar bldg

Urvi Mahajani  
MUMBAI

“Disturbed” by the rising number of avoidable court cases involving the BMC, the Bombay High Court has set up a special committee to recommend corrective measures. The court noted that several litigations arise due to the negligence or inaction of civic officials and emphasised that many of these matters could be resolved at the municipal level without burdening the judiciary.

A bench of Justices Girish Kulkarni and Kamal Khata, on July 18, expressed concern over what it described as an “alarming” situation and stressed the need for an independent and systematic effort to stem the tide of litigation. The committee will suggest ways to reduce such cases, identify problematic wards and officials responsible for lapses, and help frame a robust litigation policy. The detailed order copy was made available on Friday.

The committee comprises former Bombay HC judge Justice Gautam Patel and senior advocate Naushad Engineer. It has been tasked with examining the nature of ward-wise litigations and identifying reasons for municipal failures. The committee will also recommend a blueprint for a “robust litigation policy” and suggest corrective measures. The civic chief will nominate four civic officers to assist the panel. The report is to be submitted within four months.

The committee was constituted while hearing a batch of petitions, including one by Sameer Patil through advocate Sanjiv Sawant, concerning a stalled redevelopment project in Dadar (see box). The court highlighted that the



### Dadar Project

10-storey building under construction  
It is barely a skeletal frame

BMC allegedly allowed illegal occupation for over a decade without any Occupation Certificate (OC) or statutory clearances

Partly occupied by 12 commercial establishments on the ground floor

Two units on the 1st floor

110 residential tenants denied homes for over 15 years

Corporation Act, 1949 and Maharashtra Regional Town Planning Act, 1966. “Section 353A clearly prohibits occupation of any premises without a completion certificate or occupation certificate (OC). Yet, hundreds of customers visit these shops daily in a building (Dadar) not even certified for basic safety or fire compliance,” the court noted.

Concerned about the growing trend of civic inaction resulting in avoidable litigation, the Court said, “We would wonder whether a common man has any place in this system.” It stressed that systemic changes were essential to restore legality and reduce unnecessary litigation clogging the courts.

MHADA, meanwhile, informed the court that it has begun structural audits and will start the process of redevelopment, including provision of transit accommodation for displaced tenants. The HC has kept the matter for hearing on August 1.


What is appalling is that this has continued for 12 years with the complete blessings of the municipal machinery... Every possible officer... turned a blind eye...

Section 353A prohibits occupation without a CC or OC. Yet, hundreds of customers visit these shops daily in a building not even certified for basic or fire safety...


BMC, being one of Asia’s oldest and richest civic bodies with a budget surpassing several Indian states, must adopt a transparent and efficient approach to governance. “A clear action plan will pave the way for a more lawful, accountable, and effective civic administration,” the bench said.

The court remarked that the situation in Dadar, an incomplete building occupied by 12 commercial estab-


lishments, raises grave concerns over municipal governance. “What is appalling is that this has continued for 12 years with the complete blessings of the municipal machinery,” the bench observed. “Every possible officer right up to the concerned Commissioner has turned a blind eye.” The court took particular note of the failure to issue mandatory notices under the Mumbai Municipal



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Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel  
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Inauguration by


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PVC (Posthumous)  
1/11 GR



Rifleman Sanjay Kumar  
PVC 13 JAK RIF



Captain Vikram Batra  
PVC (Posthumous) 13 JAK RIF



Grenadier  
Yogender Singh Yadav  
PVC 18 GRENADIERS

**BATTLE OF TOLOLING**  
Indian Army launched its attack on Tololing in the last week of May 1999. Point 4590 was captured on 06 June 1999. Tololing was captured by gallant troops by 12 June 1999.



**BATTLE OF TIGER HILL**  
Tiger Hill was one of the highest peaks in the Dras – Kargil Sector. Eviction of Pakistani troops from this feature was one of the most important objectives for the Indian Army during the Kargil operation and the peak was captured on 04 July 1999.



**BATTLE OF KHALUBAR**  
Khalubar Ridge due to its location, dominates all approaches towards the Line of Control. Our Artillery destroyed enemy sangars, disrupted communication & supply lines. Some of the most heroic deeds of valour were witnessed in this sector.



**BATTLE OF POINT 4875**  
Point 4875 located in Mushkoh Valley dominated National Highway from Dras to Matayan. The troops of Indian Army fought valiantly to recapture this strategically important peak.



**OPERATIONS IN BATALIK**  
The first success of Operation Vijay was achieved in this Sector in the area of Rockfall on 09 June 1999. The subsequent attacks were launched on Point 4875, Garhi, Point 5000 and Jubar Complex. The Batalik Sector was cleared of the enemy by 07 July 1999.



**OPERATIONS IN KAKSAR**  
This was the area where the first Indian patrol while moving to re-occupy the winter vacated posts, got ambushed. When a search party was attacked, the seriousness of situation emerged. This Sector saw bitter fighting and Indian Army launched multiple attacks to dislodge the Pakistanis.



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## Radhika Apte faces furore after hosp deal

Indu Bhagat  
PUNE

Actress Radhika Apte, who once served as a trustee of the Konkan Mitra Mandal Medical Trust, is at the centre of a growing controversy over Sahyadri Hospital's Rs6,400 crore sale to Manipal Hospitals. Activists alleged that the hospital, built on prime land in Pune's Deccan area, leased by the Pune Municipal Corporation for charitable purposes, was misused for private profit. The actress' father, Dr Charudatta Apte, ran the hospital while also heading the trust. Questions are now being raised over transparency, legality of land leasing and whether poor patients ever benefited from the facility. Activists sought a full investigation, claiming that the deal is against the lease's main intent, which was public service.

Full report: Pune e-paper

## 'Enough proof against Saif's attacker'

Charul Shah Joshi  
MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have objected to the bail plea of Shariful Fakir, who has been arrested in the case of stabbing Saif Ali Khan, saying there is enough evidence against him. The court is likely to hear the plea next week.

The prosecution claimed that fingerprints collected from the actor's house matched with that of Fakir's. Besides, the officials said that the 'incriminating' CCTV footage showing him in the vicinity of Khan's house and the visuals captured after the crime were sent for facial recognition. The report confirmed that Fakir is the culprit, said the officials.

The prosecution further said that the pieces recovered from Khan's body matched with the knife recovered from the accused. Hence, these are strong evidence to prove culpability of Fakir, the prosecution added.

In his defence, the accused termed the narrative in the FIR a figment of imagination. He argued that there is no material or circumstance to connect him with the crime. His plea pointed out that the probe is over and his further detention is not required.

As per the complaint, Fakir sneaked into the bedroom of the actor's son Jehangir, but was stopped by staff. He then unleashed the attack.

## Train thefts: Phones worth ₹1cr recovered

Kamal Mishra and Megha Kuchik  
MUMBAI

The Government Railway Police (GRP) recovered 684 stolen mobile phones worth Rs1.11 crore in a special operation between June and July. In an event held on Friday at Navrang Hall, Ghatkopar, 50 recovered phones were returned to their rightful owners or family members. The remaining 634 phones are in police custody and will be returned soon.

The GRP busted an inter-state gang and arrested history-sheeter Shyam Ramakant Barnwal, 34, at the Byculla station. The police seized 49 premium phones worth Rs20.89 lakh. The gang, hailing from Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, operated on Mumbai local and express trains, targeting crowds during festive season.

The operation was launched by Mumbai railway police commissioner M Kalasagar, who took charge on May 18. Eight teams, five local units and three crime branch squads, led by assistant commissioners of police and comprising three officers and 39 constables, were tasked with recovering phones stolen in 2023, 2024 and 2025 across states.

# CBI busts cyber fraud racket targeting US citizens, 3 held

Somendra Sharma  
MUMBAI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has busted a large-scale cyber fraud and financial crime syndicate operating out of Mumbai and Pune, targeting foreign nationals, particularly US citizens through impersonation, phishing calls and financial deception. Three people have been arrested for

their alleged involvement, agency officials said on Friday.

Those arrested have been identified as Amit Dube, Tarun Shenai and Gonsalves Savio. They were produced before special judge for CBI cases, Mumbai, and have been remanded in CBI custody till July 30.

On Thursday, the CBI filed a case against unknown public servants of banks and four private persons for running

an illegal call centre since January.

As per a CBI official, illegally earned proceeds to the tune of nearly Rs3-4 crore per month was laundered via mule accounts, cryptocurrency and hawala routes. It was also revealed that these operations are supported by certain unknown public and private sector bank officials, who facilitated the opening and operation of fake

## Unknown public servants have been booked too for aiding the racket

accounts using forged KYC documents.

A CBI official said that the group, in connivance with other unknown persons, was impersonating officials from agencies such as the US

Internal Revenue Service (IRS), US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and even the Indian High Commission, to defraud unsuspecting US citizens. Under the threat of legal action, the victims were coerced into paying \$500 to \$3,000 through gift cards or bitcoin transfers. Spoofed VoIP-based calls were being made from a covertly operated illegal call centre in Pune,

the official said.

The call centre workers were paid in cash routed via hawala from both the US and domestic locations, including Maharashtra and Gujarat. These workers were housed in multiple flats across Pune. The scam's operation includes the illegal acquisition of contact leads through vendors on messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Signal. Victims were contacted via

toll-free numbers generated and disseminated by these vendors, eventually connecting them to the fraudulent call centre, officials said.

Searches at seven locations in Pune led to seizure of 27 phones and 17 laptops. Unexplained cash of Rs1.60 lakh and around 150 gram narcotics was also seized. Scrutiny of a seized phone led to crypto currency worth Rs6.94 lakh.

# Man acquitted mths after being arrested in 3-decade-old case

Charul Shah Joshi  
MUMBAI

The sessions court has acquitted a 52-year-old security guard in a three decades old robbery case registered at the Pydhonie police station. Ejaz Shaikh was arrested in March this year after being on the run since September 1993.

The court observed that the prosecution failed to examine even a single witness. "The incident occurred in 1992, more than 33 years ago. After such a long gap, it is highly impossible for the prosecu-

tion to secure any further evidence, especially in a city like Mumbai, which has a high mobility rate."

According to the prosecution, the complainant's father ran a jewellery shop named Mohanlal Joharmal. Due to the 1992 riots, the family had vacated the shop between December 7 and December 17. On December 21, the complainant was allegedly carrying Rs1 lakh to the shop on a scooter when a group of men on a bike assaulted him and fled with the money. A case was filed the same day.

Shaikh was first arrested in June 1993 and granted bail in September that year. However, he absconded and was re-arrested only on March 4 this year. The trial began after he was granted bail again in April.

Though a list of witnesses was submitted, the prosecution admitted it could not trace or produce them. The court said, "No material is placed on record against the accused... the complainant is not traceable." With no evidence presented, Shaikh was acquitted.

## CASE DETAILS

The 52-year-old was accused of robbery during 1992 riots

He was first arrested in June 1993 and granted bail in September that year

However, he absconded and was re-arrested only on March 4 this year

He was granted bail in April

# Local feed producers to get big fish to fry with new rules

**Mumbai:** To boost local production in the fisheries sector, the state government on Friday announced new guidelines for the procurement of fish feed.

Addressing a presser, fisheries and ports minister Nitesh Rane said the new directives will make fisheries projects more efficient and self-reliant while encouraging local fish feed manufacturers. Currently, a majority of the fish feed is imported, he said, adding that the move will promote local producers and ensure strict quality control.

According to the new norms, fish feed must be certified by Indian regulatory bodies such as ISI, BIS or FSSAI and packaging must clearly mention nutritional values along with the date of manufacture and expiry.

Suppliers will be required to provide tax invoices and



## NEW RULES

Fish feed must be certified by Indian regulatory bodies

GST registration will be mandatory for suppliers

Records of farmers purchasing the feed must be maintained

ensure the feed is delivered in airtight, hygienic packaging through clean and dry transport vehicles. GST registration will be mandatory for suppliers and records of farmers buying the feed must be maintained, Rane said.

He informed that under the new rules, all government-subsidised fisheries projects will be mandated to purchase feed only from state-registered, state-sponsored or pilot

feed producers recognised by the government.

Rane said the state has launched various fisheries initiatives under central and state financial assistance, including fish seed production and conservation centres, cage culture, biofloc systems, etc. These projects require a steady supply of high-quality fish feed to operate at full capacity.

—PTI

# DLF debut sees ₹2.3k cr sales in a wk

FPJ News Service  
MUMBAI

DLF Home Developers Ltd, a 100% subsidiary of DLF Ltd, India's largest listed real estate company, in partnership with Trident Realty, announced the complete sellout of all four towers launched as part of phase 1 of 'The Westpark', a residential development located off Link Road, Andheri West. This swift sell-out, worth over Rs2,300 crore, marks DLF's entry into Mumbai's residential real

estate market and highlights the company's strategic expansion into key regions across western India.

Aakash Ohri, joint managing director and chief business officer, DLF Home Developers Ltd, said that the inventory for phase 1 has been completely sold out in less than a week. "Initially, we launched only two of the four planned towers, but due to exceptional demand, we brought all four towers to market, resulting in the sell-out of all 416 units." These

apartments form the free sale component of the SRA project.

"Our entry into Mumbai represents a significant strategic milestone for DLF," said Ohri, adding that Mumbai has always been a key component of the company's national growth strategy.

He continued, "In collaboration with Trident Realty, we have introduced a premium residential offering that reflects DLF's hallmark values of quality, community living and design excellence built

over our 78-year legacy." DLF is proud to offer a development that resonates with the aspirations of the city's discerning residents, said Ohri, expressing "gratitude and humility" on the overwhelming response.

The Westpark spans around 5.18 acres and is part of a larger 10-acre master plan. The development will comprise eight architecturally distinctive towers, each rising 37 storeys. The homes include a select mix of spacious 3 and 4 BHKs.



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His issues with Assam CM Himanta's politics, Congress prospects and lessons learnt from his father during his younger years

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## PMC to launch own public transport

The Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) is set to launch its own public transport service, with an agency soon to be appointed for a comprehensive survey. The tender process is underway. The plan follows rapid urban growth across over 200km, including areas like NAINA, Pushpak Nagar, and CIDCO nodes. Rising population and townships have increased demand. The administration is positively considering launching a bus service. Local leader Sachin Gaikwad has pushed for this for eight years. The agency will study feasibility, routes, demand, and benefits to guide future policy.

## Panvel RTO launches new 2-wheeler nos



The Regional Transport Office (RTO) in Panvel has announced the launch of a new registration series for two-wheelers. Those interested can apply with a form, a demand draft (DD) and supporting proof of residential address, identity proof, and self-attested copies of the PAN card at the RTO. The application should be submitted from 10am to 2.30pm on July 29. In case multiple applications are received for the same registration number, a list will be displayed on the notice board at 4pm on July 29, following which the owner should submit an additional DD (minimum Rs301) with a sealed envelope indicating the extra amount they are willing to pay by 2.30pm on July 30, when a public auction will be held.

**UPGRADE** | The ₹351-cr project promises real-time access to records, enhanced efficiency, and improved monitoring of resources

# BMC hospitals to go digital with health management system

Amit Srivastava  
MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is expected to roll out the Health Management Information System (HMIS) across its major hospitals by next month. The initiative is aimed at boosting efficiency and saving time for both patients and doctors. The platform will also enable hospital administrators to monitor bed occupancy, medicine inventories, and operation theatre schedules in real time.

According to a senior official from the civic health department, the HMIS platform will provide real-time access to patient records, lab reports, and treatment histories. It will eliminate the need for patients to carry physical documents and help doctors make faster, better-informed decisions.

The digital system will first be launched at Mumbai's KEM Hospital and subsequently expanded to nine other suburban hospitals, including Rajawadi, MW Desai, Kandivali Shatabdi, and Kurla Bhabha. Around 26 maternity homes across the city will also be brought under the system. Additional hospitals will be integrated in phases.

"The platform will also enable hospital administrators to monitor bed occupancy, medicine inventories, and operation theatre schedules in real time. This digital transformation will significantly enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of BMC-run healthcare facilities," said



## Key Features & Benefits

### For Patients

Eliminates need to carry physical documents  
Real-time access to patient records, lab reports, treatment histories.

### For Administrators

Monitor bed occupancy in real time.  
Monitor medicine inventories in real time.  
Monitor operation theatre schedules in real time.

### For Doctors

Real-time access to patient records, lab reports, treatment histories.  
Enables faster, better-informed decisions.

**OVERALL IMPACT:** Significant enhancement in efficiency and responsiveness of BMC-run healthcare facilities; greater transparency, efficiency, and coordination in patient care.

the official.

The BMC has already awarded a Rs 351.95 crore contract for the implementation of HMIS over the next five years. The scope of work includes software and hardware deployment, manpower support, operations, and ongoing maintenance.

"This is one of the largest digital healthcare transformation projects ever undertaken by a civic body in India. It will ensure greater transparency,

efficiency, and coordination in patient care," the official said.

Originally, HMIS implementation was planned for 2022-23 as part of BMC's broader strategy to modernize Mumbai's public health infrastructure.

However, delays in vendor selection, system integration issues, and the enforcement of the 2024 Lok Sabha election model code of conduct pushed the timeline forward.

## Aapla Davakhana's Western Suburb Expansion

### Expansion

Mumbai's western suburbs will see **14 dispensaries** upgraded or converted by Perfect Engineering Corporation over 12 months

### Scheme

Launched August 2022

Modelled After Delhi's Mohalla Clinics

### Core Mission

Decentralise healthcare, deliver quality services locally

### Services Provided

Free outpatient consultations  
Basic diagnostic tests  
Free medicines  
Antenatal care  
Counselling

Project costing  
**₹7.05 crore**

### Western Suburbs Expansion

New facilities  
**14 clinics** to be developed

### 7 upgrades

Existing dispensaries to be enhanced

### 7 Conversions

Ready civic structures to be transformed into modern clinics

### Current Status

Final administrative approval pending  
Work expected to begin later this year

### Broader Impact

Mumbai-wide presence  
**Over 200**

Aapla Davakhana approved/operational in the city to date

**BMC's goal**

### Renovation scope

Comprehensive upgrades:  
Interior modernisation  
New furniture  
Air-conditioning  
CCTV surveillance  
Fire safety systems  
Improved plumbing and lighting

Strengthen preventive healthcare

Reduce patient burden on major municipal hospitals

Text: Amit Srivastava

## Fake godman, accomplice held for ₹20L scam on pretext of doubling the money

The accused locked the door from outside during the ritual with the advocate, took the cash, and fled on a motorcycle with his accomplice

### Raina Assainar

NAVI MUMBAI

The CBD Belapur police have arrested a fake godman and his accomplice for allegedly duping a lawyer from Mira Road of Rs20 lakh under the pretext of doubling the money through black magic rituals. The victim, Dharamveer Tripathi, 42, met the accused a year ago and was gradually convinced of his supposed occult powers.

The accused, **Sachin Sharma alias Prem Singh Sadhu Maharaj**, 35, and Jaydeep Pamecha, 25, were arrested within 18 hours from



the Karanjade area of Panvel. The police recovered Rs19 lakh in cash from them.

On July 22, Tripathi, along with his wife and son, visited a rented flat in Sector 8B, CBD Belapur, carrying Rs20 lakh

### CASE FILE

**Sachin Sharma aka Prem Singh Sadhu was previously a labour contractor**

**Accomplice Pamecha is a driver**

**Pamecha's role was to help transport the stolen money**

for a ritual. Sharma arranged religious items, placed the money-filled bag before deity idols, and instructed the family and flat owners to sit in a bedroom and chant prayers. While they were engaged

in the ritual, the accused locked the door from outside, took the cash, and fled on a motorcycle with Pamecha.

Under the guidance of senior police inspector Sandesh Revale and crime inspector Arun Pawar, a team tracked the culprits using CCTV footage and technical analysis.

Initially, the police suspected the flat owner's involvement, but he was later cleared of any wrongdoing.

The case has been registered under sections 318(4) and 127(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with Section 3(2) of the Maharashtra Anti-Superstition and Black Magic Act, 2013.



# Powai-Ghatkopar water tunnel sees breakthrough



Once completed, the Powai-Ghatkopar water tunnel project will serve as a vital upgrade to Mumbai's water infrastructure. It will dramatically enhance supply reliability

Commenting on the achievement, Kavita Shirvaikar, Managing Director of Patel Engineering Ltd, said, "The Project breakthrough stands as a clear example of how complex infrastructure can be delivered responsibly and independently, with long-term urban benefit in mind."

Prominent MNS leaders including Sunil Raut, Sandeep Kini, Nishant Dhotre, and Mangesh Gharat participated in the Haloli protest. A separate agitation in the Charoti area was led by Patil himself.

“This is the biggest scam in medical history. Amit Salunke of Sumeet Facilities is the financial backbone of the Shrikant Shinde Foundation. The money was diverted to the foundation. A team of (Anti-Corruption Bureau)

“The charges have no basis. Shrikant Shinde has proved his worth as a part of the (Op Sindoor) delegation (led by several MPs including Shrikant Shinde). Maharashtra’s people will not attach any value to such allegations,” the minister said.

According to the prosecution, the case originated from an incident on October 20, 2024, when the complainant, who owns a shop at Haji Ali, reported that a man tried to pay for food with a counterfeit

Saundalkar argued that

In its order dated July 11, the court allowed Razak's release on a personal bond of Rs50,000 with one or more sureties of like amount. He was also granted interim bail on a cash surety of Rs40,000.



MADHYA PRADESH TOURISM  
REGIONAL  
TOURISM  
CONCLAVE

## Wildlife & Offbeat Destination

# Dr. Mohan Yadav

Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh



Dr. Mohan Yadav, Chief Minister

## Krishna Raj Kapoor Auditorium, Rewa

## Charting New Horizons for Tourism

- Six major investors investing in hotels, resorts, wellness, and eco-tourism sectors will be awarded 'Letter of Award'
- The booking of PM SHRI Tourism Air Service, will now be integrated with the IRCTC portal
- Rural Home Stays will be connected with national and international travel agencies like Make My Trip, Yatra and Ease My Trip
- Strategic partnership MOU's will be signed with two leading digital marketing companies Barcode Experiential and Qyuki Digital
- Food Craft Institute in Shahdol will be inaugurated this will generate new employment opportunities
- Agreements will be signed with Gram Sudhar Samiti MM Foundation and Samarth Sanstha to set-up art and craft centres

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# Takeover row: Radhika Apte’s link to Sahyadri under spotlight

**Indu Bhagat**  
PUNE

Actress Radhika Apte’s role in the Sahyadri Hospital takeover row has come under scrutiny now after the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) issued a show-cause notice to the hospital on July 17, after it struck a deal, estimated at Rs6,400 crore, with Manipal Hospitals. The PMC’s notice sought clarification on how the deal would affect the ownership of the land in Deccan, on which Sahyadri built a charitable hospital to offer health services to needy patients.

The controversy, to which the Bollywood actress is

linked now, stems from the deal made by Sahyadri Hospitals to transfer ownership from global investor Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan to Manipal Hospitals. The Sahyadri Hospital at Deccan stands on prime land leased by the PMC. Activists allege that the land was quietly transitioned from public-charitable use to private profit without scrutiny or transparency. Vijay Khumbhar, a noted RTI activist, raised concerns and demanded transparency regarding the deal.

“This is a clear case of public land being used to build private empires. There has been no accountability, no transparency, and certainly no

benefit given to the poor patients it was meant to serve,” Khumbhar told The Free Press Journal (FPJ). “In 1998, PMC leased a prominent plot in Deccan Gymkhana to Konkani Mitra Mandal Medical Trust, headed by renowned neurosurgeon Dr Charudatta Apte, to run a charitable hospital. However, in over two decades, not a single PMC-referred patient has reportedly been treated at the facility. Today, that hospital is being operated by Sahyadri Hospitals Pvt Ltd, a private hospital chain that has changed ownership multiple times—from Everstone Capital to Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan Board, and now

Manipal Hospitals Group—all while operating on land meant for public welfare,” the activist alleged.

**Genesis of Sahyadri**  
In 1996, Dr Charudatta Apte got associated with Sahyadri Hospital. Two years later, in 1998, the PMC leased a prime Deccan Gymkhana plot to Konkani Mitra Mandal Medical Trust for charitable healthcare services. The

Sahyadri Hospital at Deccan stands on prime land—Plot No. 30, Erandwane, measuring 1,976 sqm—leased at a token rent of Rel per sq m per year for 99 years, under a legally binding lease agreement dated Feb 27, 1998. The lease was issued for the express purpose of providing affordable medical services to the underprivileged.

Over the years, Sahyadri Hospitals’ ownership has

been changed multiple times—first to Everstone Capital, then to Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan Board, and now to Manipal Hospitals Group. A health activist, who chose to remain anonymous, told the FPJ, “The PMC’s original resolution to allot that land was revoked in 1996. Yet, somehow, the same land was leased again in 1998. Who approved this? Was it even legal? The trust still claims to be fulfilling its charitable services. But if PMC never referred a patient, who exactly are they treating? And on what terms?”

**Radhika Apte’s alleged involvement**

Dr Charudatta Apte, who has simultaneously served as a trustee of the Konkani Mitra Mandal and as the Managing Director of Sahyadri Hospitals from 1996 to 2023, is central to the debate. His daughter, actress Radhika Apte, has also served as a trustee of the same trust, prompting allegations of a family-controlled operation that blurs the line between charity and corporate gain. Several activists are now demanding a full-scale investigation and public disclosure of all agreements. They are calling for the seizure and publication of all MoUs and land lease documents, as well as disclosure of all hospital ownership transfer records

and official correspondence related to the land.

RTI findings further reveal that the PMC originally revoked the resolution to allot the land in 1996. Yet the same land was mysteriously leased again in 1998. Citing this, the activists question how it became possible, under whose authorisation and whether all legal processes were followed. “This isn’t just about one hospital or one trust — this is about setting a precedent. Public land cannot be treated as private property, and charitable intent cannot be converted into corporate profit unchecked,” the health activist, who preferred to be anonymous, told the FPJ.



## Parents’ body demands fee law reforms

**Indu Bhagat**  
PUNE

As Maharashtra plans to amend its fee regulation law, parents and activists cite that this is merely an eyewash. Dilip Singh Vishwakarma, President of the MahaParents Association, Pune, urged that any amendments made should focus solely on the welfare of parents and not benefit profit-driven school managements.

Speaking to The Free Press Journal (FPJ), Suresh Gaikwad, a parent, said, “My son is studying in the 7th standard, and the fees in private institutions are skyrocketing. This adds a lot of financial burden on us. The government schools do not provide quality education, so you can’t even imagine sending your wards there. I think this new Fee Regulation Act will help the common people who are being looted in the name of quality education.”

“The government must ensure that the revised law is centred around parents’ interests. Under no circumstances should the law help profiteering educational institutions,” added Vishwakarma.

“Many private and corporate-run schools are increasingly functioning as profit-making businesses. The government should take strict action against such trends,” Shaila Kale, a parent who lives in Pimpri and whose kid goes to Podar International School, told the FPJ.

## SCAM ALERT | City accounts for 26% of financial cyber fraud in 2024 Pune leads in cyber forgery

**Abhijit Sherekar**  
PUNE

On July 22, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, in a written reply to Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi’s unstarred question in Parliament, stated India suffered a staggering loss of Rs22,845.73 crore due to cyber frauds in 2024, a 206% increase from Rs7,465.18 crore losses in 2023. Meanwhile, in the Maharashtra Budget session 2025, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis revealed that Pune witnessed a loss of Rs 6,007 crore to financial frauds in 2024. Data shows that in 2024, Pune accounted for 26% of financial cyber frauds in India.

Sandip Gadiya, cyber-crime investigator and forensic expert based in Pune, finds five major reasons behind the rise in cyber fraud cases in India—greed, fear, improved standard of living in tier 2 cities, lack of cyber awareness, and carelessness among populations related to cyber-crimes.

Speaking to The Free Press Journal (FPJ), Gadiya said, “Pune is gradually emerging as a hub of migrant population due to its vibrant culture and economic prowess in the form of IT industries and large-scale manufacturing sector. This group is non-homogeneous, varying from students, job seekers and manufacturers, and possesses a different set of cyber vulnerabilities which get exploited by cyber criminals in the form of financial fraud.”



Ankush Tiwari, one of the founders of Pi Labs, an AI fraud detection startup based in Pune, argues that greed forms the major reason behind the financial losses suffered by individuals due to cybercrime. Citing the digital arrest case of a city businessman losing Rs2 crore to cyber criminals, Tiwari told FPJ, “Cyber gangs lure victims in the form of higher return on investment in the trading market, compelling them to gradually increase investment amount and increased gains getting reflected in fraudulent app created by the scamsters, which is nothing less than a scam.” Abhijeet Zilpelwar, co-founder of Pi Labs, remarks that the vulnerability is more in the case of the general public rather than celebrities or influencers, as they seem to be less aware of the sophisticated nature of cybercrime.

“The nature of cybercrime has evolved over the years from lottery scams, social media scams, job scams to a more professional nature of cybercrime like digital arrest, fake trading and investment scam, mule account networks,

voice clones, is a step in the direction to prevent cyber fraud. Pi Labs, founded by Tiwari, Zilpelwar and Raghu Sesha Iyengar in 2023, aims to arrest the rising cases of cybercrimes via Authentify, an AI++-based software which can detect and verify the authenticity of the video, audio and image created or shared on digital media.

Speaking to the FPJ, Tiwari says, “We need to be proactive rather than reactionary to emerging challenges of cybersecurity.” Approximately US\$40 billion has been lost to cyber fraud, and AI, being at a nascent stage, has an inherent ability to further enhance the nature of financial cybercrimes. Zilpelwar told FPJ, “Reducing digital footprint, reporting the incident to law enforcement agencies at the earliest, and creating awareness by media remain key factors to address cyber fraud.”

Tiwari says that reporting cybercrime incidents to law enforcement agencies at the earliest remains the key to retrieving the lost money. It is usually the first three to four hours of crime, if the money is not transferred to mule account networks, then banks or financial institutions can trace back the money to the owner, he added.

The transnational nature of crime channelised through cryptocurrency further complicates the work of law enforcement agencies to trace the criminals and retrieve the

money. Gadiya said, “South Asian nations like Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos have emerged as the hub of crypto scams and host scam compounds targeting victims across the world. Similarly, Jamatara criminal gangs’ proliferation in India has increased the rate of cyber crimes reported in India.”

Swapanali Shinde, Senior Police Inspector in charge of the Pune Cyber Police, told FPJ, “We are aware of the transnational nature of cybercrime, and it often derails the process of investigation. On our part, we are actively organising cyber awareness workshops and have launched dedicated contact points and portals like TAF-COP, M-Kavach 2 and a national helpline number 1930 to report cybercrime. People should avoid being greedy and should increase their cyber literacy.”

Pune Police aims to be one step ahead of the cyber criminals, and eventually we will get to it,” she added, when asked about the challenges Pune Police face in tracking criminals. Gadiya opined that public-private partnership (PPP) between government and corporations can fill the knowledge gap that exists between the rising use of advanced tools used by cyber criminals and catching the trail of cybercrime. Shinde added, “Fraudsters may elope now, but they surely leave trails which can be used to nab them down.”

## PCMC uplifts kids’ learning



**Staff Reporter**  
PIMPRI

More than 6,000 young children in Pimpri Chinchwad are now receiving early education due to a city-wide initiative by the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) to transform all 211 of its Balwadis. In just three years, the initiative has delivered measurable improvements in foundational learning, with assessments showing a 20–24% jump in skills such as early literacy, numeracy, and motor development. This transformation, driven by a focused Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) strategy, has transformed basic classrooms into vibrant, child-centric spaces.

“Early childhood is the most critical stage of development, and our goal has been to give every child a strong and joyful start,” said PCMC Commissioner Shekhar Singh. “By investing in our Balwadis, training our teachers, involving parents, and adopting play-based learning, we are laying the foundation for a more inclusive and better-educated Pimpri Chinchwad,” Singh added. The programme began with a small working group of teachers, supervisors, and education professionals who redesigned the curriculum into activity-based modules. With regular monthly trainings, curated teaching materials, and strengthened teacher-student-parent relationships, the initiative scaled up rapidly. A cluster-based model with 16 master trainers and nine supervisors now supports implementation across all Balwadis.

“Every month, our Balwadi teachers hold parent meetings on topics related to early childhood,” said Sonali Anil Patole, a parent from Dapodi Girls Primary School No. 31. “These sessions help us support our children better. We feel our children are safe in the municipal school, and we as parents are involved in every step,” she added. “Through the training, I now understand the objectives of the state’s early childhood curriculum,” said Ranjana Salvi, master trainer and teacher at Nagu Barne Boys Primary School, Thergaon. “This has helped me focus more on achieving learning outcomes while teaching each day,” Salvi added. “With every cluster session, we’re seeing greater alignment in curriculum delivery and pedagogy,” added Yamuna Khandagale, Assistant Coordinator, Pre-Primary Department.

**‘Adarsh Balwadi’ set to deepen impact**  
Building on this momentum, PCMC’s Education Department is now moving forward with a plan to establish 40 Adarsh Balwadis—20 with CSR funding and 20 through municipal support—starting this academic year. These will receive enhanced educational materials and improved classroom environments to promote joyful and effective learning. Additionally, one outstanding teacher from each Balwadi will be recognised with an Adarsh Shikshak award.

The department has also prepared a unique activity-based handbook aligned with the state ECCE framework. The handbook has been appreciated by the Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training (MSCERT).

## PMC identifies 88 illegal hoardings

**Indu Bhagat**  
PUNE

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has identified 88 unauthorised hoardings within the jurisdiction of four regional offices and has already removed 24 of them. The action has been initiated following an order from the Municipal Commissioner, who directed all regional offices to immediately remove unauthorised hoardings and submit a detailed report. According to official data, there are currently 2,640 legal hoardings approved by the PMC across the city. However, a preliminary report submitted by 14 regional offices surprisingly claimed there were only 24 unauthorised hoardings in total.

The numbers prompted the Commissioner to appoint a special inspection team. The team identified inconsistencies, particularly in the Nagar Road–Vadgaonsheri Regional Office, where only seven hoardings had been reported, but the inspection revealed as many as 35 unauthorised structures. The revelations pointed to internal negligence and corruption between officials and adver-

tisers.

As a result, disciplinary action was swiftly taken. A senior clerk from the Nagar Road–Vadgaonsheri office was suspended for submitting false information, while a junior clerk faced a salary increment freeze. Similar investigations and actions were initiated in other regional offices as well. Out of the total 88 unauthorised hoardings identified across Nagar Road–Vadgaonsheri, Hadapsar–Mundhwa, Wanawadi–Ramtekdi, and Yerawada, Kalas, Dhanori regional offices, the PMC has successfully removed 24. The Sky Signs and Licensing Department carried out the removal operations, although two cases remain under dispute. Speaking to The Free Press Journal, Additional Municipal Commissioner Prithviraj BP said, “The corporation is committed to rooting out unauthorised advertising boards and holding accountable any officials who attempt to mislead the administration. The crackdown is expected to continue as the civic body intensifies its scrutiny of illegal hoardings and strengthens internal checks to prevent further violations.”

## FDA revokes Goodluck Café’s licence suspension

**Staff Reporter**  
PUNE

Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an order to revoke the suspension of Goodluck Café’s licence after a re-inspection found that the eatery had complied with general hygienic and sanitary practices.

“We found that the restaurant had met the compliance standards as per Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI),” said Suresh Annappure, Joint Commissioner, FDA, Pune Division.

Schedule 4 of FSSAI outlines the requirements for maintaining a safe and hygienic environment for food handling, processing, storage, and distribution.

This comes after the FDA had temporarily suspended Goodluck Café’s licence after a glass shard was found in its signature dish, bun maska. Kasim Irani, the owner, had blamed the bread, supplied by a vendor, for the incident.

## Patil orders AI-based challan

**Ankit Shukla**  
PUNE

Maharashtra Minister Chandrakant Patil on Friday held a meeting at his residence concerning the traffic situation in Pune’s Kothrud. He directed the officials to work on three principles — inspection, action and execution.

Patil told the officials to increase the number of CCTV cameras and introduce an AI-based challan system to manage traffic congestion effectively. He also discussed appointing 50 traffic wardens in the area and figuring out 50 hotspots for traffic jams.

During the meeting, Traffic Police Deputy Commissioner Himmat Jadhav, PMC Road Department’s Aniruddha Pawaskar, Anti-Encroachment Department’s Sandeep Khalate, BJP Pune City General Secretary Puneet Joshi, and others were present.

Patil assured that meetings will be held regularly to address traffic congestion issues in Kothrud, Baner and Balewadi.



age traffic congestion effectively. He also discussed appointing 50 traffic wardens in the area and figuring out 50

### skilling in future tech

## PCMC hosts youths’ skill conclave

**Staff Reporter**  
PIMPRI

To prepare youth for careers in emerging technologies, Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), in collaboration with Lighthouse Communities Foundation and Symbiosis Skills and Professional University (SSPU), hosted an Industry Conclave on Skilling Opportunities in Future Technologies at Ga Di Madgulkar Natyagruha, Nigdi, on Wednesday.

The event focused on co-



creating pathways for skilling youth in artificial intelligence (AI), drone technology, and defence technology, to bridge the demand-supply gap through strategic partnerships and targeted capacity-building.

PCMC Commissioner Shekhar Singh, in his keynote address, said, “We are committed to building

inclusive skilling ecosystems that connect youth with future-ready careers in areas like AI, drone technology, and cybersecurity.”

Ganesh Natarajan, founder and chairman of Lighthouse Communities Foundation, highlighted the evolving skilling landscape: “India will need 1.25 million AI professionals by 2027, over 100,000 certified drone operators annually, and nearly one million cybersecurity experts. While automation may impact some roles, new opportunities such as data annotation and drone pilot-

ing are opening doors even for 10th-pass youth. The key lies in inclusive and industry-aligned skilling.”

The conclave featured strategic inputs from industry experts, including Anirban Mukherji (CEO, miniOrange Inc), Prithijit Bobby Lahiri (head - Apprenticeship, CII MCC), and Rumpa Roy (lead, Skill at Scale – NASSCOM SSC). All speakers stressed the importance of curiosity-driven learning, self-paced upskilling, and accessible entry-level roles in AI and drone technology.



# ‘Voice of Media’ seeks rail travel concession

**Manish Gajbhiye**  
CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

The journalists’ organisation Voice of Media has demanded the reinstatement of the 40% railway fare concession for accredited journalists, which was discontinued during the Covid pandemic and has yet to be restored.

Lending support to the demand, Wardha MP Amar Sharadrao Kale recently submitted a memorandum to Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw during a meeting in New Delhi.

**Pre-Covid concession sought for working journalists**

The memorandum pointed out that prior to the pandemic, accredited journalists were entitled to a 40% concession on train travel for



attending press conferences, official meetings, government programmes and invited events.

“Prior to the pandemic, accredited journalists were entitled to a 40% concession on train tickets when traveling for press conferences, official meetings, government programs, or by invitation. However, this facility was discontinued during COVID-19 and has not yet been reinstated. To empower journalists and facilitate their work, it is essential to restore this concession,” it stated.

**Call to recognise journalism’s democratic role**

The Voice of Media memorandum emphasised the importance of journalism as the fourth pillar of democracy and described journalists as a crucial bridge between the government and the public.

It urged the government to acknowledge their contribution by restoring the travel concession, which would ease their mobility and reduce the financial burden of profes-

**LATUR HORROR | Police book six for the abuse, which took place in a children’s home from 2023 to 2025**

# HIV-infected girl alleges rape, forced abortion

**PTI**  
LATUR

Six persons were booked on Friday on the complaint of an HIV-infected girl that she was raped over a period of two years at a children's shelter in Maharashtra's Latur district and forced to undergo an abortion when she got pregnant, a police official said.

As per the complaint filed by the girl in Dhoki police station in her native Dharashiv district, the incidents took place between July 13, 2023 and July 23 this year at a home for HIV-infected children in Hasegaon here, the official said. “As per her complaint, the child was at the institution for the past two years. She was allegedly raped by an employee of the children's home four times. He also threatened her not to disclose the ordeal to anyone. The institution's management did



not help her and even tore up a letter she had marked for officials and had dropped into a complaint box,” he said.

After she fell ill, she was taken to a hospital where tests revealed she was four months pregnant, following which the accused got a doctor to per-

form an abortion procedure without her consent, the official added.

Six persons have been booked by Dhoki police, including the founder and superintendent of the institution, the employee who raped her and the doctor who per-

formed the abortion procedure, the official said.

The process of transferring the case to the Ausa police station, in whose jurisdiction the alleged incidents took place, is underway, the official said, adding that no arrest has been made so far.

# Ashok Chavan demands fish markets, landing centres

**FPJ News Network**  
NANDED

Rajya Sabha MP Ashok Chavan has urged the Union government to set up modern fish markets and landing centres in Nanded district under the Prime Minister’s Matsya Sampada Yojana to boost the local fishing economy.

Chavan met Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Panchayati Raj, Rajeev Ranjan Singh, in New Delhi on Wednesday and submitted the demand. He said fishermen in Nanded are struggling due to the absence of clean, well-equipped mar-

kets and basic infrastructure for handling their catch. The issue was earlier raised by Chandrasen Patil, Loha taluka BJP president, who had discussed the challenges faced by local fisherfolk with Chavan.

**Rivers active with fishing, but no landing centres**

Chavan highlighted that large-scale fishing activities take place in the Sudha River at Renapur in Bhokar taluka, the Manyad River at Malegaon in Loha taluka, and the Godavari River in Nanded taluka. However, none of these sites have designated fish landing centres, making it difficult for

fishermen to operate efficiently. He demanded that modern, integrated fishery landing centres be developed at all three locations to provide essential support services.

**Call for modern fish markets in multiple locations**

Chavan also sought the establishment of clean, well-equipped fish markets in Nanded city, Bhokar, Loha, Godgaon and other key areas. He said the lack of proper market facilities was forcing fishermen to sell at low prices, leading to significant income losses.

# BAMU halts PG admissions in 113 colleges

**Manish Gajbhiye**  
CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

The Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University (BAMU) has cancelled first-year postgraduate admissions in 113 affiliated colleges for failing to meet mandatory standards, including the appointment of full-time faculty and provision of basic physical infrastructure.

The move has triggered backlash from college principals and directors, who questioned the timing and transparency of the decision, especially since affiliation fees

were already accepted by the university.

Most of the affected colleges reportedly lack full-time teaching staff—a key requirement for postgraduate courses. BAMU has said the decision was taken to uphold academic standards and ensure students receive quality education. However, stakeholders argue that the sudden halt, announced just before the start of the academic year, has jeopardised the future of thousands of students.

Out of the 113 colleges, 50 are located in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district, 22 in

Jalna, 31 in Beed, and 10 in Dharashiv. In total, the admissions of around 3,310 students have been affected.

**Colleges seek clarity, question timing**

College heads have objected to BAMU’s action, arguing that the university remained silent when they paid affiliation fees earlier this year.

A meeting of the university’s board of deans is scheduled for July 29 to review the situation. The administration has given colleges time until July 28 to rectify the discrepancies and submit compliance

reports.

**University defends action**

Pro-Vice Chancellor Valmik Sarwade said the university had warned the colleges as early as February to meet the required standards for PG courses. Despite repeated reminders, many institutions failed to act, he said. “We are not cancelling the PG programmes, only halting first-year admissions until the prescribed norms are fulfilled. Colleges will be given a chance to explain,” Dr Sarwade added.

He stressed that alternate

arrangements would be explored to safeguard students’ interests. The vice chancellor personally reviewed the inspection reports. Colleges lacking full-time staff and physical facilities cannot be allowed to admit students. The integrity of postgraduate education must be preserved, he said.

A meeting held on July 24, attended by Vice Chancellor Vijay Fulari, Registrar Prashant Amrutkar and senior officials, concluded that admissions would be permitted only in institutions that meet affiliation criteria.

**CONNECTING KUMBH | Drawing from the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela model, stakeholders have called for a new terminal at Nashik airport**

# Immigration clearance delay stalls int’l flights from Nashik

**Prashant Nikale**  
NASHIK

Plans to launch international passenger flights from Nashik airport have hit a roadblock, with the Union Home Ministry yet to approve setting up an immigration checkpoint. The delay comes despite efforts to bolster aviation connectivity ahead of the 2027 Simhastha Kumbh Mela.

The Home Ministry has clarified that the Bureau of Immigration (BOI) assessed the existing infrastructure at the airport and found it inadequate for processing regular international passengers. The available space can only accommodate immigration clearance for cargo crews and chartered flight passengers, the Ministry said in a written response to a query raised in the Lok Sabha by MP Rajabhau Waje.



**Immigration facility crucial for international operations**

Waje had asked whether the Centre had approved the establishment of an immigration checkpoint at Nashik and whether it would be operational before the Kumbh Mela. In response, Minister of State

for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar stated that although some police personnel have received training for immigration duties, no decision has been made to begin international passenger services. Currently, Nashik airport has the infrastructure to handle domestic and international cargo.

However, passenger handling requires a dedicated immigration system, which is missing. The lack of this facility remains the primary hurdle for launching international services.

**Kumbh Mela boost and long-term benefits cited**

Demand for an immigration

centre has grown in light of the upcoming Simhastha Kumbh Mela. Drawing from the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela model, stakeholders have called for a new terminal at Nashik airport and expanded infrastructure to manage international pilgrims.

HAL has reportedly approved construction of a parallel runway, which could enhance flight capacity.

If complemented by immigration clearance infrastructure, Nashik could emerge as an international aviation hub serving not just spiritual tourism but also industry, trade, agriculture and hospitality.

Waje has argued that international air connectivity would significantly reduce the load on Mumbai airport and benefit thousands of passengers from northern Maharashtra.

**Prashant Nikale**  
NASHIK

In a significant political development ahead of the upcoming municipal elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is set to induct several leaders from the Congress and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) during a grand joining ceremony in Nashik on July 28.

According to BJP’s Nashik city unit president Sunil Kedar, senior leaders, including former Shiv Sena (UBT) deputy leader Sunil Bagul and former metropolitan chief Mama Rajwade will formally join the party at the ceremony, which will be held at Raosaheb Thorat Hall. Former Congress corporators and other local office bearers are also expected to switch allegiance.

BJP state president Ravindra Chavan and Minister Girish Mahajan will attend the event.

Speaking to the media, Kedar said, “Along with Sunil



Bagul and Mama Rajwade, Gulab Bhoys will join the BJP on Sunday. Many other Congress and UBT Sena leaders are in touch with us and will join the party soon.”

He claimed that the BJP is witnessing a growing wave of support in Nashik. “Many leaders from the Congress will join us in the coming

days,” Kedar added.

Reacting to the Congress’s criticism of the BJP’s ‘100 Plus’ target for the Nashik Municipal Corporation elections, Kedar dismissed the remarks as “desperate”. “Congress has no existence in the country, the state, or the city. These are the statements of a frustrated party,” he said.

# World University Games | KTHM’s rowing athletes to represent India in Germany

**FPJ News Service**  
NASHIK

Darshan Gawli and Tejas Gade, rowing athletes from the Boat Club of KTHM College, have been selected to compete in the FISU World University Games Rhine-Ruhr 2025 in Germany. The international event will be held in Duisburg on July 27, 2025.

The duo will represent Savitribai Phule Pune University at the prestigious competition. Their selection is considered a major achievement for KTHM College and a proud moment for the city of



Nashik, as only a few players from across the country made it to the final list.

Gawli and Gade were mentored by a team of rowing

coaches, including Samadhan Gawli, Appa Pingale, Jitendra Kardile, Sachin Bhambare, Sachin Dalvi, Vilas Lokhande and Daulat Bendkoli. College officials said their selection reflects the consistent progress of the institute in competitive sports.

The management of Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj, which runs the college, extended its congratulations. General secretary Nitin Thakare, chairman Balasaheb Kshirsagar, president Sunil Dhikle, vice-chairman Vishwas More and deputy chairman DB Mogal were among those who lauded the achievement.

# Suryadatta observes ‘International Day Against Drug Abuse’

**FPJ News Network**  
PUNE

On the occasion of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Suryadatta Group of Institutes organised a series of awareness programmes across its various educational institutions to promote a drug-free and healthy society.

Under the guidance of Sanjay B Chordiya, the founder president of Suryadatta Education Foundation, and vice president Sushma Chordiya, the events were held at Suryadatta National School, Suryadatta Institute of Health Sciences (College of Physiotherapy), Suryadatta Junior College, and Suryadatta Public School.

As part of the campaign, stu-



dents participated in a rally echoing the message “Say No to Dope, Yes to Hope,” urging citizens to reject substance abuse and embrace a life of purpose and positivity. The rally was flagged off by Snehal Navalakha, joint vice president of Suryadatta, and Dr Seemi Retharekar, principal of Suryadatta Institute of Health

Sciences.

The main event was held at the Bansiratna Auditorium on the Bavdhan campus, where police officials from Bavdhan Police Station, including API Ashok Dongre, PSI Chandrakant Jadhav, and officers Subhash Bahirat, Suraj Tilekar, and Kaveri Bangar were present. The

guests were felicitated with Suryadatta scarves and medals in appreciation of their public service.

The programme began with the screening of short films highlighting the harmful impact of drug use. Dongre addressed the audience, emphasising the importance of maintaining good health



and providing practical tips on staying away from substance abuse. Kiran Rao, principal of Suryadatta Junior College, administered an anti-drug oath to students.

Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay Chordiya said, “A drug-free society is a progressive society. If every individual takes a strong stand against addiction, we can build a healthier nation that progresses at double the speed.”





721.08 pts



225.10 pts



12 paise



₹500



₹00

SENSEX 81,463.09 | NIFTY 24,837.00 | USD/INR 86.52 | GOLD 99,120.00 | SILVER 1,15,000.00

## Briefs

### UPI may not stay free forever: RBI

While providing accessible and low-cost payments system remains a priority for the Reserve Bank of India, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said that unified payments interface will only be sustainable as long as someone bears the cost of transactions. "As of now, there are no charges on UPI and the government is bearing the costs. Obviously, some costs have to be paid. Right now, the government is paying those costs. Cost of any service should be paid collectively, or by the user," he said. His comments come against the backdrop of proposals from certain quarters to bring back merchant charges on unified payments interface-based transactions. Merchant discount rate is the charge paid by merchants to banks for processing payments in real-time.

### Sebi cancels registration of 13 entities

Markets regulator Sebi on Friday cancelled the registration of 13 entities as investment advisers after they failed to pay the renewal fees. "The main purpose of cancellation of certificate of registration, as investment adviser, of the noticees (13 entities) is to prevent the misuse of their expired certificate of registration with Sebi on unaware investors," the regulator said in its order. Meanwhile, Sebi on Friday proposed to ease the rules for issuers of non-convertible securities by replacing the requirement of sending a hard copy of financials and annual reports to security holders with a web link and quick response (QR) code to access the same.

### Govt to buy back 3 gilts worth ₹300bn

The government will buy back three gilts worth INR 300 billion on Thursday, the Reserve Bank of India said in a press release Friday. The buyback auction of the three gilts, all maturing in 2026-27 (Apr-Mar), will be held at 1030-1130 IST. The gilts up for buyback are the 7.27%, 2026 bond; the 5.63%, 2026 bond and the 6.99%, 2026 bond. There is no notified amount for each of the individual securities up for buyback.

### Malaysia's palm oil exports to India rebound

Malaysia's crude palm oil exports to India rebounded to 2.5 lakh tonne monthly in May and June after a brief slowdown, with the nation's market share in India rising to 35% in the first half of 2025 from 30% in 2023, Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC) Chief Executive Officer Belvinder Sron said. Speaking at the 4th edition of IPVA Global Round Table, the CEO said exports had recovered following a peak in October 2024, with the positive trend expected to continue into the third quarter driven by price competitiveness and festive restocking ahead of Diwali.

### GNG IPO subscribed 146.90 times

GNG Electronics' initial public offering received a whopping 146.90 times subscription on the closing day of share sale on Friday, mirroring a strong participation from institutional buyers. The Rs 460.43-crore IPO fetched bids for 2,08,43,32,446 shares against 1,41,88,644 shares on offer, as per NSE data.

## ECONOMY | Reserve Bank has more ammunition in its arsenal beyond rate cuts ‘Rate cuts won’t lead to asset bubbles’

FPJ News Service

MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday said rate cuts will not lead to asset bubbles and added that the central bank has more ammunition in its arsenal beyond rate cuts to help the economy.

Data available till June suggest that banks' lending rates have declined by around 0.50% this year, the same as the RBI's rate cuts till then, signalling a complete transmission of the RBI's decision. The rate cuts are aimed at upping the credit growth, Malhotra said, exuding confidence that they will not lead to the creation of asset bubbles. He said the 12.1% credit growth for FY25 is better than the decadal average of over 10%, but admitted that the number is trailing at around 9% levels in FY26. He assured the industry that the RBI will pro-

vide "the right macroeconomic conditions for growth" through its policies, liquidity stance and regulatory moves.

With data showing a steep decline in price rise in June, Malhotra Friday said that the outlook on inflation and growth will determine future rate cuts, making it clear that the current data will not influence the trajectory.

Speaking at the Financial Express BFSI event here, Malhotra said, rate cuts will depend on the outlook for both growth and inflation rather than the current numbers. "We have to remember that monetary policy works with a lag and hence outlook on the outcomes on key data like inflation for up to 12 months is kept in mind while taking the rate calls."

He reminded that as per the current projections, CPI is expected to rise to 4.4% in Q4, but admitted that the current outcomes suggest there will be



a downward revision to the number.

The governor reiterated the RBI's concerns about allowing industrial houses to promote banks, saying any entity undertaking a real economy, along with financial sector activity, exposes the system to potential conflicts of interest. It is only the voting rights which are capped at 26% as per the Banking Regulation Act, and even foreign banks can have up to 100% shareholding in a

### ‘UK FTA will help India’

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra has welcomed the signing of the free trade agreement with the UK, saying it will help multiple sectors of the Indian economy. He said multilateralism has "unfortunately" taken a back seat, and the country needs more such pacts (like the UK FTA) with countries and added that negotiations with the US are in advanced stages. "Hopefully, it (UK FTA) should help us... that is the way going forward now, because unfortunately multilateralism seems to have taken a back seat." The deal should help various sectors in our manufacturing as well as on the services side."

domestic bank. At present, the government is subsidising the payments infrastructure given its huge benefits, and in the future, there will be a need to have payments either by the state or users to ensure that the system keeps on, Malhotra said.

It can be noted that the RBI has cut its key rates by 1 percentage point this year, and official data pointing to headline infla-

tion cooling to 2.1% against the 4% target has led to expectations of further easing.

The shift in stance to "neutral" from "accommodative" suggests that the bar for delivering a rate cut is much higher now, Malhotra added. CRR cut is not just a liquidity move, but an attempt to reduce the cost of intermediation, which will help lower the borrowing costs as well.

## Mkts fall amid excessive valuations, FII selling

FPJ News Service

MUMBAI

Subdued corporate earnings, excessive valuations, FII selling and lacklustre global signals triggered a broad-based sell-off across Indian equities on Friday.

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 8.67 lakh crore in two days of sharp fall, where the benchmark Sensex tanked 1.52%.

The 30-share BSE Sensex lost 721.08 points on Friday to settle at over a month's low of 81,463.09. During the day, it plunged 786.48 points to 81,397.69. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 225.10 points to a month's low of 24,837.

"The near-term market construct has turned weak. Sustained FII selling of Rs 11,572 crore (from July 21 to 24) had a negative impact on the market.

The weakness in the broader market, particularly in smallcaps, might continue since valuations had turned excessive and difficult to justify," said Dr VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Investment. "Subdued corporate results and lacklustre global cues triggered a broad-based sell-off across domestic equities. Elevated valuations in large-cap stocks, coupled with significant net short positions held by FIIs, added to the downward pressure.

"Investor sentiment remained fragile amid ongoing uncertainty over US-India tariff negotiations and



the ECB maintaining the status quo, with rate cuts deferred until clearer insights emerged on the inflationary impact of trade developments," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited. "The India-UK FTA, which is India's first comprehensive trade agreement with a major developed country, has two implications for the market perspective.

One, this deal will significantly boost trade between both countries, which will be seen as a positive by the market.

"Two, this pact projects India as a nation committed to free trade. Textiles, leather, food processing, automobiles, pharmaceuticals and gems and jewellery are expected to benefit from the India-UK CETA, will be on the market radar," Dr VKV added.

## FX reserves fall to 7-week low of \$695.49 bn

Informist

NEW DELHI

India's foreign exchange reserves fell to a seven-week low of \$695.49 billion, down \$1.18 billion from the previous week, as of Jul. 18, data released by the Reserve Bank of India Friday showed. The reserves declined for the third consecutive week, possibly owing to revaluation losses.

The dollar index, which measures the strength of the dollar against a basket of six major currencies, strengthened 0.6% in the week ended Jul. 18. Calculated in dollar terms, the RBI's foreign exchange reserves also reflect the impact of appreciation or depreciation of currencies other than the dollar, such as the euro, the pound sterling, and the yen, held by the RBI. Foreign currency assets as of Jul. 18 were at \$587.61 billion, down \$1.20 billion.

## ‘UK agreed to rebalance FTA if carbon tax impacts trade’

Informist

NEW DELHI

The UK has agreed to rebalance the freshly signed CETA, in case the island nation imposes Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and that impacts India's trade interest, a senior government official said on Friday. On Thursday, the two nations signed a FTA under which India has committed to cut duty on 90% tariff lines while the UK would slash duty on 99% tariff lines.

UK is still at the preparatory stage of Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, and it may get implemented only from 2027. In case the UK's proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism results in adverse effect for the covered products, India will take steps to ensure that the market access concessions



provided under the free trade agreement are not eroded, the official said. To mitigate the risks of climate change, the EU had announced a phased implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism in October 2023. Under this, those exporting goods to the EU have to report the carbon content of the commodity, based on which, they would be taxed. The carbon tax collection is expected to begin from 2026. India had voiced concerns over the development and FM Nirmal Sitharaman had called them unilateral and arbitrary.

## ‘India flexible on Chinese investments in electronics’

PTI

NEW DELHI

India is flexible for collaboration of domestic companies with Chinese, especially electronics, a government source said on Friday.

Around 60 per cent of electronics manufacturing happens in China, and hence, it is not easy to ignore it, the source added.



"Things are easing (between India and China). There are signals. Tourist visas have been opened. In electronics, 60 per cent of manufacturing takes place in China.

So, there has to be some sort of collaboration," the sources said.

He was replying to a question on government approval for the Dixon joint venture with Chinese companies.

Dixon Technologies has received approval from the Indian government to form a joint venture (JV) with Chinese peer Longcheer. Dixon has been reaching

## Banking Secy calls for FDI reforms

Informist

MUMBAI

India needs to review its foreign direct investment norms so that banks here can have access to more funds, M. Nagaraju, secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, said Friday. "Universal financial inclusion is another challenge that I see that needs to be addressed," Nagaraju said. He was speaking at the Modern BFSI Summit in Mumbai.

On the importance of foreign capital, Nagaraju said access to foreign capital will reduce the cost of funds for Indian banks and should be welcomed. Banks need to play a pivotal role if India is to meet the "Viksit Bharat" aim by 2047, Nagaraju said. Indian banks need to look towards markets to raise substantial capital to fund growth, he said. "At the top of the capitalistic infra-

### Nagaraju said access to foreign capital will reduce the cost of funds for Indian banks and should be welcomed

structure level, Indian banks must raise substantial amounts of capital to support the country's growth ambitions. I am of the opinion that the country's banks are working to raise more funds and support greater expansion. Therefore, access to capital from all sources needs to be looked at and reviewed by all of us," Nagaraju said.

How banks reimagine deposit mobilisation is going to play a key role going forward, Nagaraju said. While banks can rely on traditional forms of funding growth, they need to look at new avenues to raise funds as well, he said.

## Rupee weakens 12 paise to settle at 86.52



PTI

MUMBAI

The rupee declined 12 paise to settle at 86.52 against the US dollar on Friday, tracking negative domestic equity markets and surging global crude oil prices.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee weakened due to a surge in crude oil prices and weakness in the domestic markets, which also fuelled the withdrawal of foreign institutional investors.

## Trump presses Fed chair to cut rates

Agencies

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has repeatedly demanded Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell slash rates by 3 percentage points or more.

"I'd love him to lower interest rates," Trump said during a rare presidential visit to the US central bank on Thursday. President Donald Trump locked horns with Powell, criticizing the cost of renovating two historical buildings at the Fed headquarters and pressing the case for lower interest rates.



Trump claimed the renovation project was over budget at a \$3.1 billion price tag, while Powell pushed back and said the president was including an extra building that had been renovated five years ago. The Fed has maintained that renovation costs are \$2.5 billion, an increase from \$1.9 billion.

Trump ended his tour after-

### Trump locked horns with Powell, criticizing the cost of renovating two historical buildings at the Fed headquarters and pressing the case for lower interest rates

ward by saying he wanted the renovation to be completed and Powell to aggressively cut benchmark interest rates. The Fed chair has refrained from responding to Trump's taunts on social media.

### Guv Malhotra backs his US counterpart

The RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra backed his US counterpart Powell for his work on upholding the Fed's independence, at a time when US President has gone public with his disagreement with its policies. "He is doing a very good job. Maintaining the independence of the central bank is very important. I think he has done a commendable job."

## Govt working on modalities to mandate green steel public procurement: Official

The government is working on modalities to mandate public procurement of green steel, a move towards smoother transition from the traditional carbon steel, a senior official said. Green steel refers to steel produced with significantly reduced carbon emissions compared to traditional methods.

"Green steel will be in the market and will be competing with not so green steel," Ashwini Kumar, Economic Adviser in the steel ministry said adding that "there is need to mandate some kind of public procurement of green

steel. We are working on that also."

He was addressing the India Steel Conclave 2025 organised by ASSOCHAM.

"It is a tricky business. I don't know when we will see green steel public procurement coming into force but still modalities are being worked out," he said adding that the government is also working on Green Steel Mission. He further said that European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is against the spirit of free trade agreement. -PTI

## India achieves 20% ethanol blending target 5 yrs ahead of schedule: ISMA



PTI

NEW DELHI

India has achieved its target of 20 per cent ethanol blending with petrol five years ahead of schedule, the Indian Sugar & Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) said on Friday.

The achievement represents dramatic growth from the modest 1.5 per cent blending rate when the program began in 2014 under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, ISMA said in a statement. The ethanol blending program has delivered substantial economic and environmental benefits, according to ISMA data.

Ethanol production surged from 38 crore litres in 2014 to 661 crore litres blended as of June 2025, while generating 698 lakh tonnes in carbon dioxide emission reductions. The program has provided significant financial benefits to India's agricultural sector.

## Gilts sharply down as RBI Guv offers no rate-cut cues

Informist

NEW DELHI

Government bond prices ended sharply lower Friday after the Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra indicated earlier in the day that the Monetary Policy Committee is unlikely to cut repo rate in the near term. Prices fell further as traders, who were betting on a rate cut in August, unwound their positions, dealers said. However, some recovery was seen towards the end of the

trade as a few saw the lower levels as attractive to buy, dealers added.

The 10-year benchmark 6.33%, 2035 gilt closed at Rs 99.84, or a yield of 6.35%, against Rs 100.01, or 6.33%, Thursday. The most traded 6.79%, 2034 bond closed at Rs 102.66, or 6.40%, against Rs 102.81, or 6.38%, the previous day. The yield on the 10-year benchmark 6.33%, 2035 gilt hit 6.3644%, the highest level since May 9, when tensions between India and Pakistan had pulled gilt prices down.

ANI

NEW DELHI

India's wealthiest households are set to get even richer, with their growing financial assets creating massive opportunities for wealth management firms.

According to a recent report by Bernstein, India's wealth managers are witnessing robust growth, driven by rising demand from the country's uber-rich. These firms, which cater to the top 1% of Indian households, are delivering

more than 20% profit growth and 20% return on equity (RoE).

It stated "India's uber-rich are only going to get richer. The top 1% households (the uber-rich) in India control approx. USD 11.6 Tn in total assets, of which approx. USD 2.7 Tn are in liquid financial assets that wealth managers can service". The report highlighted that these liquid assets include bank deposits and non-promoter equity holdings. Indian households are gradually shifting more of their incremental savings



and wealth into financial assets, boosting the addressable market for wealth managers.

The boom in India's capital markets is also contributing to this trend. The ultra-rich are converting their illiquid promoter holdings

into liquid financial wealth through IPOs, stake sales, and block deals.

The report stated "The uber-rich are cashing in on the capital market boom, converting illiquid promoter holdings to liquid financial wealth through IPOs, stake sales and blocks".

At the same time, a new class of wealthy individuals is emerging from the startup ecosystem, including founders and early employees, further expanding the base of high-net-worth individuals (HNIs).



Briefs

Tata Sons posts ₹26,232 cr profit in FY25

Tata Sons, the principal investment holding firm of the Tata Group of companies, saw its profit after tax jump nearly ten times in the last five years to hit Rs 26,232 crore in 2024-25 compared to Rs 2,680 crore in FY2019-20, according to its latest annual report. In terms of revenue, the company saw it climb over one-and-a-half fold to Rs 38,835 crore in FY25 from Rs 24,896 crore in FY20. The net worth of the company also surged nearly three-and-a-half times to Rs 1,49,680 crore in FY25 from Rs 45,586 crore in FY20.

SAIL Q1 net profit zooms to ₹745 crore

SAIL, country's largest steel maker, on Friday reported a multi-fold rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 744.58 crore in the quarter ended June 2025 on the back of improved operational efficiency, better cash flow and strong growth in sales volume. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 81.78 crore in the year-ago period, Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) said in a filing to BSE.

**Tata Chemicals Q1 PAT jumps 80.5% to ₹316 cr**  
Tata Chemicals on Friday reported an 80.57 per cent increase in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) to Rs 316 crore for the quarter ended June 30. The company's PAT was Rs 175 crore during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, Tata Chemicals said in a regulatory filing.

**Nayara CEO resigns as co hit by EU sanctions**  
Russian oil giant Rosneft-backed Indian refiner, Nayara Energy, which has recently been hit by EU sanctions, has appointed a new chief executive officer after its previous CEO resigned, sources aware of the matter said on Friday. Alessandro Des Dorides resigned as CEO of Nayara Energy last week and has been replaced by Sergey Denisov, they said.

**Authum Invst promoter sells 3.41% stake for ₹1,307 crore**  
Mentor Capital, one of the promoters of Authum Investment & Infrastructure Ltd, on Friday divested a 3.41% stake in the NBFC firm for Rs 1,307 crore through an open market transaction. Capital markets veteran Sanjay Dangi and his wife, Alpna Dangi, control Mentor Capital. According to the bulk deal data on the BSE, Mentor Capital sold 58 lakh equity shares, amounting to a 3.41% stake in Authum Investment & Infrastructure Ltd.

Sona Comstar: AGM held with regulatory compliance amid objections by late Kapur's mother

Amid a brewing feud over who represents the interest of Kapur family in auto components major Sona BLW Precision Forgings, the company on Friday said it held its AGM with full regulatory compliance despite request for postponement from Rani Kapur, mother of late chairman Sanjay Kapur. Rani Kapur, former chairperson of the Sona group and wife of former Chairman Surinder Kapur, in a letter dated July 24 to the board of Sona BLW Precision Forgings, alleged that while the family is in the mourning due to the passing away of Sunjay, some

‘TTC to invest ₹20K cr across businesses’ 'Bharat First' to anchor global aspirations, says Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Puri

**PTI KOLKATA**  
Diversified conglomerate ITC Ltd plans to invest Rs 20,000 crore across its businesses over the medium term to strengthen manufacturing capabilities and scale emerging growth vectors, Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Puri said on Friday. "Encouraged by the promise of the Indian economy, your company has invested in eight world-class manufacturing facilities in the recent past, with an outlay of nearly Rs 4,500 crore," Puri informed shareholders at the company's Annual General Meeting held virtually.

"As we continue to scale new horizons, ITC plans to invest Rs 20,000 crore across businesses in the medium term," Puri said, without providing further details. He had earlier announced this investment plan during the 2024 AGM. The investment could span in areas such as FMCG, sustainable packaging and export-oriented value-added agricultural products. As we continue to scale new horizons. While he did not provide a specific timeline for the proposed capex, Puri said the investment will be directed toward areas aligned with the company's 'ITC Next' strategy, which seeks to build a future-



ready portfolio through both organic and inorganic expansion. He said the company has built 40 state-of-the-art manufacturing assets, enriching ITC's robust ecosystem of 250 dedicated factories and 7,500 MSMEs. "Across your company's businesses, over 90% of value-addition takes place in the country, enlarging ITC's contribution to the economy," he noted.

Whatever is right will be done at the right time: CMD on ITC Infotech

ITC Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Puri on Friday said the company will continue to evaluate strategic options for its businesses, including ITC Infotech, based on competitive context, business maturity, opportunities and overall value creation, without specifying any immediate plans for a demerger similar to the hotels vertical. Responding to a query on the possibility of spinning off ITC Infotech as a separate listed entity at the AGM, Puri said, "We look at the business strategy, the competitive context, maturity of the business, and weigh the pros and cons of the current structure. Whatever is best, we recommend for shareholders' approval." He stressed that ITC's structure is aligned with its strategic objectives, and decisions such as the demerger of ITC Hotels follow extensive reviews. "Just like we did for hotels, whatever is right will be done at the right time. Nothing is cast in stone," Puri asserted.

Bajaj Finserv's Q1 consol PAT jumps 30%

**Informist NEW DELHI**  
Bajaj Finserv Ltd.'s consolidated net profit for the quarter ended June rose at its fastest pace year-on-year in two years on back of a robust increase in interest income. Sharp on-year rise in finance cost, however, ate into the non-banking financial company's bottom line. Bajaj Finserv's net profit rose 30.5% on year and 15.4% sequentially to INR 27.89 billion in Apr-Jun. Bajaj Finserv is the non-operating holding company of Bajaj Finance Ltd., Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Co. Ltd., Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Co. Ltd., and Bajaj Finserv Asset Management Ltd. Bajaj Finance, in turn, is



the promoter of Bajaj Housing Finance Ltd. and Bajaj Financial Securities Ltd. The Pune-based non-bank lender's consolidated total income rose 12.6% on year to INR 354.51 billion, of which the interest income jumped 21.7% on year to INR 188.90 billion, and premium and other operating income from insurance business rose 4.1% to INR 128.04 billion in the reporting quarter. In Apr-Jun, the company's total expenses rose 10.7% on year to INR 282.48 billion, of

which finance costs grew 21.7% to INR 68.07 billion. The company's expenses from net change in insurance or investment contract liabilities rose 21.5% on year to INR 30.41 billion. The company's subsidiary Bajaj Finance reported a 20.1% on-year rise in consolidated net profit to INR 47 billion for the quarter ended June, higher than analyst estimate of INR 46.14 billion, owing to strong growth in assets under management. A sharp rise in net interest income also helped bolster the financier's bottom line. Shares of Bajaj Finserv that were down from the previous close, came off lows after announcement of the financial results for the June quarter. At

1432 IST, they traded at INR 1,983.30, down 2.4%, on the National Stock Exchange. Bajaj Finserv said its subsidiary Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Co.'s net profit increased 76% on year to INR 1.71 billion in Apr-Jun. The company's other subsidiary Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Co.'s profit after tax increased 15% on year to INR 6.6 billion in the reporting quarter. In Apr-Jun, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance's gross written premium was INR 52.02 billion, up 9% on year. Excluding tender-driven crop insurance and government health insurance premium, the general insurance company's gross written premium increased to INR 53.58 billion up 15% on year.

Cipla Q1 PAT rises 10% to ₹1,298 cr

**PTI NEW DELHI**  
Drug major Cipla on Friday reported a 10 per cent increase in its consolidated profit after tax to Rs 1,298 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, 2025, aided by robust sales growth in India, Europe, and Africa. The company had posted a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 1,178 crore for the April-June quarter of the previous fiscal. Total Income from operations rose to Rs 6,957 crore for the June quarter as compared with Rs 6,694 crore in the year-ago period, Cipla said in a statement. Cipla MD and Global CEO Umang Vohra said the company's One-India business grew



at 6 per cent year-on-year during the quarter. Key therapies in the branded prescription business continued to outpace the market growth, trade generics business growth trajectory is back on track and anchor brands of consumer health business maintained leadership position, Vohra stated. "Going ahead, the focus will be on growing our key markets, further building our flagship brands, investing in future

pipeline as well as focusing on resolutions on the regulatory front," Vohra said. The company said its sales in the Indian market rose to Rs 3,070 crore for the first quarter, an increase of 6 per cent as compared with Rs 2,898 crore in the year-ago period. North America sales declined 7 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,933 crore for the June quarter. Emerging markets and Europe saw sales at Rs 861 crore for the first quarter, a growth of 11 per cent as against Rs 779 crore in the year-ago period. Africa sales grew 14 per cent year-on-year to Rs 871 crore for the June quarter as compared with Rs 766 crore in the April-June period of last year.

NSDL's ₹4,011 cr IPO to open on July 30; price band set at ₹760-800 per share

**FPJ News Service MUMBAI**  
National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL), which plans to raise Rs 4,011 crore through its Initial Public Offering (IPO), on Friday fixed a price band of Rs 760 to Rs 800 per share. The depository's maiden public issue is schedule to open on July 30 and conclude on August 1. The one-day bidding for anchor investors is schedule to open on July 29. The IPO only consists of Offer For Sale (OFS) component of 5.01 crore shares and those selling shares under this are -- the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, IDBI Bank, Union Bank of India and the Administrator of Specified Undertaking of the



Unit Trust of India (SUUTI). Since the public issue is entirely an OFS, NSDL will not receive any proceeds from the IPO. At the upper end of the price band, NSDL's maiden public issue is expected to fetch Rs 4,011 crore valuing the company at Rs 16,000 crore. This upcoming listing will make NSDL the country's second publicly traded depository after Central Depository Services (CDSL), which was listed on the NSE in 2017.

The listing of NSDL is crucial in order to comply with Sebi's ownership norms. These regulations require that no entity can hold more than 15% of the shareholding in a depository company. NSDL's principal shareholders, IDBI Bank and the NSE, are required to reduce their stake in the company to comply with Sebi's rule. Currently, IDBI holds 26.10% and NSE owns 24% stake in NSDL, which exceeds the permissible limit.

Bank of Baroda Q1 PAT rises 1.9% to ₹4,541 crore

**PTI MUMBAI**  
A de-growth in the core income led state-owned Bank of Baroda to register an 1.9 per cent growth in June quarter net profit at Rs 4,541 crore. The bank had logged a net profit of Rs 4,458 crore in the year ago period. Its managing director and chief executive Debadatta

Chand told reporters that the second quarter of the fiscal year will also be challenging but things will get better in the second half of the fiscal. In the reporting quarter, the bank's core net interest

income dropped 1.4 per cent to Rs 11,435 crore, despite a nearly 13 per cent loan growth, but it was impacted by a 0.27 per cent narrowing in the net interest margin to 2.91 per cent.

THE ART OF MONEY MANAGEMENT

# ‘PLAN BEYOND NUMBERS’

The CEO of PGIM India MF explores India's changing financial mindset, from retirement fear to equity investing, and calls for a unified financial advisory system for better planning. In this episode of The Simple Hai! show, veteran financial journalist Vivek Law engaged in an in-depth conversation with Ajit Menon, CEO of PGIM India Mutual Fund, on the evolving dynamics of financial planning, investor behaviour, and retirement preparedness in India. Drawing on over two decades of experience in financial services and investor education, Menon offered a nuanced and forward-looking perspective on how Indians, particularly millennials and Gen Z, approach wealth creation and retirement.

People think financial anxiety comes from not having enough money. But very often, it's about relying on just one source of income or one skill. The root of financial anxiety is not always numerical. Instead, it often stems from a lack of income diversification.

One must develop secondary skills or monetizable hobbies, such as teaching yoga, pet grooming, or organic farming. This can serve as fallback income streams, especially after retirement. This is crucial in a country like India, where longevity risk is on the rise. We're living longer than before, and our post-retirement lives are getting stretched.

The idea that your retirement corpus must last for 25-30 years is daunting, especially in the face of rising medical costs.

**Generational Shifts: The Millennial and Gen Z Approach**

Menon noted a stark shift in the financial mindset of the younger generation. Millennials and Gen Z don't just want to build wealth patiently. They want to do it fast. They're changing jobs frequently, exploring multiple

The new generation, by contrast, needs financial planning that is flexible, adaptive, and aligned with their dynamic life paths

careers, and aren't afraid of risk. This lifestyle represents a sharp departure from that of earlier generations, which typically had single careers

spanning decades and placed a strong emphasis on stability and savings. The new generation, by contrast, needs financial planning that is flexible, adaptive, and aligned with their dynamic life paths. Time is ripe for advisors and financial institutions to rethink how they engage with this cohort and provide tailored, technology-driven solutions.

**Corpus to Contentment**

One of the most powerful takeaways from the conversation is his reframing of retirement planning. We need to move the discussion away from large, often intimidating corpus numbers to more meaningful questions like, "what will make you happy and purposeful in your retirement?"

Instead of treating retirement as the end of economic activity, Menon advocated for viewing it as a new phase of

life that can be both productive and fulfilling. Having a second skill that generates income after retirement, even in a limited capacity, can greatly reduce financial dependence and enhance psychological well-being. Retirement should not just be about financial survival.

**Wealth Creation Engine**

In a clear endorsement of equity as a critical component of any long-term investment

allow investors to align their investments with income growth and spending needs. For example, an SIP with a top-up ensures that as an investor's income rises, so does their investment contribution. Similarly, SWPs provide a disciplined approach to withdrawing funds in retirement without disrupting long-term compounding. Automation helps correct human behaviour. The less emotional interference, the better the financial outcomes.

**Financial Advisory Ecosystem**

India's financial advisory landscape remains fragmented, with multiple regulators governing insurance, mutual funds, pensions, and loans. This results in scattered advice and confusion for consumers. Menon advocated for a unified, solution-based financial advisory model.

A household needs advice on tax, investments, insurance, loans, and retirement. But often, they end up dealing with different agents and institutions for each. As the profession matures, driven by tech-savvy, younger advisors, it will become more integrated, trusted, and client-centric. The next generation of advisors will speak the language of today's investors, and that's how the trust gap will close.

**Financial Well-being: A State of Mind**

Menon redefines financial well-being as: "It's not just about how much money you have. It's about how secure and purposeful you feel about your financial life. True well-being comes when you stop chasing more and start aligning your money with your values and goals. That's when finances stop being a source of stress and start being a source of strength."

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Generally speaking, investing in yourself is the best thing you can do. Anything that improves your own talents; nobody can tax it or take it away from you.

Warren Buffett



DII / FPI trading activity	BUY VALUE	SELL VALUE	NET VALUE
DII	12,786.65	10,648.06	2,138.59
FII / FPI	12,831.79	14,811.75	-1,979.96

All figures in ₹ crores

# Volatility to continue amid tariff deadline



## Motilal Oswal Team

The Sensex and the Nifty are down for the fourth straight week, the longest losing streak so far in 2025. 35 out of 50 Nifty stocks are down this week barring banks and Pharma, all sectors have ended negative. How long will this weakness persist? Are there lower levels insight or markets will bounce back is something only time will tell.

Markets have been consolidating since the past four weeks but the bias seems negative and it is very clear that Nifty is unable to sustain above the 25200 mark. Sector rotation is quite interesting and we have seen how IT sector performed down 4.1% post results from some of the heavyweights, FMCG also underperformed down 3.4% for the week, however BFSI is seen gaining some traction as Nifty Bank and Nifty Financials were up 0.44% and 0.95%. Pharma which was up 0.31% also witnessed some buying. What has led to this consolidation and negative bias is weak earnings by IT companies and continued selling by FIIs that completely overshadowed optimism around the Free Trade Agreement signed between India-UK.

Market sentiment was further damped with respect to concerns over

delays in the US-India trade deal and weaker-than-expected Q1 results from FMCG major Nestle India. Importantly the tariff deadline of 1st August is approaching next week, hence all eyes will be on what President Trump does and its impact on the markets.

We expect markets will remain volatile as tariff deadline approaches and also ahead of key FOMC Meeting scheduled next week. Having said that, the India-UK Free Trade Agreement, stronger dollar index and expectation of good quarterly numbers are some of the positives that should support the market sentiment. As stock specific action continues due to ongoing Q1FY26 Earnings, the buy on dip strategy augurs well. On a weekly basis ended on Friday, the Indian benchmark indices ended in red. Sensex and Nifty were down 0.4-0.5% each while Midcaps were down 1.7% during the week.

Earnings are the flavor of the season and investors are busy monitoring the numbers, management commentary on growth and outlook and guidance for the remaining quarters so stock specific actions will continue keeping markets busy. On the data front starting with domestic cues, we have cumulative Industrial Output, Industrial Output, Manufacturing Output, Infrastructure Output, Forex reserves etc.

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DATA SOURCE: CAPITALINE

## Hot stocks

Company Name	7/24/2025	7 DSMA	21 DSMA	50DSMA	250 DSMA	BSE 1 Year High Price	Pulscore
Dr Lal Pathlabs	3091.55	3006.58	2901.55	2875.70	2949.71	3645.00	100.00
Kama Holdings	3083.60	3090.74	3072.67	2893.58	2662.91	3265.50	100.00
Siemens	3128.35	3127.79	3195.42	3235.09	3191.46	4041.64	100.00
Glaxosmi. Pharma	3159.95	3140.69	3241.94	3222.01	2704.70	3515.95	100.00
SRF	3144.40	3170.88	3204.38	3088.50	2678.29	3319.00	100.00
TCS	3150.15	3182.64	3315.48	3400.08	3904.67	4585.90	100.00
M & M	3260.65	3231.02	3183.43	3115.13	2935.21	3302.90	100.00
AIA Engineering	3322.20	3366.32	3356.90	3380.28	3640.06	4940.00	100.00
Escorts Kubota	3446.75	3425.48	3367.70	3348.90	3476.23	4422.00	100.00
Titan Company	3483.60	3444.21	3527.04	3532.56	3405.92	3866.15	100.00
Timken India	3517.25	3474.90	3403.56	3288.28	3209.51	4438.00	100.00
Larsen & Toubro	3478.25	3481.66	3556.70	3597.85	3531.51	3963.00	100.00
Torrent Pharma	3515.90	3512.26	3407.70	3287.79	3276.53	3615.20	100.00
Gujarat Fluoroch.	3569.30	3523.77	3502.14	3621.23	3849.08	4875.00	100.00
Cummins India	3562.15	3580.99	3482.22	3323.25	3297.96	3926.60	100.00
CEAT	3344.80	3640.35	3698.84	3709.26	3083.40	4048.95	100.00
eClerx Services	3658.40	3675.69	3532.71	3512.39	3071.86	3918.55	100.00
Akzo Nobel	3872.15	3705.78	3574.58	3440.75	3540.34	4649.00	100.00
Thermax	3844.30	3854.31	3575.12	3530.16	4060.24	5721.20	100.00
KEI Industries	3904.85	3939.56	3825.29	3706.61	3857.01	4776.85	100.00
Avenue Super.	4019.85	4044.35	4174.85	4149.90	4158.65	5484.00	100.00
P I Industries	4113.55	4114.65	4131.21	4007.74	3959.89	4801.40	100.00
Ingersoll-Rand	4077.80	4123.79	4045.46	3947.38	3964.02	4699.90	100.00
Supreme Inds.	4239.60	4196.76	4236.39	4238.63	4379.93	5724.50	100.00
Schaeffler India	4154.10	4212.10	4119.69	4096.33	3662.68	4372.70	100.00
Cams Services	4198.60	4226.76	4211.61	4135.75	4204.42	5367.45	100.00
L&T Technology	4300.50	4351.64	4353.83	4390.73	4898.19	5990.00	100.00
Hind Motocorp	4301.80	4382.81	4324.93	4318.80	4532.12	6245.00	100.00
Hero.Aeronautics	4679.80	4744.71	4862.51	4939.47	4377.20	5166.00	100.00
SKF India	4989.70	4947.38	4901.95	4753.09	4636.71	5774.65	100.00
Navin Fluor.Intl.	5074.00	4982.59	4948.45	4653.80	3887.80	5179.00	100.00
Alkem Lab	4997.80	4993.97	4998.44	4966.65	5336.10	6440.00	100.00
BASF India	5152.50	5064.91	5097.53	5085.87	5624.24	8748.10	100.00
LTIMindtree	5203.20	5210.43	5269.96	5243.33	5528.14	6764.80	100.00
Pfizer	5289.55	5319.47	5545.48	5517.63	5100.32	6452.85	100.00
Fine Organic	5378.15	5343.43	5197.10	4909.18	4724.42	5950.00	100.00

## Upwardly & Downwardly Cos

Company Name	7/18/2025	7/25/2025	Days	Gain/Loss %	Per Day Average
Ujivan Small	48.85	43.31	5	-11.34	-1.108
Triveni Turbine	667.60	615.95	5	-7.74	-10.33
Colgate-Palmoliv	2394.15	2215.10	5	-7.48	-35.81
Mphasis	2829.95	2619.55	5	-7.43	-42.08
Pun. & Sind Bank	32.27	29.93	5	-7.25	-0.468

## Top gainers (%)

Company Name	7/24/2025	7/25/2025	% chg
Indian Energy Ex	132.45	145.10	9.55
Phoenix Mills	1448.30	1526.95	5.43
Home First Finan	1414.55	1473.05	4.14
Orient Electric	216.05	223.00	3.22
Cipla	1487.25	1531.10	2.95
Torrent Pharma.	3515.90	3602.50	2.46
ICICI Securities	876.85	895.70	2.15
SBI Life Insuran	1798.35	1832.85	1.92
Shyam Metalics	950.60	968.35	1.87
Supreme Inds.	4239.60	4318.10	1.85
Sterilite Tech.	114.95	117.00	1.78
Syngene Intl.	669.40	680.75	1.70
Apollo Hospitals	7365.10	7469.05	1.41
Tata Motors-DVR	599.60	607.75	1.36
Metro Brands	1205.10	1220.30	1.26
Pfizer	5289.55	5354.75	1.23
Privi Speci.	2449.80	2479.70	1.22
Anupam Rasayan	1131.80	1145.30	1.19
Medplus Health	884.05	893.90	1.11
CEAT	3344.80	3381.10	1.09
Dr Reddy's Labs	1264.85	1277.60	1.01
Max Healthcare	1267.30	1279.65	0.97
Coforge	1674.95	1689.35	0.86
Aurobindo Pharma	1113.35	1122.25	0.80
ICICI Lombard	1906.25	1921.15	0.78
Atul	6603.85	6654.95	0.77
ERIS Lifescience	1780.65	1794.00	0.75
United Breweries	2018.30	2033.10	0.73
GMM Pfaudler	1306.05	1315.50	0.72
HDFC Life Insur.	756.90	762.15	0.69
J B Chemicals &	1695.40	1706.10	0.63
Zydus Lifesci.	971.05	976.70	0.58
Laxmi Organic	204.60	205.70	0.54
Mankind Pharma	2587.80	2601.30	0.52
CSB Bank	425.50	427.60	0.49
Ramkrishna Forg.	622.80	625.65	0.46
Narayana Hrudaya	1982.50	1991.45	0.45
Keynes Tech	5662.05	5687.45	0.45
Alkem Lab	4997.80	5018.45	0.41
Sheela Foam	659.75	662.35	0.39
Lupin	1943.40	1950.95	0.39
Sun Pharma.Inds.	1692.10	1698.60	0.38
Can Fin Homes	772.55	775.40	0.37
SBI Cards	885.80	889.05	0.37
TV18 Broadcast	57.77	57.98	0.36
Happiest Minds	611.65	613.45	0.29
Laurus Labs	835.85	838.05	0.26

## Top losers (%)

Company Name	7/24/2025	7/25/2025	% chg
Intellect Design	1141.75	1034.70	-9.38
APL Apollo Tubes	1688.35	1541.30	-8.71
M R P L	151.40	140.75	-7.03
Swan Energy	509.30	473.60	-7.01
Grindwell Norton	1762.05	1644.50	-6.67
Union Bank (I)	145.00	136.25	-6.03
KIOCL	361.80	340.45	-5.90
Hindustan Copper	273.60	258.85	-5.39
K P R Mill Ltd	1244.75	1178.85	-5.29
Ujivan Small	45.68	43.31	-5.19
CRISIL	5822.25	5545.05	-4.76
Jubilant Ingrev.	818.45	779.50	-4.74
Guj. Ambuja Exp	110.80	105.55	-4.74
Bajaj Finance	913.65	873.45	-4.73
Five-Star Bus.Fi	722.10	690.00	-4.45
JM Financial	177.00	169.20	-4.41
Adani Green	1020.75	975.95	-4.39
Poonawalla Fin	432.25	413.50	-4.34
Zee Entertainment	129.30	123.75	-4.29
B H E L	250.90	240.15	-4.28
Sona BLW Precis.	490.45	469.45	-4.28
Prince Pipes	343.70	329.20	-4.22
UTI AMC	1415.20	1355.70	-4.20
HFCL	79.25	75.92	-4.20
Rainbow Child.	1622.65	1554.50	-4.20
Graphite India	565.10	541.55	-4.17
CreditAcc. Gram.	1365.00	1308.25	-4.16
HLE Glascoct	447.75	429.50	-4.08
Tania Platforms	676.35	648.80	-4.07
Vardhman Textile	493.45	473.40	-4.06
S A I L	136.10	130.65	-4.00
JK Lakshmi Cem.	983.30	944.00	-4.00
Sonata Software	430.15	413.05	-3.98
Cams Services	4198.60	4032.50	-3.96
Latent View	429.75	413.20	-3.85
Aditya Birla Cap	270.85	260.45	-3.84
NBCC	113.65	109.30	-3.83
Deepak Fertilis.	1597.90	1536.75	-3.83
Timken India	3517.25	3382.80	-3.82
Adani Energy Sol	849.40	817.45	-3.76
Oracle Fin.Serv.	8938.45	8604.05	-3.74
Borosil Renew.	648.90	624.70	-3.73
Garware Tech.	932.35	897.60	-3.73
PNB Housing	1048.75	1010.15	-3.68
Zensar Tech.	825.75	795.40	-3.68
Kalpataru Proj.	1194.50	1151.20	-3.62
Data Pattern	2778.25	2678.00	-3.61

## 52-week high

Company Name	7/25/2025	52-week High	52-week Low	Change Rs	Chg (%)
RRPSemiconductor	2947.35	2947.35	23.22	2924.13	12593.15
City Pulse Multi	2226.85	2285.00	335.00	1950.00	582.09
eClerx Services	3645.70	3918.55	2116.00	1802.55	85.19
GHV Infra	1403.30	1403.30	19.78	1383.52	6994.54
Jubilant Agri	2193.45	2361.90	1026.55	1335.35	130.08
Midwest Gold	1315.25	1315.25	42.00	1273.25	3031.55
Aayush Art	910.90	949.50	126.25	823.25	652.08
Torrent Pharma.	3602.50	3615.20	2891.45	723.75	25.03
Home First Finan	1473.05	1518.80	838.65	680.15	81.10
Sharda Cropchem	1088.35	1090.25	440.05	650.20	147.76
Tatva Chintan	1146.95	1219.90	610.00	609.90	99.98
Sinnar Bidi Udy.	1049.60	1050.90	547.85	503.05	91.82
Arunis Abode	482.85	482.85	25.70	457.15	1778.79
Laurus Labs	838.05	845.60	390.30	455.30	116.65
Vimta Labs	584.75	598.90	235.00	363.90	154.85
Stellant Secu.	382.75	382.75	29.86	352.89	1181.82
ICICI Bank	1476.60	1493.70	1153.30	340.40	29.52
InfoBeans Tech.	565.00	598.65	269.95	328.70	121.76
Shyam Metalics	968.35	974.85	655.00	319.85	48.83
Tilaknagar Inds.	497.00	506.00	205.00	301.00	146.83
RDB Real Estate	281.30	281.30	12.90	268.40	2080.62
Osiajee Textfab	291.55	304.00	37.94	266.06	701.27
Ekansh Concept	281.20	281.30	41.71	239.59	574.42
Euro Asia Export	247.10	247.10	16.73	230.37	1376.99
Bizotic Commer.	263.00	263.00	45.90	217.10	472.98
Sai Life	837.95	850.50	635.30	215.20	33.87
Cura Tech.	235.95	235.95	23.24	212.71	915.28
Jetking Infotrai	264.90	264.90	55.35	209.55	378.59
Marble City	196.15	200.80	29.86	170.94	572.47
Elitecon Inter.	159.52	159.52	1.10	158.42	14401.82
Indo Borax & Ch.	290.35	299.00	141.45	157.55	111.38
Vega Jewellers	151.00	151.00	2.14	148.86	6956.07

## 52-week low

Company Name	7/25/2025	52-week High	52-week Low	Change Rs	Chg (%)
National Standar	2448.80	6195.00	2430.05	-3764.95	-60.77
Colgate-Palmoliv	2215.10	3893.00	2212.20	-1680.80	-43.17
Bharat Global	111.20	1702.95	111.20	-1591.75	-93.47
Tejas Networks	601.25	1459.80	600.00	-859.80	-58.90
Salzer Electron.	814.20	1650.00	802.30	-847.70	-51.38
Raymond Realty	711.70	1055.20	703.95	-351.25	-33.29
Available Fin.	175.15	471.00	174.95	-296.05	-62.86



## corporate gallery

## Vantara And Project Elephant Organise Country's Largest Elephant Caregiver Training



Vantara, India's pioneering wildlife rescue, care, and conservation initiative founded by Mr. Anant Ambani, in collaboration with Project Elephant, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, is currently hosting the Vantara Gajsevak Sammelan, a landmark five-day training programme bringing together over 100 mahouts and elephant caregivers from across India. All participants will be awarded a certificate upon successful completion of the training programme. This national-level capacity-building initiative aims to enhance professional expertise, raise care standards, and promote best practices in the welfare of elephants under human care. The programme commenced with a ceremonial welcome and maha aarti at the Radhe Krishna Temple, setting the tone for a spiritually and professionally enriching experience. "This Sammelan is more than a training programme, it's a tribute to those who dedicate their lives to elephant care," said Vivaan Karani, Chief Executive Officer, Vantara. "Our aim is to unite traditional wisdom with modern science to build a stronger, more compassionate foundation for their well-being. It reaffirms that the future of elephant conservation in India depends not just on policy or habitat—but also on the empowered hands and hearts of their caregivers."

## CR GM inspects The Signal and Telecom Training Institute, Byculla; inaugurates new hostel



Dharam Veer Meena, General Manager, Central Railway inspected The Signal and Telecom Training In-

stitute, Byculla and inaugurated the newly constructed Jaigad Hostel for trainees on July 23, 2025. The Jaigad Hostel with 36 rooms has a capacity to accommodate 144 trainees. It has a Gym, Recreation room, Dining room and Wi-Fi facility. The Signal & Telecom Training Institute, Byculla which is part of the Signal & Telecom Workshop Byculla, imparts training to about 1500 trainees on an average every year from two Zones, viz. Central Railway & West Central Railway. Set up in 1968, the Institute conducts more than 100 courses every year for Artisans and Engineers which include Initial Apprentice Course, Foundation Course, Refresher Course, Special Equipment Course and KAVACH training.

## "Employee Connect Drive" Launched On WR

Vivek Kumar Gupta, GM/WR launched the drive with the release of the Campaign Poster



Western Railway has always been in the forefront in the welfare & well-being of its employees. Moving ahead

in this direction, under the aegis and able guidance of Vivek Kumar Gupta, General Manager of Western Railway, a novel initiative "Employee Connect Drive" has been launched across all six divisions of WR. To mark the launch of this campaign, GM Vivek Kumar Gupta, Pradeep Kumar, Additional General Manager of WR, Smt Manjula Saxena, Principal Chief Personnel Officer and other senior officials of Western Railway released "Employee Connect Drive" poster on 24th July, 2025. These posters available in four languages, viz. Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati & English have been displayed across the divisions of WR in order to ensure inclusivity and effective communications with employees.

## ICSI-WIRC Celebrates Student Month July-2025

## 25th July – Career Awareness Program



As part of the celebrations for "Student Month – July 2025", Career Awareness Program, on 25th July 2025, the Western India Regional Council (WIRC) of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) conducted "Career Guidance Session" at

Montfort Junior College of Arts & Commerce, Prabhadevi, Mumbai. The event was conducted under the leadership of CS Hrishikesh Wagh, Chairman, ICSI-WIRC. Rev. Br. Joseph, Hon'ble Principal, Ms. Steffi Fernandes, Subject Teacher, Ms. Greetal Fernandes, Class Teacher, Mr. Yogesh Kadam and Mr. Praveen Shukla, Faculty grace the occasion. Students were apprised regarding various process/documentation required for registering the CS Course, registration dates, eligibility, fee structure, etc. Around 40 students attended the session.

## 25th July – Essay Writing Competition "Operation Sindoor"

As part of the celebrations for "Student Month – July 2025", the Western India Regional Council (WIRC) of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) organized "Essay Writing Competition on the topic Operation Sindoor (Role of Artificial Intelligence in Armed Forces)" on 25th July 2025 at the WIRC premises in Mumbai. The event was conducted under the leadership of CS Hrishikesh Wagh, Chairman, ICSI-WIRC. 5 students of the ICSI participated in the event.

## 24th July – Book Review Competition

As part of the celebrations for "Student Month – July 2025", the Western India Regional Council (WIRC) of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) organized "Book Review Competition" on 24th July 2025 at the WIRC premises in Mumbai. The event was conducted under the leadership of CS Hrishikesh Wagh, Chairman, ICSI-WIRC. 10 students of the ICSI participated in the event and taken part in the Book Review Competition.

## whispersinthecorridors

Dr Suresh Mehrotra



## Will Delhi Police Commissioner get brief extension?

Will Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora get brief extension in service on July 31? One can wait and watch.



## POWERGRID signs MoU with VMMC &amp; Safdarjung hospital Delhi



Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna PSU under Ministry of Power, Government of India has signed an MoU with Vardhman Mahavir Medical College (VMMC) & Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi, to provide seven state-of-the-art medical equipments under CSR for the benefit of urology and renal department patients. Equipments include Video Urodynamic Machine with Near Infra Red Spectroscopy, TRILOGY Lithotripter, Thulium Fibre Laser Machine, Portable Mobile Endoscopy Machine, 3-in-1 endoscopy system, etc. The MoU was signed in the presence of Dr. Yatindra Dwivedi, Director (Personnel), POWERGRID, Jasbir Singh, ED (CSR), POWERGRID, Anshuman Tandon, CGM (Corp. Comm.), A K Rai, CGM (CSR), Ashok Kumar Mishra, GM (CSR & HR), NR-I, POWERGRID, Dr. (Prof.) Sandeep Bansal, Director, VMMC & Safdarjung Hospital, Dr. Charu Bamba, Medical Superintendent, Dr R K Wadhwa, Senior CMO, Dr Pawan Vasudeva, HOD Urology Department, Ms. Poonam Dhanda, Medical Social Welfare Officer & Member CSR Committee, VMMC & Safdarjung Hospital. The CSR assistance is being provided by POWERGRID for installation of high-tech equipments, upgrading various functions of the hospital that will benefit patients coming from all over India. Corporate Social Responsibility is embedded into POWERGRID's business model and is aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. POWERGRID has been consistently contributing to the field of economic and social development across the country with its CSR initiatives. As on 30th June 2025, POWERGRID has commissioned and is operating 284 Sub-stations, more than 1,80,533 ckm transmission lines and 5,66,831 MVA of transformation capacity. With the adoption of the latest technological tools and techniques, enhanced use of automation and digital solutions, POWERGRID has been able to maintain an average transmission system availability of more than 99.84%.

## OUR PREDICTION CAME TRUE

WHISPERSINTHECORRIDORS.COM

Ajay Seth appointed Chairman of IBDA on July 24  
(WE SAID THIS ON MARCH 28, 2025)  
Who will be new Chairman of IBDA?  
After we started Dr. Suresh Mehrotra as Chairman, Minister, Regulatory and Development Authority of India (RD&A), New Delhi government has a Chief Minister Secretary, Ajay Seth as former Director, Secretary, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi. He is a former officer of the Indian Air Force and is currently serving as a senior officer of the Indian Air Force.



## Khattar likely to quit for a bigger role

According to the latest buzz union minister Manohar Lal Khattar is likely to quit from the council of ministers. He is likely to be given some bigger role. Sources said this could be either the BJP Chief or The Vice President. Things will be cleared when PM Modi returns to India.



## Eleven IPS officers shifted in Kerala

Eleven IPS officers have been shifted in Kerala. Dr Arul R B Krishna is transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner of Police, VIP Security and will also hold the additional charge of the post of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Armed Police Battalions, while Sasidharan S was appointed as Assistant Director (Administration), KEPA and Ramesh Kumar takes over as Superintendent of Police, V&ACB, Ernakulam Range. Similarly, Anand R will be posted as District Police Chief, Pathanamthitta; Sabu Mathew as District Police Chief, Idukki; Vishnu Pratheep T K as District Police Chief, Kollam; V G Vinodkumar as Assistant Inspector General of Police, Law & Order; P Vahid as Commandant, India Reserve Battalion; Mohammad Nadeemuddin as Commandant, Kerala Armed Women Police Battalion and Shahansha K S has been appointed as Superintendent of Police, Railways; Yogesh Mandhaiya has been posted as Commandant, Special Armed Police Battalion (SAP).

## Reshuffle of IAS officers in Odisha

More than 12 IAS officers have been transferred and posted to different places in Odisha. Accordingly, Rajesh Prabhakar Patil has been appointed as Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Co-operation, while Dr Bijay Upadhyaya is allowed to remain in charge of Secretary, Odia Language, Literature & Culture and Samarth Verma was made Director, Minor Minerals. Similarly, Deepankar Mohaptra has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer, Hockey Promotion Council, Odisha; Ms Preksha Agrawal as Sub-Collector, Dharamgarh; Ms Pranitha Dash as Sub-collector, Baliguda; Ms Kasturi Panda as Sub-collector, Panchpir; Abhishek Dilip Dudhal as Sub-Collector, Gunupur; Ms Ashni A L as Sub-collector, Nabarangpur; C Saravanan as Sub-collector, Kuchinda; Ms Tejwani Behera as Sub-collector, Sudargarh; Shiv Malviya as Sub-collector, Anandpur and Avinash Kumar was made Sub-collector, Berhampur.

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**Briefs**  
NEW DELHI  
**HC bins Lalu plea for early hearing**

The Delhi High Court has dismissed former Bihar chief minister and RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav's application to advance his plea to quash the FIR in the CBI's land-for-jobs case. Justices Ravinder Dedeja on July 24 said the scheduled date of hearing on August 12 was "not very long". Yadav moved court, claiming the trial court fixed arguments on charges against him and his family members from July 26 to August 2.

KANPUR  
**BJP minister protests against govt**

In a rare display of defiance against her own party-led government, Uttar Pradesh's Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare, Pratibha Shukla, staged a dramatic six-hour sit-in at a police station in Kanpur Dehat on Thursday evening, demanding the suspension of the local station in-charge for allegedly filing a fake SC/ST case against her close aides, all BJP workers. Arriving at Akbarpur Kotwali police station around 4 PM, the minister sat on dharna against Inspector Satish Singh, accusing him of working under political pressure and misusing legal provisions against innocent party workers.

—Biswajeet Banerjee

NEW DELHI  
**ED charges UCO Bank ex-CMD Goel**

A chargesheet has been filed against arrested former UCO bank CMD Subodh Kumar Goel and his family, and his properties worth Rs 106 crore have been attached under anti-money laundering law, Enforcement Directorate said on Friday. Goel was arrested by the federal probe agency in May from his home in Delhi in an alleged bank loan fraud case of more than Rs 6,200 crore linked to Kolkata-based Concast Steel & Power Ltd. (CSPL).

DUBLIN  
**Irish gang targeting Indians?**

A horrifying pattern of violence against Indians in Ireland has come to light after a 40-year-old Indian man was assaulted and stripped in public by a teenage gang in Tallaght, Dublin. The man, who was accused without evidence of acting inappropriately around children, which was also denied by the Irish police, was left bloodied and traumatised. Authorities are probing the case as potential hate crime. Jennifer Murray, the Irish woman who came to his aid, said, "At least 4 Indian men and another man have been facially stabbed by this gang of teens in last 4 days."

**SC nixes delimitation plea in Andhra and Telangana**

**Online Report**  
NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a petition seeking a delimitation exercise and an increase in the number of assembly seats in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, reports Bar and Bench.  
A Bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh ruled that the two States could not be compared with Jammu and Kashmir, where a similar exercise was carried out in

**‘SHEER IGNORANCE’ | Locals had informed admin about bldg condition, but it was ignored**

**Raj rickety school crashes, 7 kids die**

**Manish Godha & Agencies**  
JAIPUR

A tragic incident unfolded on Friday in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district when a portion of a government school building collapsed during morning prayers.  
Seven children, including two siblings were killed, and at least 29 others sustained injuries in the disaster. The collapse occurred at the Piplod Government School in the Manoharthana block, just as students were gathering to begin their day.  
The villagers held a dharna by blocking the road at Guradi Choraha.  
Police personnel were deployed in the area to maintain law and order.  
Some of the students who were in the school premises during the incident also joined their parents in protest.  
A student who witnessed the collapse said, "Some other students and I were sitting near the gate of a classroom. Some pieces of gravel started falling from above. Moments later, the classroom adjoining our classroom collapsed. Since we were sitting near the gate, we immediately rushed out."

She said that her parents and other people present there started rescuing the students trapped under debris.  
"We got scared and started crying," another student said.  
The protesters demanded compensation of Rs 1 crore for the families of the victims.  
"The incident happened due to the negligence of the administration. A compensation of Rs 1 crore should be given by the government to the families who have lost their children," one of them said.



**Five teachers suspended**

Ironically, 10 days ago, the physical security check of every school was made mandatory, and orders were issued to immediately repair the damaged/dilapidated parts. However, Education Secretary Krishna Kunal clarified that the CBEO associated with the concerned school had submitted a report mentioning no problem in the building. "Action will be taken against this officer who submitted the report," said Kunal.  
Meanwhile, taking action on the mishap, the education minister, Madan Dilwar has suspended all five teachers, including the principal posted in the school. He also ordered a high-level inquiry into the accident. As per the factual report of the block education officer the rear wall of the school collapsed first because of water logging in the foundation resulting in the fall of the roof. President Droupadi Murmu, PM Narendra Modi, CM Bhajan Lal Sharma, and former CM Vasundhara Raje and Ashok Gehlo have expressed grief over the accident and consoled the loss of lives.

**STUDENTSPEAK**

"While we were sitting inside the classroom, stones started falling from the roof. Immediately, we informed our teacher, but what we said was ignored. Later, the roof collapsed," two students said.  
The part of the Piplod Government School building housing Classes 6 and 7 gave way, burying about 35 children, police said.

**HORROR RECALL**

Some of the locals said that they had informed the tehsil-

dar and sub-divisional magistrate about the condition of the school building, but no action was taken.  
"This happened due to negligence of the administration," Balkishan, a local resident, told reporters.  
Agency reports said he was sitting on the roadside close to the school when he heard a loud noise. He turned around to see that a portion of the building had collapsed in a cloud of dust and debris. The sounds of children screaming broke through the noise.

**2,800 killed in 2019-23 jumbo attacks**

**PTI**  
NEW DELHI

More than 2,800 people lost their lives in elephant attacks in India from 2019 to 2023, with Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal among the worst-affected states, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Friday.

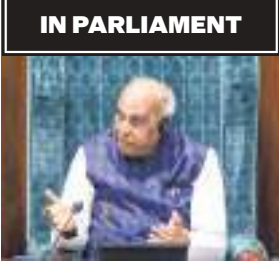
According to data shared by Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh in response to a question by CPI(M) MP John Brittas, between 2019-20 and 2023-24, a total of 2,869 people were killed in elephant attacks. Odisha reported the highest deaths in the country at 624, followed by Jharkhand (474), West Bengal (436), Assam (383) and Chhattisgarh (303), according to the data.

The annual toll from elephant attacks has been rising steadily, increasing from 595 in 2019-20 to 629 in 2023-24. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka recorded 256 and 160 human

**₹1.4 cr, 1.5 kg gold at forest officer's home**

**PTI**  
BHUBANESWAR

Anti-corruption vigilance sleuths on Friday found Rs 1.44 crore in cash and 1.5 kg gold from a "secret treasury" at residence of a deputy forest ranger in Odisha's Koraput district, an official said.  
The vigilance department raided six locations of Rama Chandra Nepak, currently serving as Deputy Ranger-cum-In-Charge Ranger of the Jeypore Forest Range, based on an allegation of possession of disproportionate assets to his known sources of income.  
As many as 6 DSPs, 5 Inspectors, 9 ASIs, and other supporting staff conducted the raids.



**BJP MP Jagdambika Pal presides over Lok Sabha**

deaths due to elephant attacks, respectively, over the five years. In contrast, tiger attacks claimed the lives of 378 people between 2020 and 2024.  
Maharashtra reported the highest number of deaths during this period at 218, followed by Uttar Pradesh (61) and Madhya Pradesh (32).  
As many as 110 deaths were reported from tiger attacks in 2022, most of them from Maharashtra (82). The number declined slightly to 85 in 2023 and 73 in 2024.

**BJP govt in Assam practising politics of fear, says Gogoi**

From politics of fear in Assam to dynastic politics, Congress MP and the party's newly appointed state unit chief Gaurav Gogoi fields questions from FPJ's Executive Editor Afrida Rahman Ali on a wide-ranging issues. Excerpts:

**Q: You've said that people in Assam are afraid to raise independent opinions. What is making the political climate so intimidating?**  
**A:** The current BJP government in Assam practises politics of fear and intimidation. Whether it's villagers worried about losing access to welfare, journalists afraid of arrest, or businessmen concerned about raids —

**Kamal Haasan, 3 others take oath as MPs**  
Four newly elected Rajya Sabha MPs from Tamil Nadu, including actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan on Friday took oath as member of the House.  
The other three MPs who took oath were, Rajathi, S R Sivalingam and P Wilson.  
Haasan belongs to the MNM party, while the other three are from DMK.  
All the four members took oath in Tamil.  
On Thursday, six members from Tamil Nadu had retired after completing their terms.

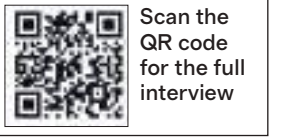
**'Covid vax had no effect on risk of heart attacks'**  
Union Health Minister JP Nadda said on Friday that Covid vaccination had no effect on the risk of heart attacks. In a written response to a question in Lok Sabha, he also clarified that data regarding heart attack cases is not



this is not hypothetical. These things have actually happened.  
**Q: There have been strong allegations about voter list manipulation in Assam and Maharashtra. What is the Congress' position on this?**  
**A:** This isn't just a Congress issue. It's about the fundamental right to vote. In my own constituency, people

maintained centrally. Heart attack cases are not notifiable and there is no central registry for these.  
**Cancer day care centres**  
More than 200 Day Care Cancer Centres (DCCCs) have been approved for establishment across the country for the financial year 2025-26, including 14 centres in Andhra Pradesh, Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav told the Lok Sabha on Friday.  
**Around 89% train tickets booked online**  
Prospective train passengers can book reserved tickets either online or through computerised Passenger Reservation System counters, and around 89 per cent of tickets are being booked online, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw apprised the Rajya Sabha in a written reply on Friday.

who had voted in the Lok Sabha elections couldn't find their names in the Assembly election list months later. This kind of systemic exclusion and opacity from the Election Commission is dangerous for democracy.  
**Q: You've been accused of riding on your father Tarun Gogoi's political legacy. How do you respond?**  
**A:** I've learned politics from my father. But I want people to judge me on my work — not just my surname.



**BJP-JD(U) conspiring to kill Tejashwi: Rabri**

**Dheeraj Kumar**  
PATNA

Former Bihar CM and RJD leader Rabri Devi on Friday alleged that BJP and JD (U) were conspiring against her son and former deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav and trying to get him murdered before the assembly polls.  
State BJP chief Dilip Kumar Jaiswal dismissed Rabri Devi's allegations as baseless and politically motivated.  
"Tejashwi is covered under Y-category security. Government will review his security and enhance it if it is needed," he added.  
**NITISH'S DRESSING DOWN:** Bihar CM Nitish Kumar on Friday took a dig at the opposition MLAs for reaching the assembly wearing black shirts, as a mark of protest against the special intensive revision of the electoral rolls.  
**SIR'S FIRST PHASE OVER:** The first phase of SIR of the electoral rolls completed in Bihar on Friday even as enumeration forms of around 1.2 lakh voters have yet to be received while the names of 65.2 lakh voters are likely to be excluded.  
According to a press note

released by the ECI on the last day for submitting enumeration forms, out of 65.2 lakh voters, 22 lakh are dead, 35 lakh have either permanently migrated or could not be traced, seven lakh voters enrolled as voters in more than one place and enumeration forms of nearly 1.2 lakh voters yet to be received.  
The Election Commission (EC) said 99.8 percent of Bihar's voters have been covered under the SIR exercise. Out of 7.9 crore voters, forms of 7.23 crore voters have been received and digitised, and their names will be included in the draft electoral roll. Eligible voters whose names are left out can still be added after filling the prescribed forms during the next phase of the process between August 1 and September 1, and parties can also file objections for the removal of ineligible voters.  
**Stalin hits out at SIR:** Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin on Friday hit out at the Election Commission of India's Special Intensive Revision of voter list alleging it is being misused to quietly erase voters from disadvantaged and dis-senting communities, tilting the balance in favour of the BJP.

**Modi 2nd to Nehru now as longest-serving PM**

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday marked a major milestone in the country's history, becoming the second-longest-serving PM of India in consecutive terms, surpassing the record of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.  
Notably, he is the first non-Congress Prime Minister to mark this achievement. Additionally, Narendra Modi is the first Prime Minister born after independence and the longest-serving from a non-Hindi state.



Narendra Modi, 74, took oath as Prime Minister for the first time on May 26, 2014 and has served a total of 11 years and 60 days in office till date.

The erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had served for 11 years 59 days in office in consecutive terms. She held the highest office as Prime Minister of India from January 24, 1966 - March 24, 1977.  
Former and first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru holds the record of the longest-serving Prime Minister of India in consecutive terms for 16 years and 286 days, from August 15, 1947 to May 27, 1964.

— INFOGRAPHICS.. ROBIN ROY

NAME	FROM	TOTAL TIME
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU	AUG 15, 1947 – MAY 27, 1964	16 YRS, 286 DAYS
NARENDRA MODI	MAY 26, 2024 – PRESENT	11 YRS, 1 MNTH, 29 DAYS*
INDIRA GANDHI	JAN 24, 1966 – 24 MARCH, 1977	15 YRS, 350 DAYS
INDIRA GANDHI	JAN 14, 1980 – OCT 31, 1984	
VP SINGH	DEC 2, 1989 – NOV 10, 1990	343 DAYS
CHARAN SINGH	JULY 28, 1979 – JAN 14, 1980	170 DAYS
CHANDRA SHEKHAR	Nov 10, 1990 - Jun 21 1991	223 DAYS

<b>ONGOING*</b>	Narendra Modi on Friday overtook Indira Gandhi to become the second longest serving prime minister of India in consecutive terms, having remained in office for 4,078 days. Indira Gandhi was in the office in an unbroken stint for 4,077 days, from January 24, 1966, to March 24, 1977.	Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, holds the record for the longest uninterrupted term.
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**saral ghar wapsi**  
**Kashi scholars finalise new Hindu code of conduct**

**Biswajeet Banerjee**  
VARANASI

The Kashi Vidvat Parishad, a prominent body of Vedic scholars based in Varanasi, has finalised a comprehensive Hindu Code of Conduct that lays out a simplified and structured path for individuals seeking to return to the Hindu faith. The code, which has been in development for over 15 years, is being described as a landmark initiative to both preserve Sanatan traditions and respond to contemporary challenges facing the Hindu community.

At the heart of the code is a detailed procedure for ghar wapsi, or reconversion, intended for those who left Hinduism due to social pressure, religious influence, or coercion. As per Professor Ramnarayan Dwivedi, national general secretary of the Parishad, the new code makes the return to the fold more accessible, humane, and rooted in ritual authenticity.  
Individuals seeking reconversion will now undergo a pooja under the supervision of a qualified acharya or spiritual guide. If the person remembers

their ancestral gotra, it will be restored and retained. In cases where the gotra has been forgotten, the acharya will assign an appropriate one based on Vedic norms. The reconverted individual will also have the liberty to choose a second name of their preference, aligning with their new spiritual journey.  
"This is not merely a religious formality—it is a restoration of identity," said Prof Dwivedi. "We are giving people the dignity to return to their roots with honour and without shame."

**Two Odisha siblings rape teen, threaten to bury her**

**Agencies**  
BHUBANESWAR

In a shocking incident, two brothers allegedly gang-raped a 15-year-old girl and then attempted to bury her alive after she became pregnant in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district.  
The police have arrested the accused brothers, identified as Bhagyadhar Das (60) and Panchanan Das (58), for allegedly raping the minor for the last one year, news agency PTI reported citing an official. Meanwhile, a third suspect, Tulu, remains missing. Authorities have launched a

manhunt to track him down.  
According to the complaint lodged by the victim's father at Kujang police station, the two brothers allegedly sexually abused the minor for a year and now she is seven months pregnant.  
As per the complaint, the accused brothers were working at a mutt (ashram), which the minor used to frequently visit. The father alleged that the two men raped the minor multiple times over an extended period. When they discovered her pregnancy, they allegedly attempted to bury her alive to conceal their crime, NDTV reported.

**UP fake envoy had 11 foreign bank a/cs**

**Biswajeet Banerjee**  
GHAZIABAD

Harshvardhan Jain, the man arrested for running a bogus embassy in Ghaziabad, maintained at least 11 bank accounts in four different countries, including UAE, UK, Mauritius, and Cameroon, Uttar Pradesh's Special Task Force (STF) has revealed.  
The 47-year-old, who posed as an ambassador representing fictitious micronations such as "Westarctica", "Saborga", "Lodonia", and "Poulvia", used these accounts to orchestrate a massive international scam by promising

overseas jobs and diplomatic affiliations to unsuspecting victims.  
He is also accused of setting up a network of fake companies abroad — among them East India Company UK Ltd, State Trading Corporation UK, Island General Trading in Dubai, Indira Overseas Ltd in Mauritius, and Cameroon Ispat SARL in Cameroon.  
Jain's name surfaced during investigations into international fraudster Ehsan Ali Syed, who was arrested in London in 2022 and extradited to Switzerland the following year.





Briefs

SGPC flays dance at Guru’s event

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has strongly condemned the Punjab government’s language department for featuring singing and dancing at an event in Srinagar marking Guru Teg Bahadur’s 350th martyrdom anniversary. SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhami stated that such “entertainment” directly violated the sanctity of the Guru’s supreme sacrifice and Sikh religious values. The chief of SGPC emphasised that these solemn occasions demand adherence to Sikh traditions, reverence, and the spirit of Gurbani, not casual celebrations. Dhami called for a public apology from the Punjab government and strict guidelines to prevent similar disrespectful occurrences in the future.

- Rajesh Moudgil

Manipur Prez rule extended

Despite the political afford to establish a popular government in trouble torn Manipur the Centre to extended the President’s Rule in Manipur for an additional six months, following a resolution moved by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Rajya Sabha. Extension will take effect from August 13, 2025. The notice stated: “That this House approves the continuance in force of Proclamation dated February, 13, 2025 in respect of Manipur, issued under Article 356 of the Constitution by the President, for six months.

- Digijyoti Lahkar

HEALING TOUCH | Top court pitches for better support systems, staff training, curriculum reforms to tackle mental health issues

SC frames 15-point plan to cut student suicides

FPJ News Service MUMBAI

Calling the sharp rise in student suicides a “systemic failure that cannot be ignored,” the Supreme Court on Friday issued a comprehensive set of 15 guidelines aimed at tackling the mental health crisis among students across India. A bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta made the observations while hearing an appeal related to the unnatural death of a 17-year-old NEET aspirant in Visakhapatnam. The petitioner had sought a CBI probe, which the Andhra Pradesh High Court had earlier denied.Citing data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the bench

The guidelines mandate all institutions to maintain an optimal student-to-counsellor ratio

said the country saw a staggering 1,70,924 suicides in 2022, of which 7.6%—13,044 cases—involved students. Of these, at least 2,248 deaths were directly linked to exam failure. The suicide rate among students has more than doubled since 2001, when the number stood at 5,425.

The bench said mental health is a crucial part of the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. “The continued loss of young

lives, often due to preventable causes rooted in unattended psychological distress, academic overburden, and institutional apathy, reflects a systemic failure,” the judges noted.

The guidelines mandate all educational institutions—including schools, colleges, coaching centres, and hostels—to maintain an optimal student-to-counsellor ratio, appoint dedicated mentors, display suicide helpline numbers prominently, and establish protocols for immediate referral to mental health services.

Institutions must ensure regular training for teaching and non-teaching staff to identify early warning signs of distress and respond with psychological first aid. They are also directed to sensi-

tively engage with marginalised groups, including SC/ST, OBC, LGBTQ+ students, those with disabilities, and children facing bereavement or trauma.Educational bodies must review exam patterns periodically, introduce life-skills training, and integrate mental health literacy into curricula. Parents and guardians, too, must be sensitised through regular workshops.

The bench called for every institution to maintain anonymised mental health records and submit annual wellness reports. Given the pressing nature of the crisis—especially in cities like Kota, Hyderabad, Sikar, and Delhi—the court directed Centre to file a compliance affidavit within 90 days.

₹150 crore sanctioned for Assam police

DISPUR

In a significant move to bolster law enforcement infrastructure and administration, the Assam Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, convened in Dibrugarh on Friday, announcing key decisions for the state police force. A major highlight was the sanction of ₹150 crore under the Mission for Overall Improvement of Thanas for Responsive Image (MOITRI) scheme. The scheme has already seen 73 police stations completed in its first phase, with 31 additional stations and one cyber police station finalised in second phase.

Cabinet noted an unprecedented ₹1,500 crore investment in Police infrastructure. Cabinet also approved creation of 10 new Co-District SP. Several ministers will attend inaugural events of these new Co-Districts, including Jayanta Malla Baruah for Boko, Chandra Mohan Patowary for Palashbari, among others.



In the Courtyard

‘Caste system’ in MP judiciary

Jabalpur: The Madhya Pradesh High Court has issued a scathing order, criticising the pervasive ‘caste system’ and ‘feudal mindset’ within the state’s judicial structure. A division bench, comprising Justices Atul Sreedharan and D.K. Paliwali, observed that HC judges are treated as “savarn” (privileged), while district judges are relegated to “shudras”. The court likened the relationship to that of a “feudal lord and serf,” noting a conscious instillation of fear and inferiority. The remarks came while overturning the dismissal of a special court judge, highlighting how judicial orders can lead to adverse actions against district judges.

SC extends stay on Rahul’s summons

New Delhi: The Supreme Court today extended its interim stay on summons issued to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi concerning his controversial remarks against Vinayak Damodar Savarkar made during the ‘Bharat Jodo Yatra’ in 2022.A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih adjourned the matter for four weeks, allowing complainant Nripendra Pandey to file his reply and Gandhi to file a rejoinder. The Uttar Pradesh government has filed an affidavit asserting that the summoning order was justified, alleging “deliberate spreading of hatred through pre-planned actions” by Gandhi, and opposing his plea. The Supreme Court had previously stayed the summons on April 25, 2025, while cautioning Gandhi against making further derogatory remarks about freedom fighters.

Delhi HC directed to hear pleas on release of Udaipur Files

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has directed the Delhi High Court to hear pleas challenging the Centre’s approval for the film “Udaipur Files - Kanhaiya Lal Tailor Murder” on July 28. The top court deemed the filmmakers’ appeal against a stay on the film’s release. Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind president Maulana Arshad Madani and an accused in the Kanhaiya Lal murder case were instructed to approach the high court. The filmmakers’ counsel argued against claims of targeting a community, stating India’s social fabric is strong. SC clarified it was not expressing an opinion on the merits.

SC questions U’khand on blind aspirant’s exam exclusion

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has sought responses from the Uttarakhand government and its public services commission regarding the exclusion of blind and locomotor disabled individuals from judicial services examinations. Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan issued notices on Sravya Sindhuri’s plea, which challenges May 16 recruitment advertisement for violating Rights of PwD Act.

From front page

In Male, PM affirms...

“With a local currency settlement system, we will be able to trade directly in Rupee and Rufiyaa. UPI is gaining momentum, and this will strengthen tourism and commerce.”

Beyond economics, Modi reaffirmed India’s enduring strategic interest in the Maldives. He noted that the island nation remained a key partner in India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ and the recently launched MAHASAGAR initiative, which extends India’s maritime cooperation to littoral nations of the Global South.

“India takes pride in being Maldives’ most reliable friend. We have always been the first responder. For us, it is always Friendship First,” the PM declared. President Muizzu echoed the sentiment, announcing the release of commemorative stamps to mark 60 years of diplomatic ties. He thanked India for its consistent support, particularly in supplying essential commodities.

“India’s continued assistance to the Maldives through the export of essential commodities is a key facet of our bilateral cooperation under the longstanding trade agreement,” Muizzu said.

Observers see the visit as an attempt to “reset” ties after recent turbulence. Muizzu had risen to power on an “India Out” campaign demanding Indian troop withdrawal. Tensions escalated in January 2024 after Maldivian ministers posted derogatory remarks about Modi, following his promotional visit to Lakshadweep, perceived as a challenge to Maldives’ tourism industry. The backlash led to a #BoycottMaldives campaign in India, severely impacting Maldivian tourism.

With Friday’s warm optics and economic outreach, both leaders appear keen to put that discord behind them.

Mahua: 56 lakhs...

Protests against the SIR process continued both inside and outside Parliament. Opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, staged a demonstration near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi within the Parliament complex. Holding placards marked “SIR”, the protestors later threw them into a dustbin, symbolically rejecting the EC’s move.

Demanding greater transparency, Rahul Gandhi asked why the EC was refusing to share the data with all political parties. “What is the government hiding?” he asked.

Inside Parliament, the uproar disrupted proceedings in both Houses. In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Om Birla attempted to begin Question Hour amid slogans from the Opposition benches. The House was adjourned soon after. In the RS, Deputy Chairman Harivansh announced he had received several notices under Rule 267, including one on the SIR issue, but had to reject them for not meeting procedural norms. This led to a walkout by Opposition MPs and later adjournment.

Deadlock ends...

Rijiju added that while the Lok Sabha will debate the issues on Monday, a similar discussion is

scheduled for the Rajya Sabha the following day. “This was the Opposition’s demand, and we immediately agreed. What follows next will be decided later,” he said. The Minister also revealed that the Centre had consulted Congress president and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, and LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi. “Our consistent effort is to ensure smooth functioning of Parliament. I appeal to all parties to participate actively – everyone will be given adequate time to speak,” he stated.

Speaker Om Birla’s meeting with floor leaders of parties having a minimum of four MPs followed his appeal to Opposition MPs to end their protest and join the debate. “Come and hold a discussion to end the stalemate,” he urged before adjourning the House. The Opposition had been demanding an immediate discussion since the Monsoon Session began, pressing for answers on the conduct of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, the alleged lapses during the Pahalgam attack, Operation Sindoor, and US President Trump’s repeated claims of brokering an India-Pakistan “ceasefire” via trade deals. Opposition leaders insisted that only PM Modi could address these concerns meaningfully. The Centre, in turn, offered to hold discussions once Modi returns from his visit to the UK and Maldives. Congress deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, confirmed, “We have been waiting to discuss Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor in Modi’s presence. Since he is abroad, we did not raise the matter in the House.”

Rahul owns mistake...

Gandhi said the Congress now wants the next national caste survey to follow the “Telangana model,” which he called a “milestone for social justice.” He said the party would push for this model in Parliament. He pointed out that around 90 per cent of the country’s population, Dalits, OBCs, tribals, and minorities, remain largely excluded from important decision-making processes, including the preparation of the Union Budget.

“In the country, the population of Dalits, backward classes, tribals, and minorities together constitutes about 90 per cent. But when the halwa was being distributed after the budget was prepared, there was no one from this 90 per cent population present,” he said. “You are the ones making the halwa, but they are the ones eating it. We are not saying that they shouldn’t eat the halwa, but at the very least, you should get some too,” he added.

Gandhi also criticised the lack of OBC representation in key areas like the media and corporate sector, and reiterated the need for a caste census to assess and ensure fair participation.

He said data from the Telangana caste survey revealed that SC, ST, and OBC communities were largely excluded from receiving large-scale financial packages, while most MGNREGA and gig workers belonged to these categories.

On the issue of education and language, Gandhi said English remained a powerful language that defined progress in India. He questioned the BJP leaders’ criticism of English, saying, “Ask them where your children study? Do they study abroad, and if so, in Hindi medium?”

He also posted on social media that the Modi government’s data in Parliament showed the “deprivation of Bahujans and institutionalised

Manuvad.” He alleged that many qualified SC, ST, and OBC candidates were being rejected under the label of “Not Found Suitable”. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also accused the BJP of trying to “eliminate the poor”.

Blocked: 25...

The other OTT platforms include Boomex, Navarasa Lite, Gulab App, Kangan App, Bull App, Jalva App, Wow Entertainment, Look Entertainment, Hitprime, Feneo, ShowX, Sol Talkies, Adda TV, HotX VIP, Hulchul App, MoodX, Fugli, Mojflix, and Triflicks.

These platforms were found in violation of various laws, including Section 67 and 67A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, Section 294 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and Section 4 of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

Officials said the content on these platforms featured long sequences of nudity, graphic sexual innuendos, and scenes without any storyline or social message. The Ministry noted that the platforms had continued to publish such material even after being warned in September 2024. In February 2025, an advisory was sent to OTT platforms asking them to remove obscene content.

Despite the warnings, the platforms reportedly continued to stream objectionable content. In some cases, such as the Ullu web series ‘House Arrest’, content was temporarily taken down but later re-uploaded. The Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council (DPCGC), a self-regulatory body, had earlier called ALLT’s edited content “totally distasteful and bizarre”.

The Ministry also found that five platforms previously blocked in March 2024 resumed operations under new domain names. In total, 26 websites and 14 mobile apps, nine on the Google Play Store and five on the Apple App Store have been ordered to be blocked.

France to recognise...

Macron’s step, although unprecedented, was not unexpected. For months, he hinted about his desire to head in that direction, particularly after formal recognitions of Palestine were granted this year by Spain, Ireland, Norway, and Slovenia. Hasni Abidi, director of the Center for Studies and Research on the Arab and Mediterranean World, believes that the step “had been considered for a long time” and is not just a purely symbolic gesture – more of an action to reinforce Palestine’s political standing in the international arena.

On the home turf, news of the step bitterly split French politicians. The right-wing party Republican’s vice-president, François-Xavier Bellamy condemned the step as “inefficient” and “counterproductive,” saying that it would “endanger Israeli and Palestinian civilians.” Marine Le Pen, who is the “queen” of the extreme right, National Front Party attacked President Macron for giving credence to Hamas. She calls the move a “politically and morally flawed one against the values of France”.

The French Left, on the other hand, widely welcomed the gesture but didn’t shy from lashing out at its timing. Leftist boss, Jean-Luc Mélenchon referred to it as a “moral victory” but questioned

strongly why it couldn’t be done earlier. Ecologist leader Marine Tondelier declared, “Better late than never,” with Communist Party leader Fabien Roussel, urging action and sanctions against Israel’s government immediately. Socialist Party’s Olivier Faure supported making a gesture but only if done simultaneously with pressure on Israel.

The French government defended reaching a decision as a step towards peace. Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot emphasised that Hamas is against a two-state solution, and recognising Palestine “proves the peace camp right.”

Internationally, responses were mixed. The United States, Israel’s closest ally, attacked harshly as its Secretary of State Marco Rubio called it a “reckless” lift for Hamas propaganda. Saudi Arabia on the other hand applauded what it called a “historic” step. Spain’s Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez who himself recognised Palestine in May 2024, hailed Macron’s move, stating, “The two-state solution is the only solution.”

Be a patriot, focus...

The judges even suggested that the party should raise local issues concerning garbage dumping, pollution, drainage, and flooding. “You are an organisation registered in India. If you could take up issues like garbage dumping, pollution, sewerage, flooding... We are just giving examples. You are not protesting on those but on something happening thousands of miles outside the country.” Moreover, the court underscored that the stance taken by the party differs from the country’s foreign policy, and such a protest could have potential diplomatic consequences. “You don’t know the dust it could kick up... getting on to the Palestine side or the Israel side. Why do you want to do this? It’s obvious, going by the party you represent, that you don’t understand what this could do to the foreign affairs of the country,” the judges warned.

On June 17, the police rejected an application filed by the All India Solidarity Organisation to hold a protest at Azad Maidan against the genocide in Gaza. This was challenged by CPI(M) before the high court.

CPI(M)’s counsel Mihir Desai submitted that the police refused permission on the grounds that the protest was against India’s foreign policy and that it could lead to a law and order problem. He added that even if the protest went against foreign policy, citizens have the right to demonstrate at a designated spot. The possibility of a law and order situation cannot be used as a reason to deny that right.

However, the additional public prosecutor highlighted that the police had received objections to the proposed protest and anticipated potential law and order issues; hence, permission was denied. The court added that the party did not have legal standing to file a petition to challenge the police order since it had not made the application before the police.

Pak threshold for...

“Our preparedness level has to be very high, 24x7, 365 days a year,” he said. He also underlined the need for future soldiers to be “information warriors, technology warriors and scholar warriors,” saying warfare now requires a mix of these capabilities.

Kapur’s mom...

Kapur has requested a two-week deferment of the AGM, citing mourning and the need for greater transparency. The letter has also been forwarded to SEBI, raising regulatory red flags. As whispers of a corporate power struggle emerge, serious questions are being raised about transparency and control within one of India’s top auto-tech firms.

Meanwhile, Auto component giant Sona BLW Precision Forgings Ltd (Sona Comstar) issued a statement on Friday countering allegations by Rani Kapur, mother of the late chairman Sunjay Kapur. In its filing, Sona Comstar asserted that Rani Kapur had not been a shareholder since 2019 and therefore had no legal standing to intervene. It also denied her claim of being coerced into signing documents, stating that “no documents were signed or obtained from her” after Sunjay’s passing. The company defended the appointment of Priya Sachdev Kapur, Sunjay’s widow, as an Additional Non-Executive Director, clarifying it was a nomination from Aureus Investments Pvt Ltd, which holds 28.02% of the company. Her appointment was reviewed by the Nomination and Remuneration Committee.

The company rejected Rani Kapur’s claim of being the Sona Group’s majority shareholder, stating Sunjay was declared the sole beneficial owner in May 2019.

Meanwhile, scrutiny around Priya Sachdev Kapur—an entrepreneur with a background in M&A and e-commerce—has intensified. Her elevation to the board and Rani Kapur’s explosive charges have cast a spotlight on the internal dynamics of the Kapur business empire.

Born in Delhi to automobile dealer Ashok Sachdev, Priya holds a degree in Mathematics and Business Management from University College London (UCL) and has also undertaken short-term studies at UCLA.

SC allows Kerala to...

However, Venugopal opposed, asking, “how can withdrawal be tagged? Constitution Bench will be surprised.” Attorney General for India R Venkataramani then submitted, “the judgment under reference, the Tamil Nadu case, is what is being relied upon.”

“I am not relying upon anything. I am withdrawing it,” Venugopal retorted.

AG continued, “It is not that they are withdrawing it simpliciter because they don’t want to pursue this issue. The judgment in the Tamil Nadu case is being relied upon by them. Then I may have a point in saying, let the matter be heard and also in saying that judgment, for a number of reasons, may be referred to a larger bench. But there is a presidential reference now. So why should it be allowed to be withdrawn? There are two earlier references, 1996 and 2011 where pending writ petitions were heard along with the references.” “I am unable to understand [objection to withdrawal],” Venugopal stated. Justice Narasimha also indicated that the petitioner cannot be prevented from withdrawing.

“They want to withdraw it. If they were asking us to dispose of the petitions in terms of the judgment, that is a different issue,” he said. “I am not asking so. I am withdrawing it,” Venugopal clarified.



# Govt clears path to legalise structures built before 1972

OVER 1 LAKH HOUSES TO BENEFIT, SAYS CM; CIRCULARS ISSUED TO REVENUE DEPT, DoP, DMA; PROCESS STARTS FROM AUGUST 1

THE GOAN | NETWORK

**PANAJI**  
In a significant move, the Goa government has taken a decisive step to regularise over one lakh old houses constructed before 1972, including those located on Alvara or Bhatkar land, provided they are marked on the survey plan. The process, which begins on August 1, will involve the issuance of crucial certificates – Settlement Land Certificate from Deputy Collector and Structure Regularisation Certificate from either Panchayat or Municipality, as per the structural jurisdiction. The crucial decision was taken during the Cabinet meeting on Friday, following which the government issued three circulars to clear

PROCESS FOR REGULARISATION		
■ Settlement Land Certificate issued by the Deputy Collector	exceed 1,000 sqm	house tax
■ <b>Eligibility:</b> House must appear in old survey plans (1970–1972) under the Goa Land Revenue Code, 1968	■ Requires documents like Form I & XIV, Form D	■ <b>Legal clarity:</b> These certificates do not confer ownership rights but legally validate the structure and land
■ Structure must occupy at least 25% of the plot and the plot size must not	■ Certificate to be issued within 7 days if eligible	■ The certificates will serve as conversion sanad, removing the need for another during reconstruction
	■ Structure Regularisation Certificate issued by local panchayat or municipality	
	■ Confirms the structure is legal and assessed for	

the confusion about which houses in Goa are legal or illegal. “This will benefit those whose homes are reflected in the original survey plans of the early 1970s. Even if the structure is on Bhatkar land or Alvara land, it will be considered for regularisation,” Chief

Minister Pramod Sawant told media persons post meeting. He explained that the first step will be the issuance of a Settlement Land Certificate by the Deputy Collector. To be eligible, the house must be shown on the old survey plans prepared under the Goa Land

Revenue Code of 1968, typically between 1970 and 1972. The structure must occupy at least 25 per cent of the plot, and the total area of the holding must not exceed 1,000 square metres. Upon submitting an application with a fee of Rs 1,000, the Deputy

Collector will verify the supporting documents, such as Form I and XIV, and Form D, and consult the Directorate of Settlement and Land Records, if necessary. If you are found eligible, the certificate will be issued within one week. After verification, a “Settlement Land Certificate” will be issued within seven days, certifying the structure as legal and exempt from conversion provisions under the Goa Land Revenue Code, 1968. The second step involves verification and certification from the local panchayat or municipal body, depending on whether the structure lies in a rural or urban area. The respective authority, will issue a certificate stating that the house is an existing legal structure.

# Goa to get Third District with headquarters at Curchorem

**District gets cabinet nod**, to cover tribal-dominated talukas of Canacona, Quepem, Sanguem, Dharbandora

THE GOAN | NETWORK

**PANAJI**  
The State cabinet on Friday accorded its approval for creation of Third District, comprising four remote talukas of Canacona, Quepem, Sanguem and Dharbandora- which all together account for around 28 per cent of State's scheduled tribe (ST) population. Curchorem in Quepem taluka has been designated as the headquarters of the third district, following government approval of a proposal submitted by a panel led by the Chief Secretary. Currently, the coastal State has two districts – North Goa and South Goa – with headquarters at Panaji and Margao respectively. Of the total 12 talukas, five are in North, seven are in South. However, with the creation of a third district, the boundaries of the existing North Goa district will remain unchanged, whereas, the South

## FOCUS ON ST POPULATION

■ The new district accounts for around 28% of the State's ST population

■ The move aims to improve governance and service delivery in remote and tribal-dominated areas

■ The district is expected to benefit from central funding for setting up hospitals, schools, sports

complexes, museums, etc

■ The socio-economic indicators of the region make it eligible under the Aspirational District Programme, potentially attracting more development funds

■ After the new district is formed, South Goa will comprise only Ponda, Salcete, Mormugao. North Goa remains unchanged

Goa will consist of only Ponda, Salcete and Mormugao. The Council deliberated that the creation of New District which is majorly inhabited by the tribal population will also facilitate setting up of new hospitals, educational institutes, sports complex, museum, etc from the central funds. “The proposed New District consists of a significant com-

ponent of people belonging to the tribal community. Around 28 per cent of the total population in the proposed New District is Scheduled Tribes. The unique needs and challenges of the tribal community can be fulfilled by the creation of this district, which is poised to deliver targeted solutions and streamlined administration,” the cabinet note stated.

## Quepem MLA flags hurdles in accessing old birth records

**MAPUSA:** Quepem MLA Alton D'Costa on Friday raised a pressing issue in the Goa Legislative Assembly concerning the difficulties faced by citizens in obtaining birth certificates, particularly for births registered during the 1960s and early 1970s. Highlighting the plight of senior citizens and residents from rural areas, D'Costa urged the State government to streamline the record reconstruction process and make it more accessible to the public. Speaking during the Assembly session, D'Costa pointed out that despite the availability of an online portal for the reconstruction of old birth records, many applicants continue to face delays and bureaucratic hurdles. “Applicants are often forced to make multiple trips to Panaji or Margao civic offices just to follow up on their requests. This is particularly inconvenient for the elderly and for those living in remote talukas,” he said.

## IN SHORT >>

### Levinson appointed new GSPCB chief

**PANAJI:** Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Friday told the House that the government has appointed Levinson Martins as the new Chairman of the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB).

### Man hacks wife to death in Bicholim

**BICHOLIM:** In a shocking incident, a man allegedly hacked his wife to death with a sword in broad daylight at Vathadev-Bicholim on Friday afternoon and later surrendered to police.

### Rottweiler attacks man, owner booked

**MAPUSA:** Calangute police has booked a dog owner after his Rottweiler attacked and bit a 60-year-old elderly citizen at Anawada in Candolim on Thursday.

# House votes down resolution for Romi Konkani in schools

DESPITE CM'S REQUEST TO WITHDRAW, FERREIRA PERSISTS; RESOLUTION LOST BY 24-6 MARGIN

THE GOAN | NETWORK

**PANAJI**  
The Goa Legislative Assembly on Friday rejected by a 24-6 vote a private member's resolution seeking introduction of Romi Konkani in schools in the State moved by Aldona MLA, Carlos Alvares Ferreira. The resolution was put to vote after Ferreira rejected the request from Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to withdraw it when six MLAs from the Opposition voted in favour while 24 from the ruling side rejected it. Ferreira sought to argue that Konkani in the Romi script has been in use for over 450 years in Goa and is currently used by a significant section of the population. He said, the National Education Policy supports and recognises the need for effective educational benefits through the power of language. Quoting a para from

FERREIRA'S ARGUMENT IN SUPPORT	
■ Romi Konkani has been used in Goa for over 450 years	tongue or local language for effective learning
■ It is the home language for a significant section of Goans	■ Some Opposition MLAs argued that in Karnataka, Konkani is taught in both Devanagari and Kannada scripts with government support
■ The NEP supports education in one's mother	
SAWANT'S COUNTER	
■ The script issue was settled in 1962 in favour of Devanagari	has already framed the language policy
■ A committee of educationists under the NEP	■ He warned that raising the Romi script issue could be divisive

the NEP, Ferreira said the policy also recognises that young children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their "home language" which is usually the same as mother tongue or the one spoken by local

communities. Ferreira urged the government to therefore make provisions and give the option of Romi Konkani in schools which Sawant who is also the education minister rejected steadfastly.

# Cabinet approves off-campus centres for private varsities

**Temporary measure** aims to accelerate higher education growth until main campuses are ready

THE GOAN | NETWORK

**PANAJI**  
In a bid to expedite establishment of private universities in Goa, the State cabinet on Friday granted nod to allow setting up of transitional off-campus centres until the main campus is established. The cabinet approved amendment to the Goa Private Universities Act, 2020 to amend sub-section (1) of section 6. The amendment would be introduced in the oncoming monsoon session of the State Legislative Assembly. “In sub-section (1), in clause (ii) of Section 6 of the said Act, after the expression ‘whichever is higher’, the expression ‘and may possess an off-campus centre adhering to the guidelines of the regulatory body so as to start the operation of the university in the initial stages until the expiry of the maximum period specified or until the main campus is established,

EDU TO NEXT LEVEL	
■ The change will allow universities to start operations early, provided the off-campus centre follows the regulatory body's guidelines, and remains in use only until the main campus is established or the permitted period ends	
■ Existing law mandates that a private university must own or lease land for 30 years, covering at least 50,000 sq mtrs	
FLASHBACK: THE AMENDMENTS	
■ Universities must use land strictly for academic and research purposes	■ If enough eligible reserved category candidates are not available, seats can be filled from unreserved categories
■ Only non-profit companies can sponsor private universities	

whichever is earlier,” the cabinet note stated. The Goa Private Universities Act, 2020 came into force from April 1, 2020 to allow private universities to set up their campuses in the State. Total five private universities have so far got government consent. During the Budget session, the government had amended

the act in bid to vest the powers of the land acquired with the university and ensure that it is not used for any other purposes besides academic and research. Currently, as per law, the university should be set up on a land-owning or leased out for a period of 30 years with an area of not less than 50,000 sq mtrs.

## Speaker breaks silence on 39A uproar; replies on August 7

THE GOAN | NETWORK

**MAPUSA**  
A day after uproar in the Goa Legislative Assembly over key questions related to Section 39A of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act going unanswered, Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar on Friday clarified that most of the pending queries pertaining to the TCP department will be addressed on the penultimate day of the ongoing session. Tawadkar informed the House that a majority of the starred and unstarred questions related to the TCP portfolio have been scheduled for response on August 7, the second last day of the current monsoon session. One question has been deferred to the next session, while another has been transferred to the Industries Department for reply. The clarification comes in the wake of strong protests in the Assembly, especially from the Opposition, who raised concerns that several questions regarding Section 39A and land-use conversions were either dismissed as sub judice or left unanswered entirely.

# Two cops suspended for molesting woman outside Panaji pub

THE GOAN | NETWORK

**PANAJI**  
Two police constables attached to branches of the Office of the North Goa Superintendent of Police have been suspended following serious allegations of molestation and assault on a woman outside a pub in Patto-Panaji. Details shared by SP Rahul Gupta stated that the woman accused Omkar Jadhav and Mayur Naik of outraging her modesty outside the pub. “The woman has alleged that the accused touched her

inappropriately, hurled abusive words and that one of them assaulted her with a mobile phone on her forehead, causing an injury. The accused were immediately suspended from duty and an FIR was registered against them,” the SP said. “This kind of behaviour is unacceptable as part of a disciplined police force,” he added while further informing the media that a show cause notice has been issued to a third police personnel who had accompanied the two suspended personnel.

THE GOAN | NETWORK

**PANAJI**  
Amid ruckus by the Opposition, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Friday said that the government is open to reviewing the provisions regarding the individuals born in the State in the interest of Goans. Addressing the House, Sawant said that the Goa Succession, Special Notaries and Inventory Proceeding Act outlines specific provisions for individuals born in Goa and those born outside but governed by the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 and so also



RGP MLA Viresh Borkar marshalled out of the House for his persistent protest demanding a clear definition of the terms ‘Goans’ and ‘Persons of Goan Origin’.

the Official Gazette released in February 1995. He said that the Act specifies persons who prior to the 20th day of December, 1961, were governed by the

provisions of the Civil Code of 1867 as in force in erstwhile Portuguese regime over Goa and which continued in force, to the person born in Goa of parents who are governed

by the provisions of the Civil Code of 1867, any person born outside the State of Goa of parents who were or are governed by the provisions of the said Civil Code of 1867 or rest

of India, etc. “Goa remains committed to reviewing and strengthening the existing provisions of The Goa Succession, Special Notaries and Inventory Proceeding Act in response to the emerging needs to challenge and uphold the interest of Goans,” Sawant told the House. Sawant was responding to the Private Member Resolution moved by RGP MLA Viresh Borkar who urged that the House recommend the government that the terms ‘Goans’ and ‘Persons of Goan Origin’ be clearly defined in law to protect the identity and rights of Goan people.

# Govt mulls review of laws defining Goan origin amid House ruckus; POGO resolution rejected

## UPROAR IN ASSEMBLY

■ Sawant stresses the need to strengthen and review the Act to address current challenges and protect Goan identity

■ His remarks came in response to a Private Member's Resolution by RGP MLA Viresh Borkar, seeking a clear legal definition of ‘Goans’ and ‘Persons of Goan Origin’

■ The resolution was rejected by the House, leading to uproar by the Opposition



## Briefs

### GANDHINAGAR Task force report on comprehensive educational assessment

In a significant step towards transforming the education system in Gujarat, the Task Force Committee, constituted to implement a 360-degree evaluation through a holistic education approach, formally submitted its recommendation report to Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. The recommendations align with the National Education Policy introduced under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which advocates for comprehensive educational assessment across the country. The objective of the policy is to foster holistic development and nurture globally competitive human capital through inclusive and multidimensional education. In this context, the Task Force Committee has proposed integrating academic learning with sports, cultural activities, and vocational training, thereby strengthening students' emotional and intellectual capabilities. These suggestions aim to embed a truly holistic educational philosophy in the state's evaluation system. The report was presented by the Chairman of the Committee, Shri Jayendrasinh Jadav, along with other committee members. The state government will now study the report thoroughly and initiate appropriate measures based on its findings

### AHMEDABAD CM interacts with BSF jawans

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel visited the Nadabet BSF Border Out Post located near the Pakistan border and lauded the courage and valour of the soldiers guarding the border. During his visit to Suigam for the inauguration of various development projects in Banaskantha district, the Chief Minister also interacted with the jawans and officers of the Nadabet Border Security Force. He commended their courageous contribution to the resounding success of Operation Sindoor, carried out under the resolute leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and acknowledged the vital role played by both BSF and Army personnel. He further noted that the Seema Darshan initiative launched by the State Government at Nadabet has given citizens a unique opportunity to gain a closer understanding of the BSF's work, with lakhs of tourists visiting the site and significantly boosting border tourism. BSF IG Abhishek Pathak expressed gratitude to the State Government for providing sweet water facilities and other infrastructure in border areas including Nadabet for the BSF. The BSF jawans presented a Guard of Honour and a memento to the Chief Minister.

### AQIS SNARED | Terrorists had planned to carry out a high-impact attack and immediately escape to an undisclosed Arab nation

## Al-Qaeda terror plot foiled before escape of 4 militants

FPJ News Service  
AHMEDABAD

In a massive national security breakthrough, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested four operatives affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), who were plotting a major terrorist attack in India and planning to flee to an Arab country thereafter. The suspects—Mohammad Fardeen Mohammad Rais Sheikh from Ahmedabad, Saifullah Qureshi Mohammad Rafiq from Modasa, Zeeshan Ali Asif Ali from Noida, and Mohammad Faiq Mohammad Rizwan from Delhi—were apprehended during synchronized raids in Ahmedabad, Modasa, Delhi, and Noida on July 23 under Operation Sindoor.

Investigators revealed that the four men used Instagram to spread extremist ideology and recruit vulnerable youth. They operated five Instagram accounts—Shariat Ya Shahadat, Fardeen 3, Mujahid 1, Mujahid 3, and Saifullah Mujahid 313—to glorify violence, incite communal hatred, and propagate Al-Qaeda's radical doctrines.



ical doctrines.

"This was not just online hate speech. It was a dangerous and coordinated plan to strike India and flee. Their goal was to carry out a high-impact terror attack and immediately escape abroad," said ATS DIG Sunil Joshi.

Sources in Gujarat ATS confirmed that the four arrested terrorists were in the final stages of preparing for an attack. They had identified soft civilian targets and were arranging weapons and logistics. Zeeshan Ali, the Noida-based accused, had already

planted weapons at a concealed location, while Fardeen Sheikh of Ahmedabad was actively coordinating group communication and travel plans.

Their sinister plot was to execute the attack and then disappear using fake documents, travelling to an undisclosed Arab nation. Their escape plan was uncovered through decrypted chats and call logs shared in more than seven private extremist groups.

"The intent was clear—create panic, destabilize India,

and vanish before they could be traced. We've caught them just in time," said a senior ATS officer.

Further investigation has revealed that Mohammad Faiq from Delhi had been in touch with two individuals in Pakistan.

Intelligence agencies believe these foreign handlers were guiding the operatives and possibly financing the operation. Central agencies have joined the probe to identify these Pakistani links and uncover other operatives in the pipeline.

## Three dead as drunk driver mows down pedestrians

FPJ News Service  
GANDHINAGAR

Three people, including a woman, were killed and at least three others critically injured when a speeding Tata Safari, allegedly driven by a drunk man, ploughed into pedestrians and motorists on the service road from Bhaijipura to City Pulse in the Randesan area of Gandhinagar on Friday morning.

The driver, identified as Hitesh Vinubhai Patel, a resident of Por village currently living in Sector 5B, was reportedly under the influence of alcohol and driving recklessly at over 100 km/hr. The SUV caused a trail of destruction, resulting in at least four separate collisions within minutes. Police sources confirmed that Hitesh has a history of rash driving and has been involved in multiple accidents previously.

"This is not just an accident—it is a massacre caused by drunken negligence," said Gandhinagar SP, Wasam Shetty condemning the tragic incident. "Three lives have been lost. Two senior citizens are fighting for their lives in the hospital. We have arrested the accused and he will undergo a thorough medical examination to confirm his intoxicated state."

The deceased have been identified as Hansaben



Rohitkumar Vaghela (56), Nitinbhai Pratapbhai Wheeler (63), and other unidentified person.

Meanwhile, three others, including Kaminiben Bipinbhai Ojha (65) and Mayurbhai Joshi (65) are undergoing treatment at SMVS and Civil Hospital respectively. Bipinbhai Ojha (75) also sustained serious injuries.

The Tata Safari (GJ 18 EE 7887) is registered in Hitesh Patel's name. Forensic experts (FSL) have been roped in to determine the exact speed of the vehicle at the time of the crash. Investigators are reviewing CCTV footage and collecting eyewitness statements.

Local residents are outraged. "This is a busy stretch. The car was moving like a bullet. People had no time to react," said

Rajesh Prajapati, a tea vendor who witnessed the crash. "It felt like a scene from a horror movie."

Another eyewitness, Rekha Joshi, said, "We don't feel safe walking on the roads anymore. Drunk drivers are roaming free. We demand justice and immediate police action."

The tragic event has sparked fear and anger across Randesan and neighboring areas. Locals staged a small protest at the crash site, demanding installation of speed breakers, better surveillance, and stricter enforcement of drunk driving laws.

Police confirmed that Hitesh Patel has been taken into custody. "Strict legal action will be taken. We will ensure that such reckless behavior does not go unpunished," said the investigating officer.

## CM Patel to inaugurate 3rd NCC Leadership Academy

FPJ News Service  
ANAND

In a major push towards youth empowerment and national service, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel will inaugurate the NCC Leadership Academy at Navli in Anand district on July 25. Spread over 15 acres, the state-of-the-art facility is designed to become a hub for developing discipline, leadership, and patriotic values among the young generation.

This is Gujarat's third such academy—after Ahmedabad

and Rajpipla—and will be run under the Vallabh Vidyanagar Group Headquarters. Developed at a cost of ₹5 crore in its first phase, the academy will accommodate and train 200 cadets with modern residential and physical training facilities. The second phase, with an additional investment of ₹25 crore, will expand the capacity to 600 cadets.

"The Navli academy is more than a training ground—it's where tomorrow's leaders will be forged,"



said Colonel Manish Bhola, Commanding Officer of 4 Gujarat NCC Battalion, Vallabh Vidyanagar. "This is the largest NCC Leadership

Academy in Gujarat once fully completed. We aim to raise Gujarat's cadet strength from 75,000 to 85,000 in the coming years."

## School principals explore Adani Hazira Port under project Udaan

FPJ News Service  
SURAT

In a landmark educational initiative, 55 school principals from Surat city and district, along with the District Education Officer (DEO), embarked on an industrial exposure tour to Adani's Hazira Port, Oil Refinery, and Cement Plant under the Adani Foundation's flagship initiative, Project Udaan.

This marks the first time such a large group of school leaders from the region has been offered an insider's view of one of India's leading industrial hubs. Project Udaan, a national-level outreach effort by the Adani Foundation, aims to inspire students by giving them real-world exposure to industrial operations. The initiative is free for government and grant-in-aid schools, while private schools pay a nominal fee.

"This visit was eye-opening," said Meena Joshi, principal of a Surat-based school. "We always speak to students



about industries in theory, but seeing operations at such a scale makes a lasting impression. I now understand how powerful this experience can be for our students."

DEO Bhagirathsinh Parmar praised the initiative, saying, "This is a unique platform for students to witness real-world industrial activity. It broadens their outlook, fuels curiosity, and inspires them to learn beyond textbooks."

The visit included a guided tour of the Adani Port's sprawling facilities, interactive sessions with site engineers, and discussions about future collaboration between

schools and the Adani Foundation. Many principals acknowledged this as their first ever industrial visit.

"I was stunned by the scale and efficiency," said Principal Harish Patel. "It's no longer just about books – students need to see the world of work to dream bigger."

The Adani Foundation's goal with Project Udaan is to bridge the gap between education and industry, allowing students from Class 9 to 12 and colleges to visit various Adani facilities across India. To date, lakhs of students have benefited from this enriching experience.

### Gems and jewellery exports set for UK boom

Melvyn Thomas  
SURAT

The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has ushered in a new era of growth and opportunity for the Indian gem and jewellery sector, with exports projected to rise from the current \$941 million to an impressive \$2.5 billion in the next three years.

This significant development was welcomed by Kirit Bhansali, Chairman of the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), who called it a "transformative milestone" achieved under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Bhansali, who was part of the Indian business delegation present during the historic signing, said, "It was an immense privilege to witness this momentous occasion. This landmark accord unlocks exciting new opportunities for our sector and strengthens our trade relationship with the UK."

## Saputara monsoon fest to dazzle with grand folk parade, tribal culture



FPJ News Service  
GANDHINAGAR

Gujarat is a festival-loving state that celebrates its diverse culture with every event. Located in the Dang district and known as Gujarat's Cherrapunji, Saputara comes alive during the monsoon season, attracting an unprecedented influx of tourists to this scenic hill station. The annual Saputara Monsoon Festival holds special appeal for visitors, boosting local employment alongside tourism. This year, the Saputara Monsoon Festival will be held from July 26 to August 17, 2025, captivating visitors with its varied attractions. Initiated under

the vision of then-Chief Minister and current Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the festival has become a major draw for domestic and international tourists.

Under the leadership of Honourable Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, the government of Gujarat is committed to promoting tourism, development, and employment in Dang. Guided by his vision, the Saputara Monsoon Festival 2025, organized by the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited (TCGL), will commence vibrantly on July 26, bringing Saputara to life with diverse cultural and regional activities.

CCTV footage from the school captured the girl walking through the corridor around 12:26 PM, casually twirling a keychain. Moments later, at exactly 12:27:02 PM, she climbed the railing and jumped without hesitation. A friend had reportedly tried to stop her but failed.

The student had recently resumed classes after a month-long medical leave, backed by a certificate. The school principal, Leena Arora, acknowledged that the girl appeared mentally disturbed. "She suddenly screamed in class before the incident. Our teacher calmed her down, but we had no idea this would follow," she said. The girl lived in Naranpura with her parents and siblings. Her father had dropped her at school as usual that morning. The City District Education Officer (DEO) has now sought a detailed report from the school about the incident. Renowned child psychologist Dr. Prashant Bhimani, after reviewing the footage, said, "The way she fidgeted with the keychain shows a sort of artificial confidence masking deeper emotions. There was anger in her actions—possibly signs of depression. These impulses can come in powerful waves. Only she knew what she was hiding behind that mask."

## Tourists flock to witness giant waves

Melvyn Thomas  
DAMAN

The usually calm coastline of Daman has transformed into a spectacle of nature, drawing large crowds of tourists as the Amasa tide causes massive 15 to 20-foot waves to rise from the sea. The Namopath area has become a key attraction point as visitors from across Gujarat and neighbouring states gather to witness the breathtaking force of the ocean.

The unique tidal event, caused by the lunar phenomenon of Amasa (new moon), has stirred up strong currents,



turning the sea near Namopath into a visual delight of crashing waves and misty sprays. Social media is flooded with videos and pictures, further fuelling interest in this natural marvel.



"I came from Surat after seeing reels of the waves on Instagram. It's like watching a live nature documentary," said Parth Patel, a tourist standing on the Namopath jetty. "We even dipped our feet in the

water – it's thrilling but also a little scary."

Another visitor, Roshni Mehta from Vadodara, shared, "I've never seen the sea this wild in Daman. It's a rare sight. The power of the waves is mesmerizing. We are keeping a safe distance but thoroughly enjoying it."

Despite the allure, the powerful currents pose a risk. The local administration has stationed lifeguards and issued warnings advising people to stay away from deep waters. Barricades have been placed at key locations along the Namopath walkway to prevent accidents.

## Gujarat leads effort to create future ready ITIs with national scheme

FPJ News Service  
GANDHINAGAR

In a bold move to transform India's vocational training landscape, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in partnership with the Government of Gujarat, hosted a high-impact state-level workshop at the NAMTECH Campus, IIT-Gandhinagar, on the recently launched ₹60,000 crore National Scheme for ITI Upgradation.

The workshop brought

together key government officials, industry leaders, and training institutions for an in-depth consultation aimed at aligning state-level strategies with the Centre's vision of creating globally competitive and industry-relevant ITIs. With Gujarat at the forefront of this mission, the event underscored how strong centre-state-industry collaboration can drive skilling reform.

"The ITI Upgradation Scheme is not just about improving infrastructure—it's about upgrading aspirations,"

said Rajit Punhani, Secretary, MSDE. "By bringing industry on board as equal partners, we're shaping a future-ready vocational ecosystem that delivers on quality, relevance, and employability."

Gujarat officials shared a detailed status update on the state's preparedness, including cluster identification and pilot rollout timelines. The Labour, Skill Development and Employment Department highlighted its roadmap for implementing the national scheme and ensuring maxi-

mum local impact.

"Gujarat is committed to turning this scheme into a powerful tool for economic empowerment," said Dr. Vinod Rao, Principal Secretary, Labour and Skill Development, Gujarat. "We are not just implementing a policy—we are co-creating it with industry."

Industry stakeholders from top companies like Pidilite Industries, L&T, TATA Motors, Nayara Energy, and Sanand Industry Association participated actively in the discussions.



**AWAITED** | Petition over the promotion policy pending in HC

# Departments set to start holding DPCs for promotion

But the promotion orders will be issued after the HC order

Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

The government is getting ready to move the promotion process further because a petition over the promotion policy is pending in the high court. Nevertheless, the government informed the high court that it would not promote any-

The HC order has put a ban on promotion since July 7, but the court is yet to fix a date for hearing the petition

one until the court gives a verdict on the issue. The Advocate General presented the government's views to the court. Now, the government wants to complete all the formalities regarding promotion before the court gives its decision. The departments have been directed to complete the process for writing CRs and hold DPC meetings. Promotion for Grade I and Grade II employees will be

done through the PSC. The departments have been told to complete the process for promotion and take dates for DPC from the PSC. As the process for promotion will begin in all the departments, the PSC may take time to hold DPCs. If the HC takes a decision in favour of the policy, the government will start issuing promotion orders. If the government does not

start the process for promotion now, it will take a long time to complete it after the HC order. This is the reason that the departments have been asked to start the process for promotion. The Samanya Pichra Alp-sankhyak Kalyan Samaj (SPAKS) has filed a petition in the high court, saying the promotion policy is a violation of the order for ending reserva-

tion in promotion. The court directed the government to tell the difference between the old and new policies through a chart. The government has also prepared a chart showing the difference between the two policies. The HC order has put a ban on promotion since July 7, but the court is yet to fix a date for hearing the petition. On the other hand, the government has prepared all the papers so that whenever the HC fixes a date for hearing, it may present a reply.

## EOW registers FIR, problems may rise for BJP MLA, family

SAHARA LAND CASE

FIR against Subroto Roy's son Shimanto

Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

BJP MLA Sanjay Pathak and his family are in trouble in Sahara land case after the EOW registered a case against Sahara's chief manager Shimanto Roy who is the son of Subroto Roy, the founder of the group. In the month of January this year, the Economic Offences Wing has registered preliminary enquiry on the complaints received by Manu Dixit, Deependra Singh Thakur and Himanshu Paviya, re-

Land sold at lower rate

- ▶ Total cost of 508-acre land is around Rs 1,000 crore
- ▶ Bhopal: In 2014, 110-acre land was sold for Rs 47.73 crore
- ▶ Sagar: 99.76-acre land was sold for just 14.79 crore
- ▶ Jabalpur: 99.44-acre land was sold for Rs 20.60 crore and 99.44-acre land in Katni was sold for Rs 22 crore
- ▶ Gwalior: 99.76-acre of land was sold for Rs 18.60 crore

lated to the sale of land and purchase irregularities. The BJP MLA's family had purchased the land through their company, situated in Bhopal, Jabalpur and in Katni which is estimated to be 310 acres. DG Upendra Jain informed that the EOW has begun investigation after registering the PE and found huge financial irregularities. He added that 508 acres of land was sold at Rs 123.72 crore and according to the

Court's instruction the amount was scheduled to be deposited in SEBI-Sahara-Refund Account. But in place of depositing the amount, Sahara CCM Roy, DGM-MMW JB Roy and deputy managing worker OP Shrivastava shifted the amount into different accounts after selling the land. Out of Rs 123.72 crore, the company officials did not deposit the amount of Rs 72.82 crore into the account.

## In a first, centralised syllabus for PG courses in Madhya Pradesh



Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

For the first time in the state, the Higher Education Department has prepared 50 model syllabi for Post Graduate (PG) courses, aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP). The PG courses have been categorised into PG Diploma, 1-year PG Programme, and 2-year PG Programme. A senior officer from the Higher Education depart-

Courses prepared on the lines of NEP

ment stated that the centralised PG syllabi will be implemented in all colleges and universities simultaneously. Meanwhile, out of the 50 syllabi, a few, such as Hindi Literature, Sociology, English Literature, Economics, and Yoga, have already been uploaded. Under the PG Arts faculty, courses have been prepared under 24 heads, including Vedha, Astrology Science, Yoga, and Dance.

It is worth mentioning that topics related to ancient Indian knowledge have been incorporated in some form in relevant courses. For instance, PG Diploma in Hindi Literature (1st semester) includes a chapter on 'Ancient Indian Tradition and Hindi Literature'. The second paper of PG Diploma (1-year) also has 'Ancient Indian Tradition and Chandra Bardai's Prithviraj Raso'. In the third paper, students will study a novel on Ahilyabai.

## AIIMS Rs 100cr simulation lab plan nixed over high cost

Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

AIIMS Bhopal's proposal to develop a simulation training lab worth Rs 100 crore has been turned down by the Standing Finance Committee (SFC) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). The committee expressed concern over the abnormally high expenditure and recommended setting up a basic undergraduate (UG) skill lab with a budget of Rs 4.5 crore instead. The proposed simulation lab was to use mannequins and simulators to provide hands-on training in various medical procedures and scenarios. It would have enabled students to practice safely before working with real patients, covering areas like fundamental nursing, emergency care and other specialised fields. The SFC suggested focusing on a basic UG skill lab to meet immediate training requirements more cost-effectively.

Proposal to fill over 100 posts proposed  
AIIMS Bhopal has forwarded a proposal to the Department

Health ministry panel flags high cost, asks for low-budget alternative

SFC recommends setting up Rs 4.5 crore basic UG skill lab instead

Proposed lab was to use mannequins and simulators to provide hands-on training in medical skills

of Expenditure (DoE) under the Ministry of Finance to fill over 100 posts, including faculty, residents and non-teaching staff. The proposed recruitments include 2 posts for Department of Rheumatology and Immunology (3 faculty, 3 residents, 6 non-faculty), 12 posts for Medical Genetics (same composition) and 85 posts for Department of Critical Care Medicine (6 faculty, 42 residents, 37 non-faculty).

## 57.60% students clear HSC second exam

Girls outshine boys

Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

The Board of Secondary Education (BSE) declared the result of Higher Secondary Certificate Second Exam on Friday. The overall pass percentage of regular boys and girls stood at 57.60 per cent. The pass percentage of boys is 55.51% and that of girls stood at 60.21%. In other words, girls outshined boys in the exam. As many as 24,728 students passed in first division including 12,186 boys and 12,542 girls. At least 52,966 students including 29,193 boys and 23,773 boys passed in second division. Likewise, 457 students including 350 boys and 107 girls passed in third division. Two students remained absent in the exam while exam of five students was cancelled. The number of failed students is 57,517 including 33,442 boys and 24,075 girls. Meanwhile, the pass percentage of private students was 39.40% including 37.80% boys and 41.63% girls.

## Indore boy wins MP's first gold in Int'l Physics Olympiad

Our Staff Reporter  
INDORE

A talented student from Indore, Riddhesh Bendale has made history by winning a gold medal in the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) 2025. This achievement is particularly notable as Riddhesh is the only student from Madhya Pradesh to win a gold medal in IPhO. The competition was held in France from July 18 to July 24, 2025, with over 415 participants from 87 countries. The Indian team gave a remarkable performance, winning three gold and two silver medals. Riddhesh's historic achievement is a matter of pride for the state and the country. The International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) is one of the most prestigious physics competitions for secondary school students. Its objective is to evaluate students' in-depth understanding of theoretical and experimental physics,

analytical ability, critical thinking and problem-solving skills at the highest level. The competition consists of two 5-hour exams: experimental and theoretical. Riddhesh's father Anant Bendale expressed his happiness, saying, "I am thrilled at Riddhesh's achievement. His hard work and dedication have paid off and I could not be prouder. This achievement is a testament to his exceptional talent and perseverance." Riddhesh's parents are overjoyed at his success and his achievement is expected to inspire many young students in the region. "His success has inspired many young students in the region and his name has become synonymous with excellence in physics," said his mentor Kamal Sharma. He added that Riddhesh's win was expected to motivate other students to pursue their interest in physics and strive for excellence.



## HC instructs MP Online not to tamper with nursing data

Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

The High Court, principal bench of Jabalpur instructed MP Online that no data related to nursing should be tampered with. A public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Law Students Association President Vishal Baghel over irregularities in recognition and admission in nursing and paramedical colleges in Madhya Pradesh was heard on Friday by the bench of Justice Atul Shridharan and Justice Anuradha Shukla.

The petitioner presented documents of Sendhwa Nursing College and alleged that the college was granted recognition for 2024-25 after being found suitable following two investigations by the CBI. On the other hand, the mark sheet of the faculty shown by the college in the application for recognition was fake, which led the High Court to confiscate the file of that college from the CBI. The CBI informed HC that the mark sheet presented by the petitioner was found in the records of the CBI in some

The petitioner showed fake mark sheet by opening it on Nursing Council's official portal during hearing

other name, so the petitioner should be asked from which source he has obtained the mark sheet. On being asked by the High Court, the petitioner showed the fake mark sheet by opening it on the official portal of the Nursing Council during the hearing.

In fact, both the judges themselves downloaded the mark sheet from the portal of MPNRC as told by the petitioner, which confirmed that the mark sheet presented by the petitioner is part of the record of recognition by the Nursing Council. The court directed the CBI to hand over a copy of the file to the petitioner as well. The High Court also directed MP Online not to make any manipulation or change in online data of the Nursing Council. If the order is violated, a case will be registered.

## Court takes cognisance on resort built in ESZ, Pench Tiger Reserve

District admin closes resort as it was in core area

OUR STAFF REPORTER  
BHOPAL

ADJ court, Chaurai, Chhindwara district has taken cognisance over the resort, which was run in Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) within core area 308 metre and 100 metre from the water reservoir of Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) as it violated notification of ESZ provision,

November 2019. The resort was run by Dr Sayed Azhar Ali. Captain Brijesh Bharadwaj had lodged complaint to the district administration stating the resort was run from 2021. Field director PRT informed divisional commissioner, Jabalpur that on the basis of SDM (Chaurai), Chhindwara district, it was found that the resort was at 308 metre of core area and in limit of 100 metre of water reservoir in Jamtara, PTR, Seoni. SDM Chaurai and forest department officials had warned

owner Sayed Azhar Ali not to operate the resort till the local advisory committee (LAC) approves it on July 28, 2021. Despite that, the construction work went on. Caretakers Mukesh and Sakin Bari too were informed about the illegal construction. Captain Brijesh Bharadwaj informed Free Press, 'I had complained to the district administration, Chhindwara, PCCF (Bhopal) and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). My first complaint was in 2021 and I repeatedly

complained after that. Then, the district administration as well as the divisional commissioner, Jabalpur took action.' Resort owner Sayed Azhar Ali said, 'It is not actually a resort as my application is pending at LAC since 2021. It is a farmhouse which is registered with MP Tourism. It is a revenue and not forest land with NOC obtained from the district panchayat. Revenue and forest provisions are very complicated. It may be that my farmhouse is in ESZ but it is not forest land.'

offgrid

## Spirit of Dashrath Manjhi in Sendhwa village

FP News Service  
SENDHWA

In a feat reminiscent of Dashrath Manji's herculean effort, villagers of Bedi Fartala village constructed a 4.5 km long road within a fortnight on their own, when local administration failed them. With a combined population of 350 people under Rosar gram panchayat under Pati block, these villagers refused to wait for government promises for a road. After years of ignored applications and unfulfilled electoral promises, they took matters into their own hands by constructing a 1.5-kilometre road in just three days and completing the construction of 4.3 kilometres within 15 days. Locals struggled daily due to a lack of road. Children were unable to reach school, and elderly patients faced difficulty reaching hospitals, walking on dangerous,



muddy paths during monsoons. "If not now, then never," became their motto and with collective effort and coordination, they began carving a stretch through the hills. Half the population of the village worked on road construction from morning to evening, while others tended to agricultural duties. Women prepared meals on-site to maximise working hours and accelerate the progress of road construction. Describing their routine, villager Dharam Singh said, "We woke up every morning

to dig mountains and carried stones. The construction involved more than just laying soil and gravel - it represents our community resilience and hope." Residents manually excavated mountainous terrain, transported stones and coordinated logistics without external assistance or machinery. Local MLA Rajan Mandloi said, "Similar conditions plague every gram panchayat in the region where people rely on foot travel. I have raised the issue multiple times during assembly sessions. Many panchayats in the area are disconnected.

## Slogans, sit-ins banned in Vidhan Sabha premises

Legislators should not carry anyone in their vehicles without a valid pass, PS writes

Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

A circular, sent to the legislators before the monsoon session of the House beginning Monday, has heated up the political atmosphere in the state. After getting instructions from the Speaker of the House, Narendra Singh Tomar, Principal Secretary of the Vidhan Sabha AP Singh sent the circular that prohibits any kind of agitation and slogans by the legislators on Vidhan Sabha premises. The legislators are generally advised to remain calm inside the House, but staging sit-ins by them outside Vidhan Sabha is considered a normal practice. Soon after the circular was out, the Congress protested against it.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Hemant Katore, has said the legislators raise the public issues in the House. When the legislators do not get a proper reply to their questions, they stage sit-ins outside the House, he said, adding that such protests are just symbolic. Showing resentment outside the House is the democratic right of the lawmakers, Katore said, adding that he is against the order. The government cannot gag the voice of the opposition, he said. It is also written in the circular that, on the recommendations of a legislator, two persons will be allowed in the audience gallery. The legislators should not let anyone enter the Vidhan Sabha premises or the lobby of the House. The Congress is mulling over protesting against the circular on the first day of the Vidhan Sabha session.

INVESTMENT FRAUD

## STF unearths 145 mule accounts stashing cyber crime generated money

Our Staff Reporter  
BHOPAL

The special task force (STF) has unearthed around 145 bank accounts which were being used by fraudsters to stash and rotate money generated from investment frauds and cybercrimes, including digital arrest. On-going investigations into a major forex trade investment fraud racket (having international links) which was busted by the special task force (MPSTF) some months back, led the sleuths to the above 145 bank accounts across the country - being held and operated by at least ten companies registered in different parts of India. Transactions worth a whopping Rs 3200 crore were detected in these 145 accounts over the last eight-nine month period, out of which

around Rs 180 crore have been frozen/put on hold. Continued investigations into the accounts led to another startling revelation - at least 14 of those accounts having been used by cyber fraudsters to park proceeds of their crime. DG Pankaj Srivastava said, "262 complaints with various state police agencies and the MHA's I4C pertain to cybercrimes involving around Rs 68 crore. A significant sum out of this was stashed and routed through bank accounts held by the ten companies registered in India. Two of these companies are under our scanner in connection with forex trade investment fraud racket case.' Seven FIRs have already been registered in multiple states including Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Assam.

Out of 262 complaints, 91 related to investment fraud

SP Naveen Choudhary told Free Press that out of 262 complaints received particularly by MHA's I4C, 91 pertain to investment frauds, 75 related to share market investment/trading, 37 UPI fraud complaints, 11 job fraud complaints and six pertaining to digital arrests. A large network of fraudsters makes people from MP and other states invest huge sums in forex trading with the promise of returns ranging from 72% to 90%.

Hi-profile companies running from one or two rooms

Officials informed that two companies accounts in which investors deposited money to get benefits of BoTBro and Meta 5 Trading App-based forex trading, have their corporate offices on a single floor in Noida. Their related offices in Haryana are operated from two rooms but transactions of Rs 300 crore was done in just nine months and transactions of Rs 30 crore was done in Odisha in the same period.



Briefs

LUCKNOW  
Amrit Bharat  
Trains to  
Expand Routes



Lucknow will soon get Amrit Bharat Express trains to Jammu, Chandigarh, and Dehradun within 3 months, easing travel woes. Two new routes (Malda, Darbhanga) launched this week with 458–558 seats. Aimed at reducing waitlists and air-fare dependency.

MAHARAJGANJ  
New press club  
committee  
formed

Amit Tripathi unanimously elected President of Press Club of Maharajganj. The 12-member team vowed to uphold journalists' welfare and press freedom. Senior journalists attended the ceremony.

MORADABAD  
GST Raid  
seals metal  
firm

A Moradabad metal firm sealed for tax evasion after failing to produce purchase records. GST teams intensified crack-downs on fake billing; one suspect detained.

DEORIA  
Police conducts  
security sweep

Deoria police inspected banks, ATMs, and petrol pumps in Rampur Karkhana under SP's orders. Focused on CCTV functionality and guard deployment to curb crimes.

LUCKNOW  
Famous kulfi  
chain in  
GST net

CGST raids at 5 outlets of Prakash Kulfi (Aminabad, Chowk) revealed crores in tax evasion. Owners summoned over milk product GST slab discrepancies.

JAUNPUR  
Notorious  
criminals  
arrested

Two wanted criminals (Shubham Rai, Ramdhani Yadav) held with pistols in Khetasaray. One accused in murder cases; both have violent criminal histories.

BALRAMPUR  
Disability camp  
certifies 44  
children

Utraula block's medical camp issued disability certificates to 44 of 103 registered children. 28 referred to higher centers, parents expressed dissatisfaction over rejections.

AYODHYA  
UP Leads in  
GI-tagged  
products

UP tops India with 77 GI-tagged products, revealed at an agriculture varisty workshop. Experts emphasized reviving heritage products through GI registration.

VARANASI  
Widower  
attacked over  
remarriage

Ram Murat Pal (widower) was stoned by neighbor Sanjay Pal opposing his second marriage in Pindra. FIR lodged; accused absconding.

ACTION | CM Yogi Adityanath issues stern warning to UP power department

"Electricity no longer a service but a necessity" : CM Yogi

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

In a high level review meeting on Friday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stressed the need for urgent improvements in Uttar Pradesh's power supply, calling tripping, overbilling, and unscheduled cuts "unacceptable in any situation." Describing electricity as no longer just a service but a matter of "public trust," the Chief Minister issued firm directives to the Energy Department and DISCOMs to raise accountability and act on citizen complaints with urgency.

The meeting came against the backdrop of June's record peak demand of 31,486 MW, milestone that officials say was met successfully. Yet, across various districts, consumers continue to report disruptions, inconsistent billing, and limited rural supply hours. While the Chief Minister



emphasised that the government has no shortage of funds, electricity, or infrastructure, the continued prevalence of supply irregularities suggests that translating intent into impact remains a work in progress.

CM Yogi called for immediate technical audits of feeders and instructed officials to upgrade transformers where needed. He underlined the need to strengthen ground-

31L smart meters  
installed, Discoms  
told to reduce line  
losses

level response and make billing more transparent and timely. "Every consumer should receive an accurate, timely bill there should be no scope for overbilling," he said, noting that issues with billing

hurt both public confidence and the department's credibility. Smart metering which is promoted as a long term solution has reached 31 lakh consumers, with a goal to extend coverage down to the block level. Officials say the process is ongoing, but observers note that adoption in rural areas has remained uneven, often due to legacy infrastructure and field-level bottlenecks.

On the generation side, the

state's installed capacity currently stands at 11,595 MW, with additional power expected from upcoming projects in Ghatampur, Khurja, Panki, and Meja. Once operational, these could raise the total beyond 16,000 MW. The Chief Minister instructed departments to ensure time-lines are met and to prioritise agricultural feeder separation and solar-powered tube wells under the PM KUSUM scheme.

While the meeting conveyed the administration's seriousness, actual progress on many fronts will be closely watched. As power consumption continues to rise with rising temperatures and economic activity, the challenge is not just meeting demand but also ensure that the quality, reliability, and equity of supply keeps pace. The expectations set from the top are high; the implementation will determine whether they're met.

"Akhilesh is a wolf in sheep's clothing"

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak launched sharp attacks on SP chief Akhilesh Yadav during a high-profile event held on Jail Minister Dara Singh Chauhan's birthday, celebrated as "Sankalp Diwas" by the Chauhan community at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan.

Keshav Maurya accused Akhilesh of being a "Bagula Bhagat" pretending to care about backward communities while ignoring them during his tenure. "From 2012 to 2017, he didn't remember PDA," Maurya claimed, referring to SP's pitch for Pichhda Dalit Alpsankhyak representation. Brajesh Pathak followed suit, alleging that under SP rule, criminals thrived and women felt unsafe. The BJP, he said, had reversed that narrative. However, critics note that such repeated reliance on past accusations instead of present-day policy discourse may reflect a defensive stance.

Interestingly, despite the fierce rhetoric, the focus of the event remained on community



Deputy CM Maurya  
attacks SP chief at  
minister Dara's  
birthday event

consolidation. Dara Singh Chauhan was hailed as the voice of the Chauhan Samaj, while BJP leaders called for mobilization ahead of 2027.

While the event showcased BJP's outreach to OBC communities, Keshav's remarks seemed more directed at stoking old rivalries than offering new vision. The emphasis on SP's past contrasts with the need for forward-looking policies an area where voters may seek more substance.

Public banks lead  
stand up India loans

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the top-performing state under the Stand-Up India scheme, with public sector banks playing a crucial role in disbursing loans to new entrepreneurs. Launched to support Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and women in starting businesses, the scheme offers loans between ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore.

As of 2025, public sector banks in the state have approved 24,811 loans, with 17,845 beneficiaries receiving financial support worth 2,965 crore. Lucknow ranks first among districts, both at the state and zonal level, with 1,291 beneficiaries receiving loans worth ₹242.23 crore out



Lucknow tops list,  
private sector still  
hesitant

of 2,024 approved cases. Agra and Kanpur Nagar follow closely.

In contrast, private and regional rural banks have lagged behind. Out of 2,178 approved applications, rural banks have disbursed loans to only 1,873 beneficiaries, while

private banks have sanctioned loans for just 493 out of 1,633 eligible applicants. Overall, of the 33,640 targeted cases, 28,625 have been approved but only 20,214 loans have been disbursed.

In 2025, the Finance Ministry introduced key changes to the scheme revisiting subsidy reducing it from 25% to 15%, and adding new sectors including Sericulture, beekeeping, agribusiness, and food processing units.

Uttar Pradesh's performance reflects effective implementation and growing grassroots entrepreneurship. However, experts suggest that increasing private sector participation could further enhance the scheme's reach and impact.

Famous satirist  
Gopal Chaturvedi  
dies just six days  
after his wife

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

Gopal Chaturvedi, a prominent Hindi satirist and former Indian Railways officer, passed away on Thursday night in Lucknow. Just six days prior, his wife, Nisha Chaturvedi, a senior administrative officer, had also passed away. The double loss has sent shockwaves through the literary and cultural community.

Born on August 15, 1942, in Lucknow, Chaturvedi was a distinguished writer known for his satirical works. He worked in various high-ranking positions in the Railways and government ministries from 1965 to 1993. His notable works include "Dhandhaleshwar," "Afisar Ki Maut," and "Dum Ki Wapsi."

"Akhilesh does not use  
religion as political tool"

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

A recent visit by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and MP Dimple Yadav to a mosque near Delhi's Parliament Street has sparked political controversy, but the SP leadership is responding with a strong message of unity. As criticism poured in from both ruling BJP leaders and certain religious clerics, SP leaders in Lucknow countered with posters emphasizing Akhilesh's inclusive approach.

The posters installed late Thursday near the SP headquarters carry the message: "Akhilesh is the one who doesn't trade in hate; he doesn't politicize temples or mosques." The initiative, led by party leader Mohammad Ikhtlaq, appears to be a direct



SP posters push  
back against BJP's  
communal with call  
for harmony

response to those questioning the intent behind Akhilesh's religious outreach.

Images featured in the posters show Akhilesh Yadav with leaders from multiple faiths sitting with Hindu saints, attending a mosque, and standing with Sikh community members. The visual narrative underscores SP's positioning of

Akhilesh as a secular leader who engages across religious lines without political opportunism.

Responding indirectly to critics, Ikhtlaq noted, "For you, worship is political ground; for us, faith is a symbol of love." The SP's communication clearly seeks to counter the narrative that Akhilesh's mosque visit was a political ploy. While some conservative voices, such as cleric Shahabuddin Rizvi Bareilly, expressed dissatisfaction over Dimple Yadav's attire during the visit, SP's broader messaging has focused on religious harmony and respect for all faiths.

With these posters and public statements, the Samajwadi Party is drawing a line between divisive politics and inclusive leadership.

Gold coins  
discovered  
during  
excavation

UP State Bureau  
ALIGARH

A surprising discovery has halted excavation work in Bhareti village, Aligarh, where 11 gold coins were unearthed during the digging of a water pipeline. The news quickly spread, creating a stir throughout the village.

Upon receiving information about the find, Quarsi police station officers promptly arrived at the scene. As a precautionary measure, authorities deployed police forces in the area at 10 PM on Thursday night, and all excavation activities were immediately stopped.

Police officials confirmed that the villagers were carrying out the digging for water drainage purposes when the ancient coins were discovered.

Alarming trend of  
sudden student deaths

UP State Bureau  
BARABANKI

Barabanki has been shaken by two sudden deaths of children within 17 days, raising concerns about potential silent cardiac attacks. On July 19, 2025, Nandini, a Class 10 district topper, suddenly experienced hiccups, nosebleeds, and foamy discharge from her mouth while having lunch at school. She became unconscious and died before reaching the hospital. Earlier, on July 2, 2025, Akhil, a 12-year-old, collapsed outside his school. He was rushed to a local hospital and then referred to Lucknow, but passed away en route. Another similar incident occurred in Kasganj on July 4, 2025, where a Class 10 student collapsed during prayer due to chest pain and later died.

Experts suggest silent cardiac attacks as a probable cause



5 different students  
passed away after  
chest pain and  
sudden collapse

for these sudden deaths, noting that post-mortem reports are often unavailable or inconclusive. Unlike typical heart attacks with pronounced symptoms like severe chest pain, silent cardiac attacks present with minimal or no overt signs, making them difficult to recognize. Doctors explain that sudden unconsciousness, nosebleeds, or frothing can indicate blockages in heart arteries or heart failure.

Target to Execute  
24,000  
Investment MOUs  
in 21 Months

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

An ambitious target is set, to bring over 24,000 investment Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), totalling approximately ₹38 lakh crore, to fruition within 21 months. Invest UP has established a dedicated monitoring mechanism to ensure these proposals translate into production units.

Under this new corporate-style account management model, 40 Invest UP account managers have each been tasked with materializing 100 MOUs worth over ₹100 crore. For the 19,500 MOUs under ₹100 crore, "Udyami Mitras" and General Managers of District Industries Centers (DICs) will oversee their conversion into operational units.

Akhilesh Blames BJP  
for UP Primary  
Education Woes

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has sharply criticized the Uttar Pradesh BJP government, asserting that it is "ruining basic and primary education." He accused the ruling party of deliberately targeting the poor and PDA (Pichhde, Dalit, and Minority) communities by closing government-run schools, thereby robbing their children of a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution.

Yadav alleged that the BJP's education policy is not only regressive but also discriminatory in nature. "Their aim is clear—they want to create an unequal society where the marginalized remain educated and voiceless," he said. By systematically shutting down schools in rural and underprivi-



School Closures  
Undermine the  
Right to Education,  
Says SP Chief

leged areas, the government is paving the way for private institutions that are financially inaccessible to common citizens, he added. He further stated that instead of improving infrastructure, filling vacant teaching posts, or modernizing classrooms, the government is dismantling the very foundation of public education.

'Kanwariya'  
students march  
to Lucknow to  
protest fees

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW



In an unconventional protest during the Sawan month, a group of students from Gonda has embarked on a "Chhatra Kanwad Yatra" (Student Kanwad Pilgrimage), carrying holy Saryu river water, not for temples, but to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's residence in Lucknow. Their unique pilgrimage, which will make an overnight stop near BBD University tonight, aims to draw attention to the soaring fees in private schools, which they claim have turned education into a business.

empowerment

UP Sees sharp rise in women's workforce participation

UP State Bureau  
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has recorded a substantial increase in female labour force participation over the past six years, according to the newly released Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) Index. The state's participation rate has climbed from 14% in 2017-18 to 36% in 2023-24, marking a notable 22 percentage point increase.

The figures point to a structural shift in gender dynamics within the state's labour market. While still trailing the national average of 45%, UP's

gains outpace many other states in year-on-year growth.

Several factors appear to have contributed to this progress. Programs targeting women's skilling, employment facilitation, and inclusion in traditionally male-dominated sectors have increased accessibility to work, particularly in rural areas. The rise is also linked to policy measures such as Mission Shakti, the expansion of self-help groups, and efforts to improve workplace safety and mobility. The Labour Department reports that women now account for over 53% of registrations on the



Female labour rate  
jumps from 14% to  
36% in 6 years

national e-Shram portal from Uttar Pradesh. In the construction sector alone, women make

up 34.65% of the workforce an unusual but growing trend in a sector once dominated by male labour. In a major regulatory shift, Uttar Pradesh has lifted restrictions that earlier barred women from working in 29 hazardous category factories. Previously allowed in only 12, and later 16 categories, women can now work across all sectors, provided employers meet safety and health standards. Additionally, permission for night shift work with safeguards like transport and rest provisions has expanded job opportunities in round the clock sectors such as manufac-

turing and services.

UP's government backed self-help group model has also gained traction, with over 10 lakh groups formed and more than 1 crore women linked to income-generating activities across the state.

While the rise in participation doesn't yet match parity benchmarks, analysts note that the consistent upward trend signals deeper economic inclusion. The challenge ahead lies in ensuring that rising numbers translate into sustained, equitable, and quality employment for women across all income levels and geographies.



Quick Trail

**BENGALURU**  
**HC stays case against BJP MLC N Ravikumar**



In a relief to BJP MLC N Ravikumar, the Karnataka High Court on Friday stayed proceedings against him in a case filed over alleged derogatory remarks made against Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh.

The complaint against Ravikumar was registered not on the basis of any complaint from Rajneesh herself but on a third-party complaint that alleged his remarks were defamatory and disrespectful towards the senior IAS officer. Appearing for Ravikumar, senior advocate Arun Shyam argued that the statement made by the MLC did not contain any criminal element that could warrant prosecution under defamation or related charges. He further contended that the complaint itself lacked legal standing as it was filed by an unrelated third party without the direct involvement of the alleged aggrieved person.

**BENGALURU**  
**Sexual assault: Prajwal denied bail again**

In a significant setback for former MP Prajwal Revanna, the special court for elected representatives on Thursday rejected his bail plea for the second time in connection with the high-profile Holarasipura sexual assault case.

Prajwal, who is accused of sexually assaulting a domestic help, had filed a fresh bail application before the special court after his earlier pleas were turned down by the same court, the High Court, and the Supreme Court. He has been in judicial custody for over 14 months.

Advocate Vikram Huilgol, appearing for the accused, argued that Prajwal has already spent more than a year behind bars and highlighted that the High Court had stayed the investigation against his father, senior JD(S) leader HD Revanna, in a related case. On these grounds, the defence urged the court to grant bail to Prajwal as well.

**MANGALURU**  
**K'taka identifies Karikad in M'luru for logistics park**

As part of its ambitious Industrial Policy 2025-30, the Karnataka government has identified Karikad near Mangaluru as a key location for developing a world-class multimodal logistics park to facilitate freight movement and industrial growth, officials said.

S Selvakumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Commerce and Industries Department, said that Karikad's strategic proximity to the Mangaluru Port, railway stations, and national highways makes it an ideal site. The park will serve as a crucial node in the state's logistics corridor, connecting coastal Karnataka with the hinterland. It's expected to ease freight transport, reduce turnaround time for goods movement, and provide dedicated infrastructure to support state's growing export sectors.

**'DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT' | 'Corrupting the public's perception about the Election Commission is not in good taste'**

# Vijayendra slams Cong, asks Siddaramaiah to apologise for attacking Election Commission

**NT Correspondent**

**BENGALURU**

BJP State President B Y Vijayendra on Friday came down heavily on the Congress party, demanding that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar apologise to the people of Karnataka for casting aspersions on the Election Commission of India.

He said the Congress leaders were sowing seeds of suspicion in the minds of the public by questioning the integrity of a constitutional institution.

Speaking at a press conference, Vijayendra said, "Rahul Gandhi has accused the BJP of misusing the Election Commission during the previous

Lok Sabha elections. Now, CM Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar have echoed the same allegations. Questioning a constitutional body like the Election Commission is not only an insult to the institution but also an anti-democratic act."

Challenging the Congress's claims, Vijayendra asked, "If the Election Commission was really misused, how did the Congress come to power in Karnataka with 134 seats in 2023 assembly election? Would it have been possible for Siddaramaiah to become the Chief Minister? Didn't Congress also win the bypolls in three assembly constituencies? How did that happen if the elections were manipu-



lated?"

The BJP state chief termed the statements by the Con-

gress leaders as a "dangerous development" and claimed it reflected the party's "Emer-

gency-era mindset," which has not changed even today. He said that when the mat-

He said the Congress leaders were sowing seeds of suspicion in the minds of the public by questioning EC.

ter of electoral rolls and elections is being discussed in the Supreme Court, such remarks should be made there and not in public forums. "Corrupting the public's perception about the Election Commission is not in good taste," he added. Vijayendra's comments

came in response to Rahul Gandhi's allegation on Thursday that the Congress has "concrete 100 per cent proof" that the Election Commission allowed cheating in a constituency in Karnataka, and warning the poll panel that it will not get away with this "because we are going to come for you".

Responding to Gandhi's remarks, the EC said it is "highly unfortunate" that rather than filing an election petition in accordance with section 80 of the Representation of the People Act, or if filed, awaiting the verdict of the high court, he has not only made "baseless allegations" but also "chosen to threaten" a constitutional body.

## Dharmasthala: SIT begins operations from Belthangady



**NT Correspondent**

**MANGALURU**

The SIT, constituted by the Karnataka government, to probe the alleged criminal activities under the jurisdiction of Dharmasthala police station has begun functioning from Belthangady, officials said on Friday.

The SIT was formed following a complaint submitted to the state DGP by a resident of Dharmasthala town, alleging serious offences including illegal detention, custodial torture, extortion, and property-related irregularities involving certain police personnel and others.

To ensure the complainant's safety and smooth investigation, the team has been stationed in Belthangady instead of Dharmasthala.

According to sources, SIT has already initiated formal proceedings, gathering preliminary information related to the charges and plans to record statements soon.

The case garnered significant public attention after the complainant's letter was widely circulated in media and on social media platforms, prompting the Home Department to act swiftly and set up the SIT.

The complainant, who claims to have been a victim of illegal confinement and financial coercion, has sought protection for his family and an impartial inquiry, alleging collusion between some police officials and local influential persons.

Local sources said that SIT officers are maintaining strict confidentiality regarding their operations and movements. The investigation is being monitored closely at the state level, with the potential for significant revelations.

Senior officials said the SIT would conduct a comprehensive and unbiased inquiry and submit its report to the government within a stipulated timeframe.

## CM change talk baseless, Siddaramaiah will continue for full term: Yathindra

**NT Correspondent**

**MYSURU**

Amid renewed speculation over Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's term, his son and MLC Dr. Yathindra Siddaramaiah on Friday strongly refuted rumours of a leadership change, asserting that there is no question of the senior Congress leader stepping down before completing his full five-year term.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, Yathindra questioned the origin of such speculation. "Who has said

that Siddaramaiah will not continue for five years? Has anyone from our own party made such a statement? This debate itself is baseless," he said. He dismissed talk of an alleged 2.5-year power-sharing formula as false propaganda pushed by the Opposition.

"The claim that power will be shared for two and a half years each is something created by the Opposition. Minister KN Rajanna recently said there will be a political revolution in September — does that automatically

mean a change of CM? Why see every political statement through the lens of Siddaramaiah's chair? Revolution could mean something else — ask those who made the statement what they meant," Yathindra retorted.

Reiterating that the Congress high command and the party's MLAs fully back Siddaramaiah, Yathindra said, "When the high command and our MLAs stand firmly with my father, why

would he be replaced? The recent MUDA case verdict has strengthened him politically. There was a deliberate attempt

to dent his moral standing — but that has now been cleared."

He further claimed that targeting Siddaramaiah is an Opposition strategy

to weaken the Congress in Karnataka. "They know he is the Congress's mass leader. If they can tarnish him morally,

it weakens the party. But we are standing strong despite all such attempts," he said.

Reacting to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent claim that massive electoral malpractice took place in one of Karnataka's Lok Sabha constituencies, Yathindra clarified that Mysuru did not witness any irregularities. "We lost the Mysuru seat, but there was no malpractice here. We haven't received any complaints from any area. Had there been issues, our workers would have raised them by now," he said.

## 10 students take ill, food poisoning suspected

**NT Correspondent**

**MANDYA**

In a suspected case of food poisoning, 10 students of a residential school were hospitalised after they complained of stomach pain and other symptoms, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred in K M Doddi, Maddur taluk of this district.

At least 10 students were hospitalised after they complained of vomiting and stomach pain after consuming food served at the residential school on

Friday morning, they said.

All the students are currently receiving treatment at the hospital and are said to be fine.

"So far, we have not received any complaint in this regard. Looking at the seriousness of the issue, we will decide on taking further course of action," a senior officer said.

On Monday night, three members of a family died and two others were admitted to a hospital for treatment following suspected food poisoning in Raichur district.

## Madigas to protest for reservation

**NT Correspondent**

**MYSURU**

Senior Advocate R Arunkumar who is head of Midaiga Meesalathi Horata Samithi, on Friday described the Congress government as the 'number one enemy' of the Madigas for denying them internal reservation.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference here, he also accused state social welfare minister Dr HC Mahadevappa of being 'anti Madiga' for opposing internal reservation. Even the Supreme Court had upheld internal reservation for Madigas after delivering historic judgement last year but the state government has delayed reservation, he asserted.

## Set up leaf composting units in all city parks: BBMP chief

**NT Correspondent**

**BENGALURU**

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao on Friday instructed officials to set up leaf composting units in all parks across the city.

As part of the 'Mukhya Ayuktara Nade Valayada Kade' (chief commissioner's visit to the zone) initiative in the South zone, he issued these directions while receiving public grievances at a meeting held today.

He emphasised that waste generated in parks should be processed at the source through leaf composting (leaf composters) and the resulting compost should be reused in the parks.

Citing that during the monsoon season, tree branches of-



ten fall due to heavy rains, the Chief Commissioner directed that each zone be equipped with a shredder machine to process the fallen branches and debris locally.

According to officials, residents also highlighted problems related to inadequate

street lighting in many parts of the South zone.

In response, the Chief Commissioner instructed that all non-functional streetlights be replaced promptly. Additionally, he ordered officials to conduct night inspections and submit detailed reports.

## Woman hires paramour to kill husband; gets arrested

**NT Correspondent**

**BENGALURU**

A chilling tale of betrayal and murder has emerged from Makali village in Channarayana taluk, Bengaluru South district, where a woman allegedly orchestrated the murder of her husband due to an illicit affair and a property dispute.

The victim, Lokesh, a former Gram Panchayat member, was not only involved in agriculture and associated with JD(S), but was also a wealthy man who owned two chicken shops in Bengaluru. He had even ensured his wife, Chandrakala, was elected twice as a Makali Gram Panchayat member. However, Chandrakala, who is currently a Gram Panchayat member, allegedly plotted her husband's murder, hiring her paramour for a sum of ₹3.5 lakh.

Lokesh and Chandrakala had been married for 18 years and had grown-up children.

They resided at Gollarahatti in Bengaluru, where Chandrakala reportedly developed an illicit relationship with Yogesh, an employee of the Bengaluru Postal Department. Simultaneously, Lokesh was planning to sell a site he owned in Bengaluru, a decision that had led to numerous disputes between the couple over the past few months. Driven by these conflicts, Chandrakala decided to eliminate her husband.

The murder plot was conceived seven months prior, with Chandrakala initially offering ₹2 lakh for the hit.

However, that attempt failed, and the accused who took the money absconded. Seven months later, she



made a second attempt, this time contracting her lover, Yogesh, for ₹3.5 lakh. Yogesh, originally from Navile village in Mandya district and reportedly having a criminal background, enlisted four accomplices—Surya, Shivalinga, Chandan, and Shantaraju.

On the evening of June 23, the group intercepted Lokesh's car near Khyasapura village under the MK Doddi Police Station limits when he was travelling from Bengaluru to Makali village. They forcibly took him to a secluded area off the road, compelled him to consume poison, murdered him, and then fled the scene.

Before arranging the hit, Chandrakala had reportedly instructed Yogesh to leave no clues and make the death appear as a suicide. Following the murder, the accused positioned Lokesh's body next to his car and left a poison bottle inside the vehicle to stage a suicide. On June 24, Lokesh's body was discovered under suspicious circumstances. Initially registering a case of unnatural death, the MK Doddi police conducted a thorough investigation, which ultimately led to the arrest of Chandrakala, Yogesh, and the

'The gang forcibly took him to a secluded area off the road, compelled him to consume poison, and murdered him'.

other accomplices.

In a shocking display of deception, Chandrakala had purchased a new mobile phone and SIM card specifically for orchestrating the murder. After the crime, she participated in Lokesh's final rites, feigning ignorance of the events.

More incredibly, she even held a press conference in Channarayana, publicly demanding the arrest and strict punishment for her husband's killers, stating, "Someone murdered my husband. His soul must rest in peace."

The culprits must be arrested and severely punished." However, the police investigation unravelled her plot. The accused had purchased a car specifically for the murder.

## Questions on Siddaramaiah's tenure as CM persist; again in Delhi along with DKS

**NT Correspondent**

**BENGALURU**

Will he or won't he. This is the million dollar question hotly debated in Karnataka's political circles over Chief Minister Siddaramaiah completing his term, even as a unique record beckons the veteran, who along with his deputy and another claimant for the CM's chair, D K Shivakumar is again in Delhi, their second trip within a week.

Siddaramaiah, in his second term as chief minister, is on the cusp of becoming the longest serving elected head of the state, closing in on veteran Devaraj Urs' record as CM for over 2,700 days.

Despite his assertions, questions over whether he will complete a full five year tenure in office, or if he will make way for DKS as per a rumoured rotational formula, persists. Shivakumar is ad-



dressed as DKS.

The two are in New Delhi in their third trip since June, even as an uneasy calm prevails in the state Congress unit where voices from either camps have fallen silent over the CM issue following a high command gag order.

During their visit to the national capital, the two leaders are likely to meet the Congress' top brass.

Unlike in the past, there

have been no open remarks by MLAs on the CM change issue this time, following the dictat from leadership.

However, silent strategies and maneuvering are certainly on, as the government is nearing two-and-a-half years in office, said a senior Congress leader, summing up the atmosphere within the ruling party.

Though the Delhi visit is to attend the "Bhagidari Nyay

During their visit to the national capital, the two leaders are likely to meet the Congress' top brass.

Sammelan" organised by AICC Backward Class unit on Friday, Congress insiders indicate about the CM possibly meeting party leader Rahul Gandhi. A similar meeting could not happen last time, in the second week of July.

However there is no official confirmation in this regard so far.

There has been speculation within state's political circles, especially within the ruling



Briefs



Andhra CM congratulates Koneru Humpy

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday congratulated grandmaster Koneru Humpy for reaching the FIDE women's chess world cup final. The Chief Minister noted that her determination and brilliance are commendable. "Congratulations to Indian chess grandmaster Koneru Humpy for reaching the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup final," said Naidu in a post on X. Further, the CM conveyed his best wishes for the final, adding 'We are cheering for you'.

HYDERABAD  
Woman killed by husband at birthday party

A man stabbed his wife to death due to suspected infidelity at Abdullapurmet on Thursday night. The victim, identified as Sammakka, was a resident of Suryapet district and had been living separately in a rented house near her husband's niece's home in Abdullapurmet. She is survived by her husband Srinivas, and their two children. According to initial reports, the couple had been facing ongoing marital discord, primarily stemming from Srinivas's suspicion about Sammakka's fidelity. The conflicts reportedly escalated in recent months, and the couple had informed elders from both families about their decision to file for divorce. On Thursday, both Sammakka and Srinivas attended a birthday party hosted at Rajeshwar's house to celebrate her daughter's birthday. Following the cake-cutting ceremony, Srinivas allegedly grabbed the cake knife and attacked Sammakka, stabbing her multiple times. Sammakka died on the spot due to severe injuries.



Migrant worker electrocuted

A migrant worker from Bihar was electrocuted at a factory in Patancheru on Thursday. The victim was identified as Suresh Singh Yadav, who was employed at Agarwal Rubber Industries at Bandlaguda Industrial area of Patancheru. Following Yadav's death, his colleagues and family members held a protest in front of the factory. The victim's family alleged negligence on the part of the management to implement safety measures. After lengthy discussions, the management agreed to pay an ex-gratia of Rs 55 lakh. The family had initially demanded Rs 1 crore.

HYDERABAD  
Medical college invites applications

Employees' State Insurance Corporation Medical college hospital, Sanath Nagar in Hyderabad, has invited applications from eligible candidates for the following posts on contract basis through walk-in interview. Vacant posts include Professor – 6, Associate professor – 10, Assistant professor – 5, Super Specialist – 7 and Senior Residents- 25. Interested and eligible candidates can apply for these vacant posts. For detailed information, candidates are advised to visit website: www.esic.gov.in/Recruitments.

Centre reiterates support to semiconductor industry in TG

METRO INDIA NEWS | HYDERABAD

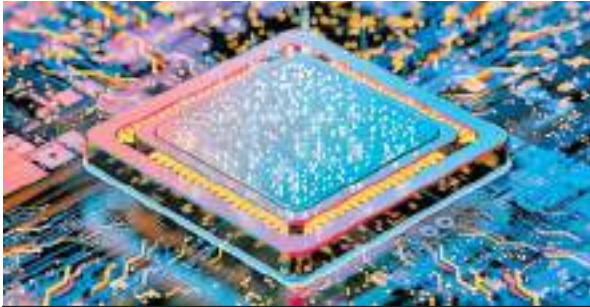
The Union Government on Friday reiterated its commitment to supporting Telangana's growing semiconductor and electronics sector through national-level schemes and incentives. Responding to a question raised by Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy in the Lok Sabha, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Jitin Prasada, made key observations about Telangana's inclusion in the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).

The Minister stated that while the "Semicon India" Program is a pan-India initiative without state-specific allocations, Telangana-based companies and academic institutions have significantly benefited through the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) and Chips to Startup (C2S) schemes.

He further clarified that applicants under the Semicon India Program are free to choose project locations across India, and all proposals are evaluated on technical and financial merits by a committee of domain experts. Telangana's participation is a reflection of its readiness and capacity to contribute to the national semiconductor vision.

Support under Chips to Startup (C2S) program in Telangana

The Chips to Startup (C2S)



- MoS Electronics&IT Jitin Prasada said in Parliament that many Telangana-based companies and institutions benefited through Design Linked Incentive (DLI) and Chips to Startup (C2S) schemes.
- Six educational institutions IN Telangana received financial assistance under C2S scheme and 22 other institutes received
- design tool access.
- Three semiconductor design companies in Telangana received direct financial support under DLI scheme and 11 other firms provided with access to design tool infrastructure.
- The Union Minister said that proposals are evaluated on technical and financial merits by a committee of domain experts.

program, designed to nurture semiconductor talent through academic capacity-building, has extended financial assistance to six leading educational institutions in Telangana: University of Hyderabad, International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Hyderabad, Osmania University College of Engineering Hyderabad, Chaitanya

Bharathi Institute of Technology Hyderabad, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad and National Institute of Technology (NIT) Warangal. Furthermore, 22 academic institutions across Telangana have received design tool access under the C2S scheme to facilitate research and training in chip design and related technologies.

YSRCP rejects report on Tirupati stampede, demands CBI inquiry

METRO INDIA NEWS | TIRUPATI

Senior YSRCP leader and former TTD chairman B Karunakar Reddy on Friday rejected the judicial commission report over the Tirupati temple stampede, demanding a CBI inquiry as the "report seems to be biased and predetermined".

The Andhra Pradesh cabinet headed by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday accepted the report submitted by Justice (retired) M Satyanarayana Murthy on the stampede that occurred at Padmavathi Park in Bairagipattada, Tirupati on January 8, 2025.

Six devotees died and nearly 40 were injured in the stampede in Bairagipattada near MGM School as hundreds of them jostled for tickets for Vai-



kunta Dwara Darshanam at Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirumala Hills.

"The report seems to be predetermined as it has let off all the main persons responsible for the incident, which includes the TTD, revenue (department) and police officials, but has selectively picked two persons and made them

scapegoats," said Reddy, addressing a press conference in the temple town.

The report states that two persons--Harinath Reddy and Ramana Kumar--are responsible for the stampede. Various vigilance and other commission reports will be given in the coming days. Against this backdrop, Reddy, claiming that the main persons were allegedly spared, and small-time officials were held responsible, demanded a CBI inquiry.

The YSRCP leader alleged that the report is aimed at making a few lower-ranking officials scapegoats.

The former TTD chairman demanded a CBI inquiry for the facts to emerge and punish the guilty, alleging that the TTD staff were in the service of VVIPs when the stampede occurred.

These premier institutions have been recognized for their excellence in engineering and research and are receiving either financial support or access to advanced design tools to bolster semiconductor education and innovation. Their inclusion highlights Telangana's strong academic foundation in electronics and VLSI design, positioning the state as a key contributor to India's semiconductor ambitions.

Support under Design Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme in Telangana

As part of the DLI Scheme, three semiconductor design companies in Telangana have received direct financial support from the central government. These companies are-Green PMU Semi Pvt Ltd, WiSig Networks Pvt Ltd, Mo-sChip Technologies Pvt Ltd. In addition, 11 other firms in the state have been provided with access to design tool infrastructure, enabling them to utilize advanced Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools. The companies supported with design tool access include: Green PMU Semi Pvt. Ltd, WiSig Networks Pvt. Ltd, Dheyo AI Pvt. Ltd, AMPICQ Pvt. Ltd, BITSILICA Pvt. Ltd, Manjeera Digital Systems Pvt. Ltd, Spintronics AI Semiconductors Pvt. Ltd, SmartKosh Technologies Pvt. Ltd, Vconnectech Systems Pvt. Ltd, Speedbus Semiconductors Pvt. Ltd, WnPSemicon LLP.

AP Govt to fill up 358 posts in AYUSH department

**Amaravati:** As part of the government's efforts to expand AYUSH services in the state the government has decided to immediately appoint 358 doctors and other staff in this department.

The Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Satya Kumar Yadav has approved the appointment of 358 persons including 71 Doctors, 26 "District Program Managers", 90 Panchkarma Therapists and a total of 358 persons at the earliest.

The previous YSRCP government spent only Rs 37 crore on AYUSH services. On the contrary, the Centre has sanctioned Rs. 83 crore to the State for the year 2024-25.

Telangana to partner with Estonia for strengthening digital infrastructure

METRO INDIA NEWS | HYDERABAD

Telangana will collaborate with Estonia, a country known worldwide for its leadership in digital governance and the digitisation of healthcare, to enhance its initiatives in e-governance and the delivery of digital public services.

Minister for IT and Industries Sridhar Babu announced this after meeting with Estonia's Ambassador to India Marje Luup and a high-level trade delegation at the Secretariat here on Friday.

Commending Estonia for achieving 100 percent digitisation of health records and for its advanced digital infrastructure, Sridhar Babu said Telangana seeks to draw upon Estonia's experience and technical expertise.

"Estonia's success in e-governance and digital health is truly inspiring. Telangana, which is still in the early stages of health data digitisation, aims to partner with Estonia to accelerate progress in this domain," the Minister stated.

The Estonian delegation comprised experts and representatives from sectors such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, and Healthcare. Discussions explored mutual interests and potential areas of collaboration, particularly in public service



"E-governance plays a vital role in delivering transparent and efficient public services. Estonia's collaboration can be instrumental in enhancing our systems

Sridhar Babu  
Minister for IT and Industries

reforms and emerging technologies.

"E-governance plays a vital role in delivering transparent and efficient public services. Estonia's collaboration can be instrumental in enhancing our systems," said Sridhar Babu. He also underlined the growing

significance of cybersecurity, stating, "As we digitise services, safeguarding them becomes equally critical. Cybersecurity is an area where mutual cooperation with Estonia is essential."

Speaking on the state's technological capabilities, the Minister noted Telangana's remarkable growth in drone development. "Drones manufactured in Hyderabad have demonstrated their strategic value recently in conflicts, including in operations involving Pakistan. Future conflicts will be defined by drone warfare and cyberattacks," he observed.

Sridhar Babu also highlighted Telangana's leadership in sectors such as food processing and premium liquor manufacturing, and proposed further cooperation with Estonia in these industries as well.

'All show, no substance': Rahul Gandhi on PM Modi

METRO INDIA NEWS | NEW DELHI

In a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said he has met the PM in person a few times and found him "all show and no substance".

Gandhi made the remarks while addressing a 'Bhagidari Nyay Sammelan' of OBCs at the Talkatora Stadium here.

It was the media, he said, that had "inflated" the prime minister's "balloon" and there was not much substance in him.

"You know what is the biggest problem in politics... No, Narendra Modi is not a big problem," he said, responding to a voice in the crowd.

"Main aapko bata raha hoon, ye aapne apne sir pe



chadha rakha hai, ye koi problem nahi hai. Ye jo media wale hain inhone iska gubbara bana rakha hai. Ye koi problem nahi hai. (I am telling you, you have given him too much importance, he is not a problem)," the Congress leader said.

"Earlier, I had not met him, but now I have met him 2-3 times. Now I understand there

is nothing - he is all show, no substance. You have not met him, I have," Gandhi said.

Addressing the gathering, Gandhi also urged OBC youth to realise their strength.

"My biggest complaint from OBC youth is that they don't understand their strength. Once they understand their strength, the whole scenario will change," he said.

Telangana Cabinet meeting postponed to July 28

**Hyderabad:** The Telangana State Cabinet meeting that was set for Friday has been rescheduled for July 28. It will now take place at 2 PM on Monday, July 28, at the DR Ambedkar Secretariat in Hyderabad.

Initially planned for 4 PM on Friday, the meeting was postponed due to the absence of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and several important ministers who are currently in New Delhi.

Ministers Ponnampalapati Sridhar, Konda Surekha, and Vankar Sridhar are participating in the Congress OBC Leadership Bhagidari Nyay Mahasammelan taking place in the capital. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy are also visiting Delhi.

The Cabinet meeting is expected to address several significant issues, including matters related to farmers

Revanth Reddy, who has spent the last two days in the national capital, returned to Hyderabad. As a result, in order to ensure full participation in the cabinet meeting, the Chief Minister has scheduled the meeting once more for July 28. The Cabinet meeting is expected to address several significant issues, including matters related to farmers, monsoon agriculture, electricity supply, new policies, land surveys, and loan waivers.

CDPOs given appointment letters

**Hyderabad:** Minister for Panchayat Raj, Women and Child Welfare Seethakka presented appointment letters to the newly appointed Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) at the Secretariat here on Friday. The Telangana State Public Service Commission (TGPSC) selected a total of 23 candidates for these positions.

During her address, the Minister extended her congratulations to all the appointees, emphasising that CDPOs play a crucial role in the Women and Child Welfare department.

"This department operates with a commitment to service and compassion. It is imperative that everyone fulfills their responsibilities with dedication. You have the opportunity to positively impact the lives of children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers up to



the age of six," she remarked.

"Anganwadi services are essential for impoverished communities, and it is your duty to help alleviate malnutrition among Anganwadi beneficiaries. You are tasked with delivering all the government services available to these beneficiaries. In alignment with the Chief Minister's vision, we aim to make Anganwadi a model for the nation," she stated.

The Minister mentioned that the state government is supplying 57 different types of

toys to Anganwadi centers and providing egg biryani twice a week.

"We are ensuring a consistent supply of milk and eggs to combat nutritional deficiencies. Additionally, we are providing uniforms for the children. It is important that everyone works with commitment. You should not restrict your efforts to the office but also engage with the community. There is no need to yield to any political influence; all should work independently," Seethakka added.

India will build a full space station in 2035: ISRO Chief

METRO INDIA NEWS | HYDERABAD

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan on Friday said that India has to nearly triple its number of satellites in space, from the current 55, within the next three years.

Delivering 'The GP Birla Memorial Lecture on Indian Space Programme - Accomplishments, Challenges and Future Perspectives', Narayanan said by 2040 India would be on par with any other nation in terms of space technology, ap-

plication area, and infrastructure.

He also said as many as 12 launch vehicle missions are planned by the ISRO this year. The upcoming mission, NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) is scheduled to be launched by India's GSLV F16 on July 30.

"Now we are working on building our own space station. We are going to have our own Chandrayaan landing. Right now, 55 satellites are in orbit serving



SKY IS THE LIMIT

- India to triple its satellites in orbit by 2040
- 12 launch vehicle missions are planned by the ISRO this year
- ISRO has placed 433 satellites belonging to 34 countries which do not have space technology into orbit using Indian rockets
- Centre approved setting up a third launch pad at Sriharikota with a budget of about Rs 4,000 cr

the common man in this country. And in another three years, this number has to be

come almost three times. The requirement is huge. The demand is so much that we have to

build satellites. We are working towards that," he said.

Later, talking to reporters, he said that in 2035 India will build a full space station, and the first module will be placed in orbit in 2028.

He said after the success of Chandrayaan-3, Japan wanted to collaborate with India, and as a result, ISRO and JAXA, the Japanese space agency, decided to work towards the Chandrayaan-5/LUPEX mission.

"We are building the satellite

together, and the launch will be done by Japan. Chandrayaan-3's lander mass was 1,600 kg and this will be 6,600 kg. We are working on that and you will hear great news in another two years," he said.

Narayanan stated that ISRO is in the process of launching a 6,500 kg communication satellite of the USA into orbit using Indian rockets, in another three months.

He further said the centre gave its approval for setting up a

third launch pad at Sriharikota with a budget of about Rs 4,000 crore.

According to him, the ISRO expects the Gaganyaan mission to launch Indian astronauts into space only in the first quarter of 2027. ISRO has placed 433 satellites belonging to 34 countries which do not have space technology into orbit using Indian rockets.

In the last ten years the total number of satellites launched by ISRO stands at 518, he added.



# Govindachamy’s daring jail escape embarrasses Govt

HD Bureau  
KOCHI

A significant lapse in security at Kannur jail has been called into question after notorious criminal Govindachamy managed to escape from his high-security cell. The incident has left jail authorities facing intense scrutiny over their failure to prevent such an audacious escape. Govindachamy, a hardcore criminal, was lodged in the high-security section of the prison when he managed to cut through the iron bars of his cell. The shocking revelation has raised serious questions about how such an action went undetected for what is believed to have been several days. It is reported that cutting through the thick iron bars would have taken at



least an hour of sustained effort, yet no guards or security personnel appeared to notice any suspicious activity. The lapse in security comes as a major blow to the jail authorities, as it is their re-

sponsibility to monitor prisoners closely, especially those considered high-risk. While some sources suggest that Govindachamy may have squeezed through the narrow space between the bars, the fact that such an

escape was possible without detection highlights the significant flaws in the prison's security systems.

Witnesses and experts are now questioning how a man who has committed serious crimes could have spent an

**Witnesses and experts are now questioning how a man who has committed serious crimes could have spent an undetected amount of time working on the iron bars**

undetected amount of time working on the iron bars. Cutting through metal bars quietly, especially in a high-security facility, would require considerable effort, tools, and time. If Govindachamy managed to accomplish this, it would imply that the prison's monitoring systems, including guards,

surveillance cameras, and other detection systems, were either ineffective or non-existent. The authorities have not yet clarified how long it took Govindachamy to cut the bars or if the escape was planned for days or weeks.

The state's prison department is under growing pressure to explain how such a breach in security could occur in one of the most guarded facilities. The escape has prompted calls for a full investigation into the state of the prison's security measures, with some demanding accountability for the officials responsible for overseeing the high-security section. If it is found that proper protocols were ignored, there could be serious consequences for those in charge.

## Four jail officials suspended

HD Bureau  
KOCHI

Four officials at Kannur Central Jail have been suspended following the escape of Govindachamy, a convict, with the authorities acknowledging lapses in security protocols. The suspended individuals include Assistant Superintendent Rijo, Deputy Prison Officer Rajeesh, and Assistant Prison Officers Sanjay and Akhil. Jail chief Balram Kumar Upadhyay confirmed the suspension and stated that the escape occurred due to a "serious lapse" on the part of the jail staff. He emphasized that

while no one is directly blamed at this moment, the escape had been meticulously planned by Govindachamy.

Govindachamy escaped at around 4:30 am, with the details of the event coming to light later than expected. The authorities confirmed that the police were notified too late, which led to delays in the search operation. Despite this, the escapee was caught soon after by the authorities, bringing some relief to the situation. Kannur Range DIG has been tasked with leading a thorough investigation into the escape, and an inquiry is underway.

## Found hiding in a well

HD Bureau  
KOCHI

Govindachamy, who had managed to flee earlier in the morning, was traced to a hiding spot inside a well in an abandoned building in Thalappu, Kannur, thanks to swift police coordination and vital public assistance. Around 6:30 a. m., the local police received urgent reports of the jailbreak. Kannur Town Police immediately spread the word to all local stations and neighbouring regions, while media outlets quickly reported the incident, raising awareness among the public. This rapid dissem-

ination of information played a crucial role in locating the fugitive. According to Nidhinraj IPS, the Kannur City Police Commissioner, three citizens alerted the police after spotting Govindachamy in the Thalappu area. "The cooperation from the public and media was instrumental in the arrest. We are grateful for their vigilance and prompt action," he stated. The tip-off from the public led the police to the remote location where Govindachamy had hidden himself in a well, trying to evade capture. After a brief search, officers apprehended him without any resistance.

## Comparisons with 2013 Ripper jailbreak

HD Bureau  
KOCHI

Thiruvananthapuram. Jayanandan, who had been convicted of multiple murders and burglaries, made a dramatic midnight escape from one of the most secure prisons in the state. His audacity in evading law enforcement for several days

led to widespread media coverage and prompted a massive manhunt. His escape highlighted significant vulnerabilities in the prison system, and it sent shockwaves through the state's criminal justice community. Govindachamy's escape mirrors many of the elements of Jayanandan's daring flight.

Both men were convicted of high-profile crimes and were believed to be highly dangerous. However, while Jayanandan had the advantage of committing his crime years before his escape, Govindachamy's crime remained fresh in the collective memory of Kerala residents. His escape further raised concerns about the

state's ability to secure high-risk inmates.

Authorities in Kannur jail have faced mounting scrutiny over how Govindachamy managed to break free from a facility that was thought to be well-fortified. The convict reportedly took advantage of a gap in the prison's routine to climb over walls and slip through a

section of the prison unnoticed. By the time prison officials realised he was missing, Govindachamy had already fled the premises. The local police, along with special task forces, launched an immediate operation to locate and apprehend him.

Experts have raised concerns about the psychological profile of inmates

like Govindachamy and Jayanandan. Both were considered dangerous due to their violent criminal backgrounds. Their escapes not only reflect potential lapses in physical security but also hint at deeper issues surrounding inmate supervision and behavioural management within the prison system.

**OBJECTION OVERRULED | The Centre had sought to keep the cases active, arguing that the matter was linked to the ongoing Presidential reference**

# SC allows Kerala to recall plea against Governor

HD Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court of India has granted the Kerala government permission to withdraw two petitions it had filed in 2023, challenging the delays by the then state Governor, Arif Mohammad Khan, in granting assent to bills passed by the State Assembly. The decision was made on Friday, as the court dismissed the Centre's request to keep the matters pending due to an ongoing Presidential reference on a similar issue. The petitions, initially filed in 2023, accused the Governor of delaying assent to key bills, raising concerns about the constitutional functioning of the state's legislative process. Kerala's legal team, led by



**The move marks a significant development in the ongoing tensions between the state government and the Governor**

Senior Advocate KK Venugopal, asserted that the petitions were no longer necessary and made it clear that the state wished to wi-

thdraw them entirely. "I am not relying upon anything. I am withdrawing it," Venugopal stated during the proceedings.

The Centre had sought to keep the cases active, arguing that the matter was linked to the ongoing Presidential reference. However, the Supreme Court bench, comprising Justices PS Narasimha and AS Chandurkar, ruled in favour of Kerala, overriding the central government's stance. The request to continue the case was based on the Centre's claim that it would have implications on the larger constitutional debate concerning the role of governors in state matters.

The bench noted that it was not convinced by the Centre's argument, emphasising that the withdrawal of the petitions should be respected. The move marks a significant development in the ongoing tensions be-

tween the state government and the Governor, especially regarding the controversial delays in assenting to bills. This ruling could have broader implications for future governance disputes, particularly in states where similar issues regarding the power of governors have arisen.

Kerala's stance in this matter highlights the tension between the state and the Centre, particularly concerning the role of the Governor. It raises questions about the autonomy of state legislatures and the authority of the executive branch in handling legislative matters. The state's withdrawal comes after a protracted legal battle over the Governor's exercise of discretion.

## Samastha accepts new school timings

HD Bureau  
KOCHI

The decision to adjust school timings in Kerala will remain in place, as confirmed by Education Minister V Sivankutty following discussions with the state's school managements.

The move, which has sparked debates across various educational circles, has received backing from the majority of school organizations, the minister stated.

In a statement, Sivankutty outlined that despite some reservations, most educational institutions have expressed their support for the revised schedules, which are set to continue as initially planned. This comes after several rounds of talks between the government and representatives of private and public school managements.

The new school timings were introduced as part of



an effort to streamline educational activities and reduce the strain on students and staff. Under the new system, schools will start and finish earlier than before, with a particular emphasis on creating a balanced environment for both learning and extracurricular activities. Sivankutty reiterated that the decision

was made with the well-being of students in mind, and the government is determined to see it through.

While the minister's statements suggest broad acceptance, some concerns have been raised about the potential impact on working parents, particularly those whose children rely on after-school care.

## Kairali AI Chip makers reject allegations

HD Bureau  
KOCHI

The developers behind Kerala's first silicon-proven AI chip have responded to allegations of transparency issues and misuse of public funds, asserting that the Kairali AI Chip is an academic research project, not a commercial product. This response follows concerns raised by the Save University Campaign Committee regarding the project's development process. The Kairali AI Chip, developed at Digital University Kerala, was created as part of an initiative involving Master's and PhD students. The project's first prototype was designed and developed by these students, with validation through multiple reviews under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's Chip to Startup programme. The university's development team, led by academic re-



searchers, pointed out that the project's primary goal is to contribute to the field of artificial intelligence and semiconductor research, rather than generating immediate commercial returns.

Kairali's creators have strongly refuted the allegations, which accuse the university of lacking transparency in the development process. They argue that the project was subjected to rigorous evaluations and that the design and testing phases were carried out with the oversight of government experts.

HD Bureau  
KOCHI

A unique Polish beer brand named after the spirit of Kerala is set to debut in the state. 'Malayali' beer, the flagship product of Hexagon Spirits International, a beverage startup founded by Palakkad natives Chandramohan Nalloor and Sargeev Sukumaran, is making its way to Kerala. Initially available at the Kochi airport's duty-free shop, the beer's Indian launch is part of a broader international expansion. Launched in 2022, the Malayali beer series has quickly found a foothold in 17 countries within just two years, with India being its latest market. Following its Kerala launch, the brand will also make its way to Oman, with ambitious plans targeting a turnover of 3.3 million euros for the current year. The journey from

**The inspiration for the brand's name came from an unexpected moment during the Indian Government's Operation Ganga, a mission aimed at rescuing citizens stranded in Ukraine during the crisis**

Poland to Kerala has been unconventional, yet the brand has attracted attention with its unique backstory.

The genesis of the beer is rooted in an unexpected twist of fate. Chandramohan, formerly the Business Relationship Director at the Indo-Polish Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Sargeev, a startup



mentor and designer with Samsung, had never considered entering the alcohol industry. Their path was originally focused on rice flakes, with a shipment of five tonnes

from Varanasi on the way to the port in Hamburg. However, when the Russia-Ukraine war erupted, a currency crisis followed, rendering the shipment unusable. Faced with this

dilemma, the duo came up with an inventive solution: brewing beer using rice flakes, a twist that would ultimately give birth to the 'Malayali' beer. The inspiration for the brand's

name came from an unexpected moment during the Indian Government's Operation Ganga, a mission aimed at rescuing citizens stranded in Ukraine during the crisis.

While observing the operation, the founders noticed that a significant number of volunteers involved in the mission were Malayalis.

This recognition of the ever-present, resilient spirit of Malayalis sparked the idea to name their beer after them, symbolising a bridge between two cultures—Poland and Kerala.

What began as an innovative response to a logistical setback is now evolving into an international brand. The Malayali beer series, known for its rice-based brewing method, sets itself apart in a crowded market with its distinct flavour.

offgrid

## A Polish beer brand ‘Malayali’ set to fizz





**The Free Press Journal**  
Founder Editor: S Sadanand

## Indian gains from CETA

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between India and the UK is a significant augury for the former, as it is the first comprehensive bilateral trade agreement that has been signed with a P5 country. This agreement could serve as a template for two significant agreements that India would sign in the very near future with the EU and the US. The Indian side is celebrating the CETA, for it provides duty-free access to 99% of the country's exports to the UK, including labour-intensive sectors that would provide a fillip to the 'Make in India' initiative. There are expectations that major industries, such as textiles, marine products, leather, etc., would be able to export more to the UK. Fast-growing sectors like engineering goods, auto components, and organic chemicals would also benefit, according to India's assessment. At the same time, India has made a significant concession by opening its market for passenger vehicles. However, imports from the UK would be regulated through quotas, beginning with 20,000 vehicles in the first year of implementation, going up to 37,000 in the fifth year.

India should be mindful of the fact that the projected benefits would materialise only if its businesses can overcome a range of product-process standards that are in place in the UK. Two additional standards are set to be introduced through the CETA, namely labour and environmental standards. The agreement makes it mandatory for India to enforce internationally recognised labour rights.

*The agreement makes it mandatory for India to enforce internationally recognised labour rights.*

The Agreement is expected to enhance mobility for Indian professionals by simplifying access for contractual service providers, business visitors, and independent professionals. The Double Contribution Convention (DCC) would exempt Indian workers and their employers from paying social security contributions in the UK for three years, which should boost competitiveness and earnings. It's a no-brainer that the DCC would have been more helpful if the exemptions were available for a longer period. The UK govt has obvious reasons to feel elated since its businesses and workers can have preferential access to the world's fourth-largest economy. The economic gains arising from the CETA could put the UK's economy on a sustainable growth path. The UK's Department of Business and Trade has estimated that UK-India bilateral trade would increase by nearly 39% in the long run, equivalent to £25.5 billion a year, and 60% of this increase would accrue to the UK. India's businesses need to take urgent steps to ensure that this imbalance in the gains from CETA is narrowed.

## Idol immersion the HC way

By laying down, on Thursday, that all Ganapati idols made of Plaster of Paris (PoP) and less than six feet in height would have to be "necessarily" and "mandatorily" immersed in artificial water bodies across Maharashtra, the Bombay High Court has pushed both the Maharashtra government and millions of devotees to be more mindful of environmental concerns around the upcoming Ganeshotsav, the ten-day public celebration of the elephant-headed God that is a part of the state's socio-religious tradition and culture. Only PoP idols higher than six feet are now permitted to be immersed in natural water bodies, mainly rivers and sea fronts. The state government, led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, will now have to amend its guidelines issued on July 21 on this subject.

The HC had, last month, lifted a ban on the manufacture and sale of idols made of PoP, which makes this week's order significant. This issue has been hanging fire, with many stakeholders arguing their interests on a PIL filed against the immersion of PoP idols in natural water sources, which relied on the guidelines of the Central Pollution Control Board that broadly ban this practice. Expectedly, Ganapati idol makers, the large majority of whom craft them in PoP, had pleaded their side of the argument, as did the Fadnavis government, which has been caught between two stools. It cannot afford to hurt the sentiments of millions of Ganapati devotees or jeopardise the Ganeshotsav celebrations that mean thousands of crores to the economy, but it is obliged to uphold the law and rules on maintaining environmental standards. This has become an issue mainly because devotees prefer idols crafted with PoP to the fragile traditional clay, called shadu in Marathi, for its sturdiness in transporting, decoration, and the use of colour. Large idols are almost always made with PoP. However, the material cannot be disposed of in any natural water body without it causing immense damage to the water and the marine ecology in it. The PoP is non-biodegradable, and idols crafted in this material take weeks, sometimes months, to decompose. Besides, the chemically toxic paints used on such idols have heavy metals like mercury and lead, which are hazardous to the aquatic life. Large-scale water contamination due to the immersion of thousands of such idols raises pollution concerns for the water bodies, soil, groundwater, and aquatic life. Environmentalists have repeatedly warned about the pollution and demanded a cap on the size and number of such idols. However, going back to the traditional clay also presents an ecological challenge in itself, given the demand for idols in the tens of thousands and the consequent extraction of the earth. The matter is likely to linger. However, for this year, the HC's direction is clear: worship and celebrate, but not at the cost of natural water bodies.



**Head On**

RASHME SEHGAL

Women studying in our colleges and universities are largely bereft of support and guidance. At a time when they are most in need of assistance, finding themselves trapped in sexually exploitative situations, they receive little help or counselling.

Seventy-six years after independence, sex continues to remain a taboo subject within our families. The result is that when young women are subject to sexual abuse, they end up having to pay a terrible price in order to preserve what they believe is their identity within our patriarchal culture. How else can we explain this spate of suicides amongst our women students? A case that received international focus was that of the 20-year-old B.Ed. student from Fakir Mohan Autonomous College in the infamous town of Balasore in Odisha. Infamous, because just two years before, Balasore was home to a major train tragedy in which over 300 people lost their lives.

This young woman was the first member of her family to join an institute of higher studies. Unfortunately, the head of the education department at the institute, Asst. Prof. Sameer Ranjan Sahoo, sought her out, demanding sexual favours and threatening her with academic

failure if she declined.

Showing extraordinary courage, she made several online complaints to the authorities and also to the Internal Complaints Committee in her college, who recommended that Sahoo be suspended for a brief period of six months. This recommendation was overruled by the principal of the college.

It is common practice that those in authority support one another, and the college principal chose to side with Sahoo, insisting she withdraw her written complaint and apologise to Sahoo. The girl's parents' FIR against the principal and Sahoo states that the former even went to the extent of warning her that if she did not withdraw her complaint, she would be unable to face anyone in this world and would be driven to suicide. That is hardly the kind of advice expected to be given to a victim of abuse by anyone in authority.

Shortly after this interaction, the FIR states, she doused herself with petrol and immolated herself. Having suffered 95 per cent burns, she was rushed to a district headquarters hospital in Balasore, and subsequently, as her condition worsened, she was taken to AIIMS hospital in Bhubaneswar, where she died on July 15. Both the principal and Sahoo have been arrested, but punitive measures alone are not

going to solve the problem of sexual harassment. Seeing the wave of protests across the state, the Odisha government hastily directed all higher education institutions to constitute Internal Complaints Committees under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, and also ensure they become active.

Dr. Ranjana Kumari, director of the Centre for Social Research, points out that she is a member of 39 such ICCs that have been set up in both government and private organisations. "They seldom meet, and even when they do, their attitude is one of complete non-seriousness," said Kumari.

Sociologists believe that the majority of sexual harassment cases within our campuses go unreported. This reflects a complete asymmetry of power between the professor and the student because the establishment tends to more often than not protect the perpetrator of the crime.

The Balasore suicide is not an isolated event. A 17-year-old student in the first year of a diploma course in an engineering college in Vishakapatnam ended her life because she was facing sexual harassment by faculty members of her college. This happened on March 28, 2024. There are innumerable similar examples

of women ending their lives in this tragic manner. These are not stray incidents, as the government would like us to believe. Data collected by the UGC between April 1, 2016, and March 31, 2017, emphasises how 103 women students admitted they had been sexually harassed on their respective campuses, with UP heading the list. One in every four cases of sexual harassment in India's universities comes from Uttar Pradesh.

The UGC's own data shows a rising graph in such crimes. In 2022-23, 400 sexual harassment cases were reported across our campuses. Unless there is a high-profile case, most tend to get brushed under the carpet. Nor do these complaints translate into FIRs.

Dr. Pulkit Sharma, a psychologist who works in the area of sexual abuse, feels that our society is backtracking on the gains made by the feminist movement of the seventies and eighties. "The voice of feminism is being extinguished in our society, and instead, we are witnessing the rise of the alpha-type male whose attitude towards women is extremely demeaning," Sharma observed.

The other problem is the lack of dialogue within our families. Victims need non-judgemental and sensitive support. Many of them are not able to discuss this issue with their parents or sometimes even

close friends. Schools and colleges are not providing students with the kind of supportive environment necessary to end this menace.

The recent murder of young tennis player Radhika Yadav by her father in Gurgaon reflects the distrust and suspicion that existed between an over-dominating father who did not want his daughter to lead an independent life. In the Balasore suicide case, the father admitted that his daughter did give some hints about something being amiss but did not elaborate on the details. A large number of universities and colleges have been kick-started by politicians and bureaucrats, who look upon these centres of learning as 'money-making machines'.

A loss of reputation is the last thing they want to contend with, and they are willing to go to any lengths to ensure it remains intact. We need to make gender sensitisation programmes mandatory and also ensure greater psychosocial support to ensure a cultural transformation takes place to challenge these deep-rooted social prejudices. Only then will we be able to address preventable tragedies such as the death of this young woman from Balasore.

Rashme Sehgal is an author and an independent journalist.



**South By Southeast**

PATRALEKHA CHATTERJEE

Trade talks between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a dynamic block of 10 economies with over 650 million people and a \$3.8 trillion market, may be strained, with India reportedly facing a \$45.2 billion deficit, but the broader relationship is quietly flourishing in unexpected ways. There is something deeper at work.

Take Buddhist diplomacy, for starters. India, as the birthplace of the Buddha, holds spiritual weight that few others can match. In 2024, sacred relics of Lord Buddha and his disciples Sariputra and Moggallana were sent to Thailand, where more than a million devotees gathered at Bangkok's historic Sanam Luang to pay their respects. I happened to be walking near Sanam Luang during the time—not as a Buddhist pilgrim, but simply an observer. The scene was nothing short of moving. I am an agnostic. That afternoon, I bought a white lotus, sacred to Buddhists.

The relics were displayed in Thailand for 26 days, visiting four cities—Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchathani, and Krabi, besides Bangkok, before being returned to India. These cultural exchanges speak to a growing relationship built not just on policy,

but mutual respect and heritage. It is not a new idea. Way back in 1952, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, India hosted the International Buddhist Conference in Sanchi, with over 3,000 monks and historians attending—one of the largest gatherings of Buddhist followers at the time. Since then, India's Buddhist outreach has expanded through temple restorations across Asia, relic tours, and the development of the international Buddhist Circuit.

The idea of reviving Nalanda University—once a prominent centre of Buddhist scholarship and pan-Asian learning—in 2006, is part of a broader initiative to position India as a contemporary steward of its ancient cultural and intellectual heritage. The Narendra Modi government has actively leveraged Buddhism as a key aspect of India's diplomatic outreach.

Cultural diplomacy is not the only front where India is gaining traction in Southeast Asia. A 2022 essay by scholars Melinda Martinus and Laura Lee for the ISEAS—Yusuf Ishak Institute, a leading Singapore-based think tank, highlighted how Indian ingenuity can offer real solutions to ASEAN's developmental challenges. "One such innovation is the rubber-based prosthetic Jaipur Foot, which helps millions of people with dis-

abilities worldwide. Others include the low-cost Mitticool Refrigerator, which cools food without electricity, and a solar-powered 'e-rickshaw', which can help the transportation industry to decarbonise. Demand for these frugal innovations is likely to be strong in the ASEAN region, especially in the least-developed member states, where many of the citizens cannot afford to acquire high-cost technologies or live below the poverty line," say the authors.

There is also the tech story—India's digital ecosystem, once seen as purely domestic, is going global. Singapore was the first ASEAN country to fully operationalise the use of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI), launching its cross-border linkage with PayNow in 2023 and the game-changing digital payments platform, which is expanding into other ASEAN countries. Add to that the human connections. Southeast Asia has become one of the hottest travel zones for young Indians. Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia were all top destinations in 2023, and by 2024.

Thailand alone welcomed over two million Indian visitors. The booming Indian wedding and honeymoon market—estimated at over \$130 billion—has turned parts of ASEAN into luxury hubs for multi-day celebrations, complete

with vegetarian menus, Bollywood playlists, and elaborate rituals.

This steady stream of Indian travellers and professionals is shaping how Southeast Asia sees India, with its fire and its flaws.

Of course, challenges remain. China looms large as a competitor—both in trade and in the Buddhist diplomacy space—often leveraging its own relics and hosting spiritual forums to build regional influence. In December 2024, Chinese relics drew crowds at Sanam Luang, offering a reminder that India is not the only player in this arena. Plus, trade tensions between India and ASEAN are not going away anytime soon. The free trade pact signed in 2010 is under review, with whispers of India rethinking its commitment due to tariff imbalances and market access concerns.

While political and trade negotiations may hit roadblocks, this quieter counter-narrative—of pilgrims, innovators, tech users, and wanderers—needs to be recognised more. It may not fix every trade rift or tension, but it creates fertile ground for deeper cooperation and shared purpose, provided both parties are willing to learn from each other.

India and ASEAN also share vulnerabilities. Like border disputes. As I write, a flare-up between Thailand

and Cambodia is making headlines, reminding us that even familiar neighbours can fall out. India may not be directly involved, but any roadmap for closer cooperation must account for the fragility in the neighbourhood. Myanmar, too, remains a source of regional instability, with its internal conflict spilling across borders.

How can India and ASEAN forge deeper collaboration ahead? "Projecting soft power is critical for enhancing partnerships, especially where mutual trust remains low," say Martinus and Lee.

Trust is not built inside negotiation rooms and conference halls alone. It grows in temples, homes, markets, and everyday interactions. During my travels across Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia, I have seen firsthand how relationships flourish when basic needs like sanitation and safety are prioritised—and when cultural empathy flows both ways.

India has the stories, the spirit, and the substance. It needs to use them—not just to negotiate, but to connect.

Patralekha Chatterjee is a writer and columnist who spends her time in South and Southeast Asia, and looks at modern-day connects between the two adjacent regions. X: @Patralekha2011

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### The China threat

China's construction of the colossal Motou Hydro-electric Power Station on the Brahmaputra in Tibet poses a grave geopolitical threat to India. Costing \$160 billion, with five power stations, it dwarfs the world's largest dam and is slated for completion by 2030. With 98,000 dams and reservoirs already under its control, China aims to weaponise water, giving itself a strategic chokehold over India. Economies downstream, especially India's northeast, are at risk of catastrophic disruption, even the potential of a 'water bomb' scenario. India has firmly demanded transparency but cannot rely on China's assurances.

R.S. Narula, Patiala

#### Criminal silence

The Gaza siege has now crossed over 21 months, and the situation continues to worsen daily. On one hand, Israel obstructs delivery of aid to the be-

sieged Palestinians' enclave, and on the other, it indulges in high-handedness when the commodities make their way to the starved Gazans. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu is in no hurry to end the Gaza conflict, as it enables him to remain in power and delay legal proceedings against him. The silence or hesitation of powerful nations is complicity by default.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

#### A sad state of affairs

The suite in Apollo Hospital, where Chief Minister Stalin is undergoing treatment, is understood to have been converted into a veritable CMO, with complete video-conferencing facilities, Zoom call accessories, a laptop setup, Wi-Fi, and a wall-mounted TV, not to speak of prompt medical attention. As opposed to this, there is a severe shortage of medical equipment and staff in government hospi-

#### Fraud of the year

When it comes to fakes, there is no competition with the Indians. Fake doctors and police and godmen are old hat. We have fake police stations, bank branches, and the like. But the antics of a certain Harshvardhan Jain really take the cake for running a fake embassy of a non-existent nation. How alert the police and other law-enforcing authorities are can be gauged from the fact that it needed a tip-off to the STF to take note of such a gigantic fraud being carried out in full public view.

Anthony Henriques, Mumbai

As long as our leaders patronise five-star hospitals for their own treatment and leave the government-run facilities for the common man, the sad state of affairs will continue.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

#### An ideal teacher

This shocking incident from a Dehradun coaching centre, where a student from Meghalaya was

forced to do 400 sit-ups just for talking in class, highlights a troubling misuse of discipline. Education is not about fear and punishment; it is about nurturing minds with empathy, wisdom, and guidance. Such extreme actions can damage a student's confidence, mental well-being, and trust in the learning system. Teachers must act not as punishers, but as mentors

who correct with compassion and inspire with understanding.

Asad Damrubar

#### English triumphs

The MP state school department will now teach English to English teachers in government schools, as they are not proficient in the language. They will, in turn, teach students. This is indeed a positive step that should



have been taken decades ago. As the aphorism goes: It is better to learn late than never. In the years to come, students will not have to depend upon dubious English tutorials that charge an exorbitant sum for teaching English.

Avinash Godbole, MP

#### SIR needed

Though the Opposition is united in protesting against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, the Election Commission reports that over a lakh of voters remain untraceable during this process, which is a serious concern. Moreover, the EC has confirmed that 7.17 crores of forms have been received and digitised. Hence, the EC seems to be on the right track in unearthing malpractices to boost the vote shares of certain parties in the state. Maybe the timing is wrong.

Capt. N. Viswanathan, Coimbatore



Briefs

US rapper GloRilla held

The American rapper GloRilla, Gloria Hallelujah Woods, was arrested on felony drug charges the night before her performance at the

WNBA all-star game, after police responded to a report of a burglary at her home in Atlanta on Saturday. Woods was in Indianapolis to perform at the WNBA all-star game. Three robbers entered her home, and were deterred when an unidentified person fired at them. The burglars fled. Deputies smelled marijuana and called a drug taskforce, who found a "significant amount of marijuana" in a bedroom closet.

Migrant boat sinks, 15 dead

A migrant boat capsized early on Friday off the coast of Libya, leaving at least 15 Egyptians dead, Libyan officials said. The boat was bound for Europe and was carrying dozens when it capsized at 2 am near Tobruk. All those known to have died were Egyptian nationals. The crews were able to rescue 2 Sudanese crew members.

Docs in UK on 5-day strike

Thousands of doctors in England's state-funded health system walked off the job on Friday in a 5-day strike over pay that the government says will hit care for patients. Resident doctors, those early in their careers who form the backbone of hospital and clinic care, took to picket lines near hospitals after talks with govt broke down.

Sri Lanka to offer free visa

Sri Lanka will extend free tourist visa policy to 40 countries to boost tourism and sustain economic recovery, Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath said. The move comes after cabinet approval last week to expand the current list of 7 eligible countries to 40. The Free Visa regime has been in place for China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Thailand, Malaysia and Japan since March 2023. The UK, the US, Canada, Pakistan, Iran, the UAE and Australia are among the 40 new nations.

Plane crashes on road, 2 die

A small aircraft crashed onto a highway in Brescia, Italy, on Tuesday, resulting in the deaths of lawyer and pilot Sergio Ravaglia, 75, from Milan and his partner, Ann Maria De Stefano, 60.

CONCERNED | 14 lawmakers, including 3 Indian-Americans, tell Rubio students contribute \$9 billion yearly to economy

Fix Indian student visa delays: US Reps

Washington: A bipartisan group of 14 US House of Representatives, including 3 Indian-American Democrats, has urged the State Department to address delays in student visa appointments affecting Indian students seeking to study in the US, 'India Today' reported.

The lawmakers, led by Congresswoman Deborah Ross, sent a letter as the new academic session approaches across American universities. They emphasised Indian students contribute approximately \$9 billion (approximately ₹77,787 crore) annually to the US economy and play a vital role in advancing research and innovation.

The letter, signed by Representatives Pramila Jayapal, Shri Thanedar, and Raja Krishnamoorthi, to US Secretary of State Mark Rubio, stated the lawmakers expressed concern over



reports from constituent universities about Indian students being unable to obtain visas to begin or continue their education in the US.

They highlighted Indian students form the largest group of international students in the country. The lawmakers emphasised the their importance in maintaining the nation's competitiveness in science and research.

"As members of Congress who represent research universities, we are concerned by reports from our constituent

universities about Indian students who have been unable to obtain visas to continue their education in the US," the lawmakers wrote, according to a statement shared by Congresswoman Ross.

"Indian students form the largest group of international students in the US and contribute \$9 billion annually to the US economy. We have seen first-hand how their contributions to science and research keep our nation competitive. We are dismayed at the possibility that many of

these bright young individuals may be blocked from continuing their education and research in the US," it reads.

The letter concluded by underscoring the vital role of research universities in the national economy and the significance of educational exchange in promoting US-India cooperation on the global stage. "Indian students take part in this work in every field of study. Moreover, as we seek to promote US-India cooperation on the global stage, educational exchange is vital to encouraging collaboration between our nations," it said.

Congresswoman Ross was joined by Representatives Pramila Jayapal, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Jim Costa, Zoe Lofgren, Stephen Lynch, Tom Suozzi, Shri Thanedar, Dina Titus, Hank Johnson, Marc Veasey, Bonnie Watson Coleman, Don Bacon, Eric Swalwell, and Brad Sherman.

Report: Clinton sent birthday note to Epstein

Agencies WASHINGTON

Donald Trump apparently isn't the only US president who sent a birthday letter to Jeffrey Epstein. "The biggest name in the album" was Bill Clinton, the 'Wall Street Journal' reported. The president's letter appeared alongside 50 others, including celebrities and executives.

The paper had reported Trump had authored a "bawdy" letter to Epstein. The letter was included in an album Epstein's former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell compiled on his 50th birthday in 2003. Trump has sued Rupert Murdoch, 2 WSJ reporters and the newspaper's publisher Dow Jones for libel and slander over the reporting.

As per WSJ, Clinton's note to Epstein read: "It's reassuring isn't it, to have lasted as long, across all the years of learning and knowing, adventures and (illegible word), and also to have your child-like curiosity, the drive to make a difference and the solace of friends." A Clinton spokesperson declined to comment, instead referring the paper to a previous statement from the ex-president, saying he had cut ties with Epstein more than a decade before his arrest and was not aware of Epstein's crimes.

Thai-Cambodia conflict flares, thousands flee

Agencies SURIN (THAILAND)

Thailand and Cambodia exchanged heavy artillery fire for a second day on Friday as their worst fighting in over a decade intensified and spread to new areas, despite international calls for a ceasefire.

At least 16 people have been killed and tens of thousands displaced in the escalating border battle.

Both sides have blamed each other for starting the conflict and on Friday ratcheted up the rhetoric, with Thailand accusing Cambodia of deliberately targeting civilians and Cambodia alleging Thailand was using cluster munitions, a controversial and widely condemned ordnance.

Thailand's acting PM Phumtham Wechayachai said Cambodia had launched attacks on multiple fronts and Thailand was defending its territory. "The situation involves acts of intrusion and aggression causing harm to people's lives. The situation has intensified and could escalate into a state of war. At present, it's a confrontation involving heavy weapons," he said. Thailand declared martial law in affected border provinces.

Fighting re-erupted before dawn, with clashes reported in 12 locations, up from six on Thursday, as per Thailand's



People rest at a shelter in Thailand's Surin

military, which accused Cambodia of using artillery and Russian-made BM-21 rocket systems to target areas, including schools and hospitals.

TEMPORARY SHELTERS

The Thai health ministry said over 58,000 have fled villages to temporary shelters in 4 affected border provinces, while Cambodia said over 4,000 people have evacuated.

NO MEDIATION

As fighting along the disputed border continued unabated, Thai officials favoured bilateral negotiations over third-party mediation to resolve the military conflict.

The US, China and Malaysia, which is the current chair of the Asean regional bloc, have offered to facilitate dialogue but Bangkok is seeking

India's advisory: Shun 7 provinces

The Indian embassy in Thailand issued an advisory urging Indian nationals to avoid travel to 7 provinces amid escalating violence. "In view of the situation near the Thailand-Cambodia border, all Indian travellers to Thailand are advised to check updates from Thai official sources, including the Tourism Authority of Thailand newsroom," it said. The provinces are Ubol, Ratchathani, Surin, Sisaket, Buriram, Sa Kaeo, Chanthaburi and Trat.

a bilateral solution to the conflict, Thai foreign ministry spokesperson Nikorndej Balanakra said, adding, "I do not think we need any mediation from a third country yet."

DOJ sues NYC over immigration policies

Washington: The US Department of Justice (DOJ) has filed a lawsuit against New York City, its Mayor Eric Adams, and other city officials to challenge the city's sanctuary policies, accusing the city of interfering with enforcing the administration's immigration laws.

"New York City has released thousands of criminals on the streets to commit violent crimes against law-abiding citizens due to sanctuary city policies," US Attorney General Pamela Bondi said on Thursday. "For too long, NYC has been at the vanguard of interfering with enforcing our immigration laws," Assistant Attorney General Brett Shumate said. "Its efforts to thwart federal immigration enforcement end now."

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and border czar Tom Homan were furious after the off-duty officer was shot, Xinhua news agency reported.

Homan promised to "flood the zone" with immigration agents to go after undocumented immigrants,

especially those with a history of violence. "Sanctuary cities are sanctuaries for criminals, hard stop," Homan said.

The case was filed in the Eastern District of New York. In the past three months, the DOJ has filed lawsuits against Los Angeles, New York State, Colorado, Illinois, the city of Rochester, New York and several New Jersey cities to "invalidate unconstitutional sanctuary policies".

The Trump administration's immigration policies sparked significant backlash across the nation, particularly in states or cities governed by Democrats or widely considered "blue".

Homan expressed his irritation with sanctuary cities, especially New York, at the White House on Thursday, just hours before the Justice Department sued Mayor Eric Adams, City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch and others for making it more difficult for immigration agents to arrest undocumented immigrants who commit crimes. -IANS



Protect Chinese in Pakistan: Beijing to Munir

PTI BEIJING/ISLAMABAD

On his first visit to Beijing after his elevation as Field Marshal, Pakistan's Army chief Asim Munir held talks with top Chinese leaders on Friday on deepening bilateral ties across different sectors.

Munir held separate meetings with Vice-President Han Zheng, top military official General Zhang Youxia and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Zhang hoped Pakistan would take necessary steps to ensure the safety of Chinese officials, projects, and institutions in Pakistan. Munir assured him of Islamabad's efforts to combat terror and protect the "Chinese friends".

Beijing is concerned over recurring deadly attacks by militant groups, including the Balochistan Liberation Army, targeting Chinese nationals working on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. In their talks with Munir, the "Chinese leadership lauded the Pakistan Armed Forces as a cornerstone of resilience and a vital contributor to peace in South Asia," a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations, the media wing of the Pakistan military, said.

Actor Bruce Willis's health worsens

Hollywood icon Bruce Willis, 70, is deteriorating rapidly, as reported by 'The Express'. The American actor known for his roles in 'Die Hard', 'Pulp Fiction', and 'The Sixth Sense' has been facing health challenges in recent years.

He is said to have become largely non-verbal and is reportedly experiencing motor difficulties, though no specific details about his mobility have been confirmed by his family in recent months. His family said in March 2022 he was diagnosed of aphasia, a neurological condition that affects ability to communicate. In Feb 2023, his diagnosis was updated to frontotemporal dementia, a progressive brain disorder that impacts behaviour.

Trump takes time out to open Scottish golf course



South Park creators issue 'apology' to Trump as WH rages about new episode

The creators of South Park, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, have issued a sarcastic apology to US President Donald Trump after he was left "seething" over a cartoon showing him in bed with the devil. Known for its subversive content, the animated comedy series began its 27th season on Wednesday (July 23), days after signing a \$1.5 billion deal with Paramount. An episode called "Sermon of the Mount" showed a cartoon Trump - with a real photo of his face - cuddling in bed with the figure of Satan, who comments on the size of his manhood. The episode also takes aim at Trump's recent lawsuits, including his legal battle with Paramount over the editing of an interview with Kamala Harris, which saw the US president receive \$16m in a controversial settlement. An administration source told Deadline Trump had been left "seething over the childish attack". "This show hasn't been relevant for over 20 years and is hanging on by a thread with uninspired ideas in a desperate attempt for attention," White House assistant press secretary Taylor Rogers stated. "We're terribly sorry," Parker said in a deadpan tone, while appearing at the Comic-Con Comedy Central Animation panel on Thursday, as per Deadline.

perty developer Fred Trump.

Their son's return to Scotland for 4 days this summer comes ahead of a state visit in September when the president and First Lady Melania Trump will be hosted by King Charles at Windsor Castle in Berkshire.

Trump is not scheduled to see the King on this visit but it

is not entirely private either as he will meet Scotland's First Minister John Swinney as well as the prime minister.

Business leaders, including Scotch whisky producers, are urging Starmer and Swinney to use their meetings with Trump to lobby for a reduction in US taxes on imports, known as tariffs.

Brazil to join South Africa's ICJ 'genocide' case against Israel

Brazil has said it will move the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to intervene in a case, alleging Israel is committing "genocide" in Gaza, as non-Western countries step up calls for greater pressure.

The Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it was in the "final stages" of submitting a formal intervention to the ICJ regarding the case, originally brought by South Africa. "The international community cannot remain inactive in the face of ongoing atrocities," the Foreign Ministry said.

Jazz legend Mangione dies

Agencies NEW YORK

Chuck Mangione, the jazz flugelhornist and trumpeter best known for his 1977 hit "Feels So Good," has passed away at the age of 84.

He died peacefully in his sleep at his Rochester, New York, home on Tuesday, his family said.

Born in Rochester on November 29, 1940, Mangione began his musical journey alongside his brother, Gap, through their group The Jazz Brothers.



Over six decades, he released more than 30 albums, earning 14 Grammy nominations and winning two: Best Instrumental Composition for "Bellavia" and Best Pop Instrumental

Performance for "Children of Sanchez." Mangione's biggest hit, "Feels So Good," became one of the most successful jazz records ever produced. The track also found its way into pop culture.

Mangione also composed music for two Winter Olympics. His song "Chase the Clouds Away" featured in the 1976 Games, and he performed "Give It All You Got" at the 1980 Lake Placid closing ceremony.

In 2012, he was inducted into the Rochester Music Hall of Fame.

HR executive caught on Coldplay kiss cam quits



AP LONDON

The female executive who was caught on camera embracing the CEO of her company at a Coldplay concert in a moment that went viral has resigned, according

to news reports.

Multiple news outlets reported Kristin Cabot, the executive in charge of human resources at tech company Astronomer, has resigned.

Her departure follows the resignation of CEO Andy Byron, who quit after the company said he was being put on leave pending an investigation. The episode resulted in endless memes, parody videos and screenshots of the pair's shocked faces filling social media feeds.



From L: Sit Taing Aung, Jonathan Myo Kyaw Thuang, Tin Latt Min and Aung Hlaing Oo

Myanmar junta's Don praise brings reward

Washington: The US has lifted sanctions on allies of Myanmar's military junta, drawing criticism from rights groups and raising questions about a possible shift in Washington's policy towards the Southeast Asian nation.

The Treasury Department said it was removing 4 individuals and companies from its sanctions list. These are KT Services & Logistics and its founder Jonathan Myo Kyaw Thuang; the MCM Group and its owner Aung Hlaing Oo; Suntac Technologies and its owner Sit Taing Aung; and another individual, Tin Latt Min. All had been sanctioned for their ties to Myanmar's

military regime, which seized power in a coup in 2021.

KT Services & Logistics and Jonathan Myo Kyaw Thuang were first sanctioned in Jan 2022 under Biden administration to mark the first anniversary of the military coup. The move came 2 weeks after Myanmar's top general Min Aung Hlaing praised Trump in a letter, urging him to lift sanctions and reduce a planned tariff hike. In the letter about 40% tariff, Min Aung Hlaing asked for a lower rate of 10% to 20%, and offered to send a negotiating team to DC and proposed Myanmar would cut tariffs on US imports to between 0 and 10%.



Briefs

CHANGZHOU (CHINA)

Hooda bows out of China Open



India's rising badminton star **Unnati Hooda's** dream run ended at the China Open Super 1000 as she lost to world number 4 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in straight games in the quarterfinals here on Friday. The 17-year-old, who scripted her biggest career win against 'idol' and two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu, lost 16-21, 12-21 in a match that lasted 33 minutes. With Hooda's exit, India's singles campaign in the tournament came to an end. In the opening game, Hooda kept pace with Yamaguchi early on but failed to sustain the momentum, with the Japanese star reeling off five consecutive points at one stage to take it 21-16. Hooda's best run was taking three points in a row. The second game followed a similar script. Despite a brief fightback Hooda fell behind.

MUMBAI

Warriorz appoint Nayar as head coach



Former India assistant coach **Abhishek Nayar** was on Friday named as the head coach of the Women's Premier League (WPL) franchise UP Warriorz ahead of the fourth season of the competition. Nayar, who was removed as the Indian men's team assistant coach recently, less than a year into the job, joins UPW after the franchise parted ways with Jon Lewis, who had been in charge of the team for the last three seasons. This isn't Nayar's first association with the Warriorz as he also helped them during the team's off-season training camps in Bengaluru after the first edition of the league.

LIVERPOOL

Frimpong excited to be at Liverpool



Ahead of the Premier League 2025-26 season, **Jeremie Frimpong** reflected on his move to Liverpool. The Dutch full-back spoke about how smoothly the transfer came together, shared his ambitions for the years ahead at Anfield, and delivered a message of gratitude and commitment to the Liverpool supporters. Speaking exclusively on JioHotstar, Jeremie Frimpong expressed his pride after signing for Liverpool. "Thank you. It is an honour to be here at Liverpool. My family and my partner are very excited for me. I'm truly grateful and looking forward to what lies ahead. It all happened quite smoothly. When Liverpool showed interest, for me it was a no-brainer."



Rishabh Pant arrives to bat on day two of the fourth Test. PTI

54  
Pant's effort despite the toe-fracture

Manjrekar states India were cheated by weather gods

Former India cricketer felt the pitch eased up and skies cleared

IAN S

NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar while analysing the change in pitch dynamics on Day 2 of the fourth Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy and stated that India were "bit hard done by the weather gods" as the "pitch eased up and the skies cleared" during England innings.

India were bowled out for 358 in their first innings after Rishabh Pant's courageous return to the crease despite a fractured foot. In reply, England's openers Ben Duckett (94) and Zak Crawley (84) gave England a flying start with a 166-run opening stand.

Both the opener, however, fell short of centuries, dismissed by Ravindra Jadeja and debutant Anshul Kamboj, respectively. England finished the Day 2 at 225/2, with Joe Root (11\*) and Ollie Pope (20\*) unbeaten at the crease.

"What this tells us is that India were a bit hard done by the weather gods. During their batting, there were dark

grey clouds, some moisture - it looked like a black-and-white movie at one point. But today, the pitch really eased up and the skies cleared."

Sanjay Manjrekar  
former India cricketer

"Suddenly, it looked like a completely different Test match. England could very well get a big score, because even someone like Jasprit Bumrah found it hard to bowl a wicket-taking delivery on this surface. So yes, India will be glad they got those two wickets when they did," Majrekar said on Jiohotstar.

Speaking about Kamboj's bowling in his debut Test, Manjrekar added.

Pant conjures up memories of a la 'Kumble'

Haridev Pushparaj  
MUMBAI

Rishabh Pant is not your ordinary batsman in cricket by any stretch of imagination and we all know that by now since his Gabba miracle and the innumerable knocks that he has played for India.

However, the 27-year-old's deeds on the second day of the fourth Test against India will be remembered for a long time to come.

Nursing a fractured toe and visibly in fair amount of discomfort, Pant hobbled down to the pitch after the fall of

Shardul Thakur's wicket as a stunned Old Trafford crowd looked on in awe and utter disbelief.

In the Indian context, it was a bit of an **Anil Kumble** coming on to bowl with a broken jaw and scalping the wicket of the great Brian Lara in 2002 sort of a moment.

The irrepressible Kumble had bowled 14 overs straight after coming on with that facial strapping to give Indian cricket one of its most memorable moments of courage, fortitude and dedication.

Pant, on the other hand, struck 17 runs off 27 balls and

mindbo gglingly also ran singles in the process despite a clear injury indicating his lion-hearted dedication towards the team's cause.

The Roorkee-born batter's presence on the pitch also indicated his ability to come to the team's rescue if his services are required in the second innings.

Be it his unconventional style of batting, manufacturing shots where there are none and muttering words of motivation to the bowler at the other end while keeping wickets, 'Spiderman' never ceases to amaze with his inge-



nity.

Apart from Pant and Kumble, Mohinder Amarnath in 1983 is another example of coming on to bat after being injured. In Amarnath's case it was a deadly bouncer from Malcolm Marshall that had smashed onto his mouth and it seemed he would be indisposed for the rest of the match.

He was on 18 while he got retired hurt but thereafter regained his composure when India slipped to 139/5 and came out to slam a sensational 80 that eventually fetched him the Man-of-the-Match.

FOURTH TEST | England No 4 becomes second highest runscorer in Test history

Root & Co torment India

PTI

MANCHESTER

Joe Root racked up his 38th Test hundred and also became the second highest run scorer in Test history as England extended their dominance over India on day three of the fourth Test at Old Trafford, here on Friday.

Root slammed a magnificent 150 in the process of creating history while Ollie Pope's 71 and Ben Stokes' unbeaten 77 piled on India's misery as the hosts took a lead of 186 runs finishing at 544/7 in 135 overs at stumps. Stokes and Liam Dawson (21) were in the middle at end of day's play.

Earlier, Washington Sundar got the ball to drift and got rid of Ollie Pope (71 off 128 balls) and Harry Brook (3 off 12) after lunch, providing a much needed relief for India after a wicketless morning session.

Root (121 batting off 201), however, continued to pile on the runs and reached three figures with a four down the leg side off Anshul Kamboj, laying the foundation for the hosts' 75 runs lead. Minutes later he also surpassed Ricky Ponting to become the second highest run-scorer in Tests, leaving him only behind Sachin Tendulkar, who amassed 15921 runs.

India employed spinners



England's Joe Root celebrates after his century on day three of the fourth Test. PTI

Washington and Ravindra Jadeja from both ends despite taking the new ball. The move worked as Sundar had Pope caught at first slip before having Brook stumped as he could not connect on the charge.

Root chose to play on the backfoot when the spinners were in operation and used the reverse sweep effectively.

Towards the end of the

session, Root took a single off Kamboj to get past the great Ponting in the all time leading run getters list.

England captain Ben Stokes (36 batting off 68) chugged along at the other end as he and Root shared an unbeaten 84-run alliance for the fifth wicket.

Bumrah bowling just one over with the new ball before leaving the field added to

India's woes. When he finally returned to bowl, the umpires reminded him that he was only allowed to bowl post tea.

In the morning session, the Indian bowlers did not pose enough threat for the seasoned Root and Ollie Pope who steered England to 332 for two at lunch.

After a forgettable evening session on day two, the Indian bowling attack once again

asdds

India first Innings: 358;  
England first Innings (O/n: 225/2):

Z Crawley c Rahul b Jadeja 84, B Duckett c sub (Jurel) b Kamboj 94, O Pope c Rahul b Sundar 71, Joe Root st (sub) Jurel b Jadeja 150, H Brook st (sub) Jurel b Sundar 3, B Stokes batting 77, J Smith cb (sub) Jurel b Bumrah 9, J Dawson batting 21, C Woakes b Siraj 4

Extras: (B-4, LB-14, NB-13) 31 Total: 544-7 (in 135 overs)

Fall of wickets: 1-166, 2-197, 3-341, 4-349, 5-499, 6-515, 7-528

Bowling: J Bumrah 28-5-95-1, A Kamboj 18-1-89-1, M Siraj 26-4-113-1, S Thakur 11-0-55-0, R Jadeja 33-0-117-2, W Sundar 19-4-57-2.

RCB pacer Yash Dayal accused of raping minor

The 27-year-old from UP is already facing charges of sexual exploitation from a woman in Ghaziabad

PTI

JAIPUR

IPL side Royal Challengers Bengaluru's under-fire pacer **Yash Dayal** has been accused of raping a minor in an FIR registered against him by Jaipur Police.

The 27-year-old cricketer from Uttar Pradesh is already facing charges of sexual exploitation from a woman in Ghaziabad who has alleged that Dayal abused her after promising to marry her during a five-year relationship.

SHO of Jaipur's Sangner Sadar police station Anil Jaiman said that the latest FIR was registered on Wednesday.

"FIR was registered against Yash Dayal for rape under relevant sections of POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) act and the BNS (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita)," he said here on



Friday.

According to Jaiman, the victim has alleged that the player raped her first in 2023 when she was 17 and a similar assault took place in April this year at a hotel in Sitapura area.

"She alleged that the cricketer had promised help and support in her career. He contacted her in April this year when he was in Jaipur for IPL

and called her to the hotel where he allegedly raped her again," the SHO said, adding that the matter was under investigation.

The player has not issued any statement on either of the two cases so far.

Dayal, a medium pacer, is a reasonably well-known bowler in the Indian domestic circuit. He made his debut for Uttar Pradesh in 2018.

Vaughan feels Pant's injury shows cricket still in dark ages

Ex-England skipper laments upon issue of allowing medical substitutes

PTI

LONDON

Injured India batter Rishabh Pant's brave fifty with a broken foot in the fourth Test against England was "great theatre" but it also showed "cricket is in dark ages" on the issue of allowing medical substitutes, feels former England captain **Michael Vaughan**.

Pant remarkably came out to bat with a fractured foot in the morning session on Thursday after retiring hurt the previous day, and went on to add 17 runs to his overnight 37 for his 18th Test fifty.

"I have felt for many years that Test cricket should introduce substitutes for injuries that are clear and obvious, like we have seen with Rishabh Pant in the fourth Test at Old Trafford," Vaughan wrote in his column for 'The Telegraph'.

"It was great theatre watching Pant come out to bat with

a broken foot on the second morning. It was unbelievable courage, and there was some amazing skill to scramble 17 runs from 28 balls."

"But he was not fit to bat, could not run, and could have made the injury so much worse.

"...the fact that he (Pant) was allowed to have a replacement as wicketkeeper, but not to bat or bowl. It is all a bit odd, and inconsistent. We are the only team sport that does this and it is an example of cricket being stuck in the dark ages, I think."

He felt sticking to the old rules "is intentionally depleting a contest by making one of the teams effectively play with 10 men for four days of the match, on the back of bad luck".

On a possible solution for such eventualities, the former England batter said, "If a player

I have felt for many years that Test cricket should introduce substitutes for injuries that are clear and obvious

Michael Vaughan  
former England captain



suffers a new injury such as a broken bone or pulls a muscle so badly that they cannot play a further part in the game -- injuries that can easily be proven by a scan and an independent doctor -- they can be replaced by a like-for-like substitute after two innings of the match.

"Before the match, each player could have an allocated replacement for both injuries and concussion, pre-approved by both teams. There would be some logistical issues, more for the home team than the tourists, who tend to have a bigger group of players at the venue. But it is not insurmountable." He admitted that replacement rules are "more open to abuse" closer to the end of a game, but if the substitutes are pre-named -- batsman for batsman, spinner for spinner - and managed well by the match referee, it could be handled very well.

praise

Cricket fraternity hails Pant's fifty with fractured foot

PTI

MANCHESTER

Rishabh Pant's audacious fifty with a fractured foot on day two of the fourth Test showed not just courage but also proved that he is the "ultimate team man", felt former India coach **Ravi Shastri**, as the cricket fraternity showered praise on the gutsy wicketkeeper-batter.

Pant's return to top-flight cricket after a horrific car accident in December 2022 was already remarkable, but

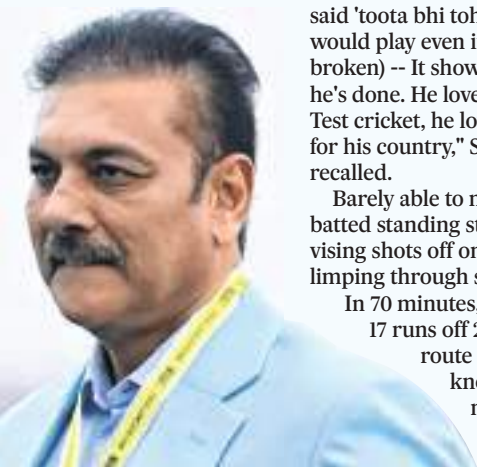
he took his daring streak to another level by completing a half-century with a broken foot on Thursday after retiring hurt on 37 the previous day.

"If anyone doubted he was ever a team man, they got to see it first-hand today. That requires more than just steel," Shastri said in a video posted by the BCCI on its website.

"For him to come back and do what he did was something special. Sometimes the motivation goes to another

level. What he did today for the team -- if that does not lift the team up, then nothing will. The applause he got from everyone in the England team out there is... I mean, that's what you live for, that's what you play for, that's what makes you." Before the fourth Test, Pant's availability as a keeper-batter was rendered doubtful after he sustained a finger injury while keeping during the Lord's Test.

"He was asked, how's the finger, will you play, then he



said 'toota bhi toh khelta' (I would play even if it's broken) -- It shows now what he's done. He loves playing Test cricket, he loves playing for his country," Shastri recalled.

Barely able to move, Pant batted standing still, improvising shots off one leg and limping through singles.

In 70 minutes, he added 17 runs off 27 balls en route to his 54, a knock that mattered more than

just the numbers as far as he was concerned.

"We need players like him who can step up in difficult moments. He showed so much courage and character despite having so much pain. It's never easy to come out there and show that fight and willingness to do it for the country," former India Test batter Cheteshwar Pujara said in the video.

"One thing is for sure that England love Rishabh Pant. Still being out there, getting those 16-18 runs, it's always

inspirational. In sport there are certain moments which you live a long time and that felt like a moment -- when you were there in the ground -- that will last long," said former India wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik, who is also commenting for the ongoing five-match Test series.

Pant launched Archer over midwicket for a six and then brought up his half-century by driving England captain Ben Stokes through the covers for four.



## Briefs

NEW DELHI

## Indian player Veda retires from cricket



Indian women's team batter Veda Krishnamurthy on Friday announced her retirement from professional cricket but hinted that she will continue to be associated with the sport in some other role. Veda played 48 ODIs and 76 T20Is, collecting 829 and 875 runs respectively. The 32-year-old, who is married to former Karnataka cricketer Arjun Hoysala, last played for the country during the women's T20 World Cup final against Australia at Melbourne in 2020.

MUMBAI

## Yohaans nets brace in St. Mary's win



St. Mary's ICSE Mazgaon Holy Family 'A' Andheri 5-2 in the Boys Under-16 Division I Group A clash of the Mumbai Schools Sports Association (MSSA) football tournament at Wings Sports Centre Bandra on Friday. Yohaans Kapadia scored a brace for St. Mary's school to give them firm grip over the match. For Holy Family skipper Aisten Chacko scored both the goals but his effort wasn't enough.

## FIDE WWC | Koneru-Divya final guarantees first Indian winner

## History beckons in chess

PTI

BATUMI (GEORGIA)

In a first for Indian chess, the FIDE Women's World Cup will have a winner from the country with Koneru Humpy and Divya Deshmukh set to fight it out in what could be anybody's game in the grand finale here on Saturday.

It's the first in the event's history that two Indians are facing each other in the final. Both Humpy and Deshmukh have qualified for the Women's candidates' tournament next year after reaching the final here.

On pure experience of playing big games, Humpy goes in the final as the favourite against compatriot Deshmukh. Humpy held her nerves to score a come-from-behind victory in the semifinals over Tingjie Lei of China in the tiebreaker on Thursday, while Deshmukh defeated former world champion Zhongyi Tan -- also of China -- in the second game of the last-four stage match.

Grandmaster Humpy, 38, was the winner of the world women's rapid tournament and also tied for first at the women's grand prix in recent times and she has proved yet again that age is just a number.

Pics: FIDE



I just need some sleep and some food, these days have been so anxious for me

Divya Deshmukh, **teen sensation**



It's one of the happiest moments for chess fans because now the title will go to India for sure

Koneru Humpy, **experienced GM**

Her grit and determination has not faded one bit in the past many years.

"It's one of the happiest moments for chess fans because now the title will go to India for sure. But of course, as a player, tomorrow will be quite a tough game as well -- Divya has played tremendously well in this whole tournament," Humpy told FIDE website.

At half the age of Humpy, International Master

Deshmukh has already stunned as many as three players ranked in top ten in the event. Her first victim was second seed Jiner Zhu of China, before ousting D Harika.

The 19-year-old Nagpur-based Deshmukh then beat former women's world champion Zhongyi Tan of China in the semifinals.

"I just need some sleep and some food, these days have been so anxious for me,"

Deshmukh said after entering the final.

"I think I could have played much better. I was winning at a certain point and then it got complicated. I think I messed up in the middlegame and that I should have had a much smoother win," she said about her semifinal match.

"She put up such a great fight at a certain point. I was just doubting if it was just a draw -- I think I got lucky in the end."

## Triple crown for Magar

Yuvaan clinches two titles including Under-11 crown after pipping his brother Avyaan in the summit clashes

FPJ News Service

MUMBAI

Parth Magar bagged a hat-trick of titles in the third 4 Star Ranking Table Tennis Tournament-2025 at the Willingdon Sports Club on Friday. Magar won the men's singles, U-19 singles and U-17 singles titles.

In the men's singles final Parth of NSCI resisted Neil Mulye's challenge to prevail 4-2 after a thrilling six-setter in the best of seven match. He had it easy in the first set but had to give it all in the second set to take 2-0 lead. Neil made a strong comeback to bag the third set without much sweat. But Parth gained momentum again to take 3-1 lead.

Neil won the fifth game but Parth held his nerves to wrap up the match in the sixth set 11-7, 15-13, 3-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-8. Senhora Dsouza also of NSCI bagged the women's crown after thrashing Songadkar Arya 4-1 (PTTA) in the final.

Magar played another six-setter against Aaditya Dalal (NSCI-UTT) in the U-19 final. He overcame his opponent 4-2 (11-9, 9-11, 12-10, 11-6, 8-11, 11-9) after a sea saw battle. Anoushka Patil of PNCL had to give her all against Vaidehi

Thakare (ROYL) in the Girls U-19 final. Anoushka came out triumphant 4-3 (11-9, 11-7, 11-7, 9-11, 8-11, 9-11, 11-6).

Compared to six setters in men's and U-19 category, Parth found it easy in the best of five Boys U-17 final by out-playing Jehan Kolah (NSCI UTT) 3-1 (12-10, 13-11, 12-14, 11-7). Arpita Borhade (CTTA) won the Girls U-17 crown by defeating Annisha Patra (RDTTA) 3-0 in the final.

## Twin titles for Yuvaan

Yuvaan Singh Walia won two titles by bagging the Boys U-11 and U-13 crowns. Yuvaan of NXT GEN blanked Yashan Kolah (NSCI UTT) 3-0 (12-10, 11-8, 12-10) to bag the U-13 championship. In an interesting clash of brothers, Yuvaan beat Avyaan Singh Walia 3-2 after a thriller in the U-11 category. Yuvaan prevailed 11-7, 10-12, 11-8, 8-11, 11-5 in a topsy turvy final that went down the wire. Just few moments separated the brothers in their game like their birth dates.

Prisha Malik won the girls U-13 crown while Aaradhya Kokane bagged the U-11 crown. In the U-15 categories, Shlok Jhaveri won the boys final while Sara Jamsutkar won the girls crown.

## FINAL RESULTS

**Men:** Parth Magar bt Neil Mulye 11-7, 15-13, 3-11, 11-9, 6-11, 11-8;

**Women:** Senhora Dsouza bt Songadkar Arya 11-9, 11-6, 7-11, 11-4, 11-7; **Boys U-19:** Parth Magar bt Aaditya Dalal 11-9, 9-11, 12-10, 11-6, 8-11, 11-9); **Girls U-19:** Patil Anoushka bt Vaidehi Thakare 11-9, 11-7, 11-7, 9-11, 8-11, 9-11, 11-6;

**Boys U-17:** Parth Magar bt Jehan Kolah 12-10, 13-11, 12-14, 11-7; **Girls U-17:** Arpita Borhade bt Annisha Patra 14-12, 14-12, 11-5); **Boys U-15:** Shlok Jhaveri bt Akhil Kampani 3-11, 11-5, 11-8, 8-11, 12-10; **Girls U-15:** Sara Jamsutkar bt

Chafekar Aarohee 1-8, 13-11, 11-5; **Boys U-13:** Yuvaan Singh Walia bt Yashan Kolah 12-10, 11-8, 12-10; **Girls U-13:** Malik Prisha bt Wani Ruhika 11-7, 13-15, 11-7, 11-5;

**Boys U-11:** Yuvaan bt Avyaan 11-7, 10-12, 11-8, 8-11, 11-5; **Girls U-11:** Kokane Aaradhya bt Dumbre Kaavya 11-6, 11-6, 12-10.

## SportVot

## Divine Star wins JE Hughes Trophy

Joe Williams

PUNE

Hitting the front right from the word go, Divine Star produced a commanding performance to clinch the JE Hughes Trophy, the feature event on the second day of the Pune racing season, held at the picturesque Pune Race Course here on Friday.

In the eight-horse field, champion jockey P Trevor

gave Divine Star a flawless ride, positioning the gelding prominently from the start. Once the gates flew open, Trevor seized the initiative, allowing Divine Star to dictate the pace. As the race entered the final furlong, the contest was as good as over. Divine Star galloped away from the rest of the field, showcasing both class and stamina to seal an emphatic victory despite a brief challenge from Fighton.

FPJ News Service

MUMBAI

Amanora School bagged the boys Under-19 and Under-14 crowns in the CBSE Cluster IX Basketball Tournament at Indira National School, Pune on Friday. Hosts Indira National School also won twin titles by bagging the Under-14 girls title and Under-17 boys championship.

In the Under-14 Girls final,

Indira National School edged past PDR School with a close scoreline of 23-18, emerging as champions in a nail-biting finish. The Under-14 Boys category saw a strong performance by Amanora School, who secured the title and were crowned winners of their division.

In the Under-17 Boys final, Indira National School once again delivered a dominant performance, defeating NEHS with a score of 28-19

to lift the trophy. The Under-17 Girls final witnessed a powerful game from The Kalyani School, who triumphed over KHS with a remarkable score of 55-21, claiming the championship.

In the Under-19 Boys division, Amanora School beat VPMS 38-30. Finally, in the Under-19 Girls category, Millennium National School secured the title and were declared the champions of their age group.



Amanora school with the Boys U-19 champions trophy.

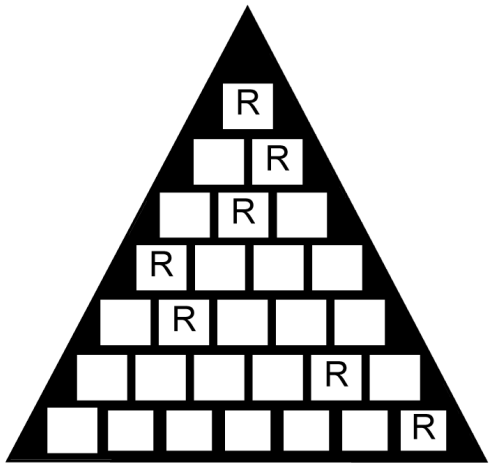




ALPHA TRIANGLE

Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

- 1 Universal gas constant in physics
- 2 Atomic number 18
- 3 Titian's work
- 4 Classify
- 5 Wrathful
- 6 Getup
- 7 More garish



R, Ar, Art, Rate, Irate, Attire, Tatter

Solution to Alpha Triangle

H	B	V	W	G	W	O	T	L	C	W	E	X
F	P	Y	A	O	G	K	L	O	C	I	N	P
K	R	W	R	H	Y	I	O	F	R	R	E	B
K	H	R	R	E	H	P	L	E	A	N	H	I
Y	U	E	E	T	S	T	A	B	L	E	M	R
B	C	M	N	X	L	E	N	N	E	K	H	D
Y	E	A	T	H	C	U	Q	F	P	V	C	H
N	T	W	R	O	O	K	E	R	Y	L	T	O
L	E	S	A	Y	N	U	G	D	D	A	U	U
U	K	D	C	X	Z	N	S	E	V	I	H	S
H	X	N	M	A	Y	P	H	E	R	R	M	E
E	T	O	C	E	V	O	D	R	N	E	S	T
T	S	O	O	R	J	E	U	Y	S	L	A	L

Animal Homes

Can you find the words connected in one way or the other with the theme indicated by the title in today's Word Search?

The words may be read horizontally, vertically or diagonally either forwards or backwards, but always in straight lines. Use a ruler to cross them through as you find them.

- Aerie

Anthill

Barn

Birdhouse

Burrow

Byre

Cave

Coop
- Den

Dovecote

Henhouse

Hive

Hutch

Kennel

Lair

Nest
- Pen

Rookery

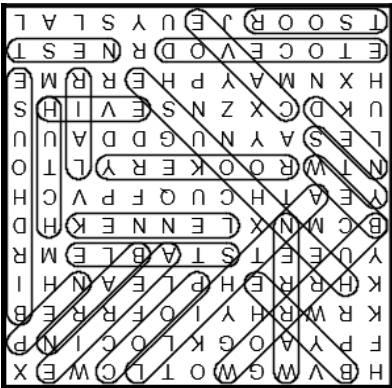
Roost

Stable

Sty

Warren

Web



Go Figure



Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once. Operations should be carried out sequentially. BODMAS rule does not apply.

The operators:



Easy

= 1

8 8 8 9

Medium

= 9

1 1 4 6

Hard

= 5

1 3 3 4

Our Solutions:

Easy - 9 - 8 - 8 + 8 = 1  
Medium - 4 + 6 x 1 - 1 = 9  
Hard - 4 x 3 / 3 + 1 = 5

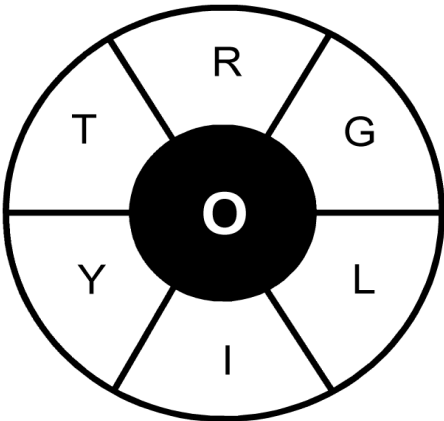
Riddler

There was a hawk that wanted water from a canister, but because of its long beak, it could not reach the bottom to get the water. So the big bird made many trips away and came back after each trip. On its last trip, it could reach the water in the bottom and comfortably got a drink. How did the hawk do it?

Answer: The hawk kept bringing pebbles and dropping them into the container. As the pebbles increased, the level of water rose to a height that the hawk could reach.

BULL'S EYE

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Each word can use a letter only once and must contain the central letter. There should be at least one 7-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as reference.



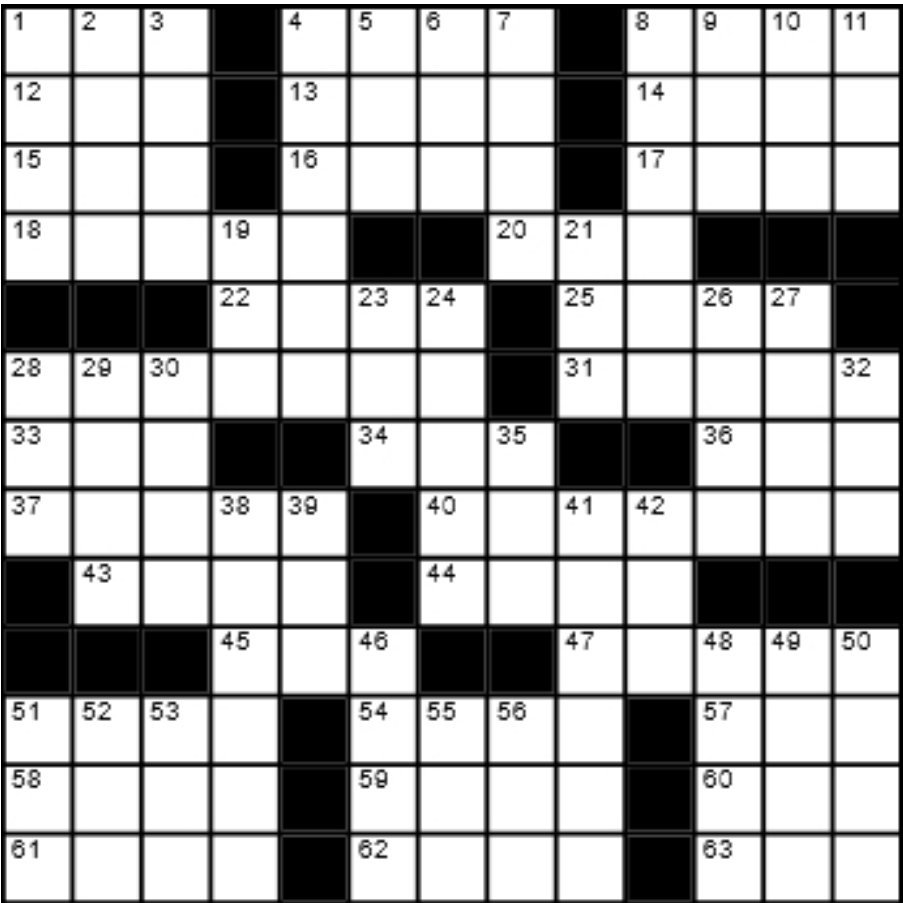
Ratings:

08 average; 09 good; 11 outstanding.

SOLUTION :

glio, glory, gory, gyro, oily, orgy, riot, roll, toil, TRILOGY, trio

Crossword #1574



Across

- 1 African Natl. Cong.
- 4 Hindu god of fire
- 8 Slender
- 12 \_\_\_ good boy : behave yourself (2,1)
- 13 Heath
- 14 Exchange fee
- 15 Prepare for war
- 16 Priestly robes
- 17 Berlin negative
- 18 Precious stone
- 20 Geometric proof is complete
- 22 Ransack
- 25 Indonesian island
- 28 Television aerial
- 31 Movement of the eyelids
- 33 'Bravo!'

Down

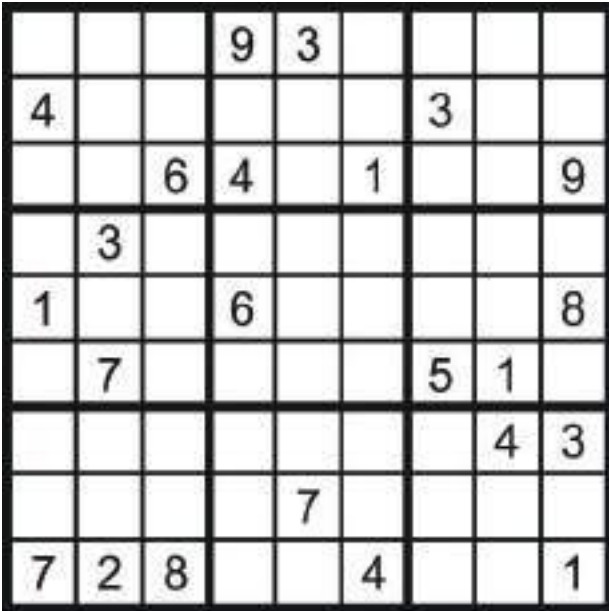
- 34 U-turn from WSW
- 36 Noah's boat
- 37 Dairy topping
- 40 Shine, sparkle or twinkle
- 43 End piece
- 44 Gumbo vegetable
- 45 Mr Morrison of the Doors
- 47 Is aware of
- 51 Sweetheart
- 54 Morales of movies
- 57 "Bad Behaviour" star Stephen
- 58 Donation to poor
- 59 Norse god
- 60 Pounds abbr
- 61 Surfeit or excess
- 62 Part of a plane
- 63 The letter "S"

Down

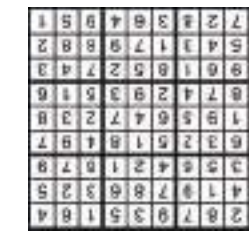
- 1 Blind as \_\_\_? (1,3)
- 2 Fiddling emperor
- 3 A body of troops in tents
- 4 Great river
- 5 Mass
- 6 Wealthy person - "bon" anagram?
- 7 Dessert Storm place?
- 8 Item of footwear
- 9 Large, abbr.
- 10 Latin trio
- 11 "My" in French ?
- 19 Type of beer
- 21 Flow back
- 23 Undivided
- 24 It takes two to \_\_\_?
- 26 Oasis lead singer --- Gallagher
- 27 Concerning, in legal terms (2,2)

- 28 Pendulum's path
- 29 Undercover cop, in short
- 30 English footballer --- Walcott
- 32 IPL team from Kolkata
- 35 Large deer
- 38 Fix or straighten
- 39 May in France
- 41 Annoying or irritating
- 42 Adult male
- 46 Siamese cry?
- 48 Shield or heraldic border
- 49 They are woven by spiders
- 50 Impudence
- 51 Purse or a satchel
- 52 Former measure of length
- 53 Atomic mass unit
- 55 Star Wars, initially
- 56 Scots "own"

SUDOKU



Across: 1 ANC, 4 Agni, 8 Slim, 12 Be a, 13 Moor, 14 Agio, 15 Arm, 16 Abba, 17 Nein, 18 Topaz, 20 QED, 22 Blink, 25 Ball, 28 Antenna, 31 Blink, 33 Rab, 34 ENE, 36 Ark, 37 Cream, 40 Glimmer, 43 Coda, 44 Olex, 45 Inn, 47 knows, 51 Beau, 54 Escal, 57 Res, 58 Alms, 59 Odin, 60 Lbs, 61 Gilt, 62 Wing, 63 Ess.



WHAT TO DO: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.



# Sit in style

Discover simple tips to spot a quality sofa that lasts and fits your lifestyle



Do you want to buy a quality sofa but are unsure how to spot one? The market is flooded with buzzwords, confusing specs, and sofa options that are pretty much the same. But the best part is that you don't have to be a furniture expert to ensure that you invest in a top-quality sofa. The market is competitive, but with a little research and some handy tips, you can find a quality sofa that fits your requirements.

That said, let us have a look at some essential advice to find a quality sofa for your space. Whether you are looking to shop living room sofas for your home or narrowing down your options, the handy tips in this blog will help you make a sensible choice.

## Frame should be strong

The thing you can't see matters the most while selecting a sofa. The inside of the sofa, its frame, gives it structure and support. Hardwood frames, reinforced by corner blocks, tend to hold up best over time. Lighter woods or particleboard may look fine initially, but they will likely weaken or creak before long.

To check if the frame feels strong, you can perform a simple test yourself in the store. Try lifting one corner of the sofa. If the opposite corner lags behind or twists, it could be a sign of a weak or poorly constructed frame.

## Cushions must hold shape

One of the simplest and most effective ways to identify a low-quality sofa is to sit on it. It is a red flag if it feels too soft or too hard, or if it doesn't spring back after you get up.

A good cushion usually has a foam core wrapped in soft fibre or down. It must be firm enough to support you and soft enough to relax. Poor-quality cushions lose their shape over time, while high-resilience foam helps prevent that from happening too soon.

## Springs matter

The base that holds the seat cushions, called the suspension, keeps you from sinking too deep into the sofa. Most sofas use sinuous springs, which are S-shaped wires that run under the seat. These offer good support and are common in well-made couches.

If the seat feels saggy or the support is uneven, it's often due to weak or missing springs. If you feel like there is empty space while pressing down, move on.

## Fabric should fit your life

While choosing upholstery, do not get carried away by its appearance. Think



While trying the sofa, don't just test it for a few seconds. Try it the way you would actually use it at home. So, lean back and sit there for enough time for proper assessment.

about who lives in your home and your lifestyle. Do you have kids or pets? Do you like to snack on the sofa? If yes, look for fabric that is tightly woven and easy to clean. Fabrics like microfiber, canvas, and some polyester blends tend to hold up better. They are resilient, easy to clean, and handle daily wear well. Leather can be a durable choice, too, though it needs a bit more upkeep. Linen has a soft, rich feel, but it can stain quickly. Consider all these factors while choosing a quality sofa.

## Test it properly

While trying the sofa, don't just test it for a few seconds. Try it the way you would actually use it at home. So, lean back and sit there for enough time for proper assessment. See if your feet touch the floor comfortably. Also, pull your legs up and see if you can dig into it comfortably with appropriate support.

## Conclusion

You don't need to speak the language of furniture design to buy a good-quality sofa. Just look for a strong frame, good cushioning, good spring quality, appropriate upholstery, suitability for regular usage, and sustainability to make an environmentally friendly choice. If you feel the size is right, comfort is optimal, and it will enliven your space for a long time, trust your instinct and go for it!



This cozy retreat is in the heart of a serene landscape. Villa Paashh stands as a testament to thoughtful design and innovative renovation. This residential interior project aimed to metamorphose a congested and uninspiring space into a cozy retreat yet open, that offers an oasis away from the hurriedness of daily life. The overarching vision was to establish large, extroverted spaces filled with light and air, forging a seamless connection with the beauty of nature. The transformation journey began with an analysis of the existing layout, where specific areas were identified for major renovations. Our team reimagined the internal architecture to create more expansive open areas, ensuring a natural flow between indoor and outdoor environments. This layout overhaul drew significantly from the clients' cultural heritage while also embracing modern aesthetics, resulting in a harmonious design language.

## Material palette

Collaboration with the homeowners was key to this project. By delving into their personalities, preferences, and nostalgic memories, we were able to infuse elements of their life stories into the home's design. To strengthen the home's connection with nature, we selected materials, textures, and fabrics that invoked an outdoor ambiance. Natural elements such as wood and stone were integrated throughout the residence, complemented by fabrics showcasing organic patterns and motifs that resonate with a natural theme.

## Parking area

One of the notable improvements was the open parking area leading to the foyer. Originally a modest open pathway, the area was transformed into a covered parking structure to accommodate the heavy rainfall typical of the hilly region during monsoon seasons. This thoughtful design ensures that clients can enter the home comfortably, regardless of weather conditions.

## Foyer & staircase

Upon entering through the main door, visitors are greeted by an impressive upper-level foyer that showcases a striking view of the nearby hills. The foyer, characterized by a sloping roof that creates a spacious atmosphere, houses a sculptural staircase clad in teakwood planks. This unique staircase leads to a cozy nook, fostering an inviting connection to the family room and integrating Indian-style seating with a meticulously designed book rack.

## Living area

Venturing deeper into the home, one finds a grand living area that encompasses the living room, dining area, and kitchen, each space flowing into the next.

# NATURE-INFUSED COZY RETREAT



**Designed by:** Volume Design  
**Principal Architect:** Ar. Harshad Bhagwat  
**Photograph Courtesy:** parthaviyadavstudios

## Sun room

An enclosed balcony dubbed the "sun room" provides a protected area to enjoy the outdoors, allowing residents to fully engage with nature while staying sheltered from the elements. The gorgeous living room features custom-built sofas that easily accommodate 10-15 guests, alongside a fun swing chair that adds a playful touch.

## Dining area

The dining area boasts a uniquely positioned square table designed to seat eight, forming a diamond shape within the overall layout.

## Kitchen layout

The kitchen is cleverly designed with an "L" shaped counter and an inviting



breakfast bar. Moreover, underscored by a double-sloping roof accentuated with elegant teakwood rafters that enhance the space's height and openness.

## Bedrooms

Descending further into the home, occupants discover the family room, a connective hub linking two additional bedrooms. This charming space encourages relaxation, furnished with comfortable chairs and an "L" shaped sofa. Further, leading out to the backyard where nature thrives.

## Master bedroom

The master bedroom, accessible via the sun room. Further, offers an exceptional layout that places the bed at its center, allowing the occupants to revel in stunning views. The wardrobe strategically situated behind the headboard maximizes space. While the ensuite bathroom features a thoughtful separation of the water closet and shower areas from the elegant bathtub and sinks.

## Backyard design

The backyard serves as a personal sanctuary with diverse nature-inspired experiences. A semi-covered verandah greets visitors, featuring cozy seating and an adjacent swing that overlooks the lush lawn. A path leads to a picturesque gazebo, cloaked in creeping vines, offering an immersive natural experience.

## Pool area

Underneath the master bedroom lies a multifunctional media hall that opens to the swimming pool. This space allows for seamless indoor-outdoor living, with reflective water patterns dancing on the ceiling, enhancing the atmosphere. The hall is designed for entertainment. Further, featuring a spacious dining area, table tennis setup, and a vast seating arrangement equipped with a television. Perfect for hosting movie nights or engaging in friendly game competitions. The renovation of Villa Paashh beautifully encapsulates balance between modern design and nature.



# Contemporary aesthetic unfolds

This tranquil home is a perfect blend of natural elements and contemporary aesthetics. There is something categorically unique but hugely comforting about this pastel-coloured, earthy-toned apartment located right in the moderately quieter but bustling cityscape of New Mumbai.

Suyash Mankame Design Studio has aimed to transform this 1200-square-foot three-bedroom-kitchen flat into a lush home with easy functionality, complementing seamlessly with a timeless yet contemporary design language.

## Comfort meets clean style

A grid-style mirror with an overhead panel of low-hanging lights at the entrance welcomes you into this beautiful abode! This space of the home is intentionally fuss-free and devoid of drama barring the main door mesh design created to match with the mandir jali in the living room.

## Design elements

The colonial-style sash band Gregorian windows of the L-shaped living area arrest attention. The sofa takes care of the surprise red aesthetic in this room.

Natural plants placed against the backdrop of the bottled green panel set the tone of freshness, which is carried forward throughout the space.

The veneer-finish television unit and contemporary boxed mandir with metal jali finish the design puzzle. The passage space is smartly used for wall storage with its centre highlighted by an eclectic wash basin.

## Kitchen area

The kitchen is built in white tones to be strictly functional whilst giving an illusion of space. Rest and rewind: Step into the earthy retreats of the bedrooms!

## Master bedroom

The design team uniformly applied a muted colour palette and clean linework across the project to highlight the freshness of this spacious flat. Diving head-first into its master bedroom, one gets a sense of the classic

simplicity of the space. The monochromatic jungle-themed wallpaper, intentional use of soft colours, and carefully crafted panelled headboard with mouldings define natural elegance.

## Bedroom design details

The sole symmetrical Stone veneer headboard with its book-match natural texture along with the complementary flooring highlights the grandness of the master bedroom. A low-back chair and a mirror adjacent to the textured panel help enhance the aesthetics and elongate the room. The side table mirror opens into a dressing table with the other side kept open to improve the accessibility of the wardrobe. A simple laminate sheet is placed at an angle to create drama. This arrangement doubles up as additional storage. The wardrobe is purposefully structured in simple white and wooden inlays. The veneer finish doors comply with the groove pattern, uniform to the design of classic lines across the site.

## Second bedroom

The second bedroom ushers you in with its surprise red wall, assuring the charging of positive energies and good vibrations in the space.

A soft board headboard adorning the bed with its barcode design line work proves an inspiration for an adjoining acrylic and foil laminate wardrobe with a similar line work which hides in a loft!

A black-and-white wallpaper balances the vibrance and the subtle dark grey laminates used for the bed tie in the entire colour palette into a homogenous blend.

*These are edited excerpts. Read full articles on The Architect's Diary website.*





Harsh Goenka

**R**etirement. The word sounds like a pause, doesn't it? A dignified slowing down, a polite stepping away from the boardroom. But let me share a secret—retirement isn't a full stop. It's a semicolon. It's a shift in rhythm, a chance to down-shift from the frenzied sprint of deadlines into the gentle hum of living.

For decades, many of us have lived life dictated by the clock—meetings to attend, emergencies to solve, decisions to make. Your wristwatch has likely been a constant companion, and your mobile phone your clingiest adversary. There may have been success, yes, but the luxury of time was always elusive.

Let's get one thing out of the way first: no one in India truly retires. We simply downshift from “boss” to “senior advisor,” from “chief decision maker” to “friendly uncle.” Your email signature may shorten, but your WhatsApp messages will likely grow longer. Retirement isn't an exit; it's a gentle reinvention. You may leave the stage, but you'll linger in the wings, whispering unsolicited wisdom from the sidelines.

#### Coffee tastes better at 9 am

The first joy of retirement is deceptively simple: coffee. Not the variety you gulp down between calls, but the kind you sip slowly, while watching the sunlight stretch across the balcony. Imagine waking up at 6 a.m., ready to dive into emails and strategy decks—only to find there are no crises, no red flags. Just silence. The calendar stares back—blank. Initially terrifying. And then... liberating. Without the tyranny of schedules, you begin to notice things: birds arguing over breadcrumbs, your spouse's smirk at the morning headlines, the neighbour's dog holding a loud press conference with the pigeons. You stop measuring time by deals closed or meetings held, and begin tracking it by the ripeness of mangoes or the length of your morning walk. Your Fitbit no longer serves as an electronic guilt trip—it becomes a friendly co-conspirator on your unhurried adventures. Try identifying cloud shapes one morning. You may even spot one that looks like a boardroom table—and another like your old assistant chasing a deadline. The imagination, long buried under Excel sheets, slowly begins to bloom again.

#### Joy of being useless

After a career built on being indispensable, retirement offers an unexpected pleasure: becoming gloriously useless. No one's waiting for your approval on a budget or your signature on a deal. You can offer advice that everyone ignores, and smile serenely as the next generation discovers the same problems you solved decades ago—except now with more apps and far less patience. You're no longer the pillar holding up the roof—you're the porch, where stories are told and laughter lingers. And porches, unlike pillars, are allowed to lean back, crack jokes, and snooze at will. It's also oddly satisfying to decline invitations to long meetings. “Sorry, I'm booked for a siesta.” Try saying that with a straight face.

#### New jobs, better pay

Retirement isn't the end of work—it's the beginning of choice. Consider taking on a portfolio of high-impact, zero-pay roles: unpaid food critic (with strong opinions), reluctant philosopher (with questionable logic), and full-time grandparent (arguably the most rewarding job of all). Why not join a painting class? One might paint what they believe is a serene lake, only to be told by the instructor it resembles a pizza. A promising future in abstract art awaits. Read books not to quote at conferences but to get lost in the story. Listen to music without dissecting the lyrics. Try yoga—though your joints may suggest that ‘savasan’ is what you should be attempting.

#### Reconnection

In the mad dash of corporate life, we often lose people. Not out of neglect, but sheer velocity. Friends become “will call him next week” names on your contact list. Retirement hands you the gift of time—and with it, the ability to reconnect. Write a postcard—yes, a real one—to an old college roommate. Call up a school friend whose laugh you still



# Joys of retirement

Discover joy in stillness, explore forgotten passions, and reinvent life on your own terms



remember and spend hours talking about nothing and everything. These aren't “strategic connections.” They're people who remember your worst haircut, your college canteen food habits, and your dreams before you learned the term “EBITDA.” Reconnecting with them is like finding forgotten treasures in the attic—messy, dusty, but full of gold. And sometimes, you make new friends—at the park, in the lift, or at your grandkid's school play. Friendship, it turns out, doesn't retire.

#### Lost art of wasting time

Retirement teaches that “doing nothing” is a very important something. You may discover poetry in staring at stars. You might take slow, scenic drives with no destination. You could nap because the couch looked particularly inviting. You might even

forget where you've kept your phone. Your children panic. You smile. They call it absent-mindedness. You call it peace. Watch a line of ants march up a wall for 20 full minutes. In your previous life, you'd have stepped on them. Now, you might admire their discipline. Spend a morning debating the origin of a mysterious birdcall with a neighbour. Conclude, after tea and biscuits, that it was either a koel or a lost ringtone.

#### From control to contribution

For those who've run companies, retirement is often seen as letting go. But it's not about giving up control—it's about shifting focus. Succession isn't a formality—it's a philosophy. The most graceful exits are those where your successor has been nurtured, mentored, and encouraged to walk their own path. You don't step away to disappear—you step back to let others rise. When done with grace, succession becomes a beautiful act of generosity.

#### Reinvention

Retirement isn't an escape from relevance—it's a redefinition of it. The most fulfilled retirees are those who reinvent themselves, who remain curious, open, and adaptable. Learn something new—be it AI from your grandchildren or the correct usage of Instagram Reels (though beware, you might go viral for the wrong reasons). Curiosity keeps you alive far longer than cholesterol charts. Start a podcast, join a philosophy group, take a cooking class and destroy a few pans. Reinvention isn't about making headlines—it's about discovering new passions without needing a LinkedIn endorsement. Meet a friend who has taken up pottery, another who writes haiku, and a third who swears by bird-watching. None of them were artists or poets or ornithologists in their previous lives—but retirement gave them the license to try.

# Sixty, sparkly and (still) sexy!

Exploring what really attracts—and repels—us in the golden years of connection and charm

Vickram Sethi

**H**uman attraction is a fascinating blend of physical chemistry, emotional resonance and psychological cues. What turns one person on may leave another completely indifferent—or worse, turned off. Whether you're navigating the dating world, building a long-term relationship, or just curious about what makes people tick, understanding the biggest turn-ons and turn-offs can be both enlightening and empowering.

As we grow older, our preferences and sensitivities evolve. What once thrilled us in our 20s may no longer hold the same charm, and what once seemed insignificant might now carry deep meaning. For seniors, the concept of attraction and repulsion extends far beyond the physical—emotional connection, shared values, and simple gestures often take centre stage.

A ‘turn-on’ is anything—behavioural, physical, emotional, or mental—that creates a sense of attraction or excitement in another person. Turn-ons can be sexual, romantic, or simply a trigger for deep admiration and connection. While turn-ons are subjective, there are certain traits that a wide majority of people consistently find appealing. Right from being physically attractive, subtle after-shave, neat hair, a clean look and fresh breath to having a sense of humour, the ability to make the other person laugh and hold their attention. Knowing oneself without flaunting it is a turn-on. Furthermore, the ability to express themselves without drama, being excited about what they are doing, being kind in a way that is consistent and genuine—not performative. Being nice isn't boring, it's sexy.

Sex, of course, is a great turn-on. Besides that, being able to hold eye contact, having communication skills, and being able to actively listen is essential for making a connection. A playful attitude can make things fun, adventurous and less predictable, whether in bed or on a picnic. Playfulness and spontaneity are great qualities.

Make no mistake, sex is nature's biggest turn-on. The joy of sex helps us procreate, and every species — whether human or otherwise — has its own methods of attracting a mate. It's interesting to see how a male bird goes through an entire ritual to attract a female. He will dance, whistle, flap his wings, show off his

plumage, and even build a nest — and yet the female is not necessarily impressed or willing. Science has still not fully figured out what trigger's attraction between males and females, or between males and males, and similarly between females and females. Whether it's the X and Y chromosomes or a problem in the medulla oblongata remains unclear.

Just because we have turned 60—and maybe forget where we left our glasses—doesn't mean we have lost our sparkle or our standards. Far from it, we are better experienced and have more knowledge about everything worth our while. Once upon a time, we may have been swayed by a handsome face or a cheeky wink, or we could dance all night without putting our back out. But now, attraction is a different kettle of fish. So, what actually floats our boat or makes us want to run a mile? Sit back, get your coffee, and let's explore the delightful world of senior turn-ons and turn-offs with the right dose of chic and charm.

A great laugh, a wicked sense of humour, the ability to talk about the absurdities of life (dirty jokes). Great conversations, someone who listens to you without interruption or checking their mobile phone. Someone who actually listens—and a bit of back and forth—is great fun. What also impresses us is kindness in the form of simple things that never go out of fashion (“please” and “thank you”). Genuine friendship can warm up quicker than a cup of Horlicks when you're feeling cold. Being reliable is a great quality; honesty is deeply attractive when you have lived through a few decades' ups and downs.

#### What turns us off

Being spoken down to... not understanding technology, and there is an upstart telling you you're not doing it correctly. They forget that you taught them how to hold a fork and a knife or even taught them to tie their own shoelaces. Now give us our moments. We have earned them. It is irritating when you are rushed while speaking. Even more annoying is when someone is more engaged with their mobile than with you while you are talking. There is no eye contact, and they are staring at their phone as if it holds the meaning of life.

We recognise empty compliments, when the butter is thicker than the slice. Cut out the negative conversations because the negativity just grows. One doesn't want to chat with someone who starts telling you what is wrong with the world today. At this stage of life, we are not impressed by fast cars, gym memberships, or how many steps you walked this morning. We are drawn to people who make us feel seen, heard and respected. We want warmth, not wildness.



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# Play to remember

Five fun and effective games to enhance short-term memory and sharpen cognitive skills daily

Seniors Today Desk

**I**n our fast-paced world, memory is an invaluable asset. From remembering names at social gatherings to keeping track of daily tasks, short-term memory plays a crucial role in our cognitive functions. Fortunately, just like muscles, our brains can be exercised and strengthened through engaging activities. Games, in particular, offer a fun and effective way to enhance short-term memory. Below are five games that stand out for their ability to sharpen cognitive skills and improve retention.

#### Simon says

A childhood favourite, Simon Says is more than just a playful pastime—it's a brilliant tool for enhancing short-term memory. The game requires players to listen to and recall a series of instructions, acting upon them only when prefaced by the phrase “Simon says.” This challenges the brain to process and store immediate commands while filtering out misleading ones. The more complex the instructions, the greater the mental workout, making this an excellent exercise in attention and recall.

#### Matching pairs

A classic card game, Matching Pairs (also known as Concentration) involves laying cards face down and flipping two at a time to find pairs. This game stimulates the brain by demanding that players remember the location of previously revealed cards. With multiple pairs to track, short-term memory is constantly tested. As players improve, they develop sharper recall abilities, training the mind to retain and retrieve information quickly.



#### Lumosity's memory matrix

For those who enjoy digital games, Memory Matrix, a game from the Lumosity app, is a fantastic choice. This game presents a grid with patterns that briefly flash before disappearing. Players must then recreate the pattern from memory. The challenge intensifies as the complexity of the grids increases.

By requiring quick retention and recall, this game effectively enhances spatial memory and short-term cognitive abilities. The progressive difficulty ensures that players remain engaged while pushing their memory to new limits.

#### Chess

Chess is often associated with strategic thinking and long-term planning, but it also significantly benefits short-term memory. Players must remember past moves, anticipate their opponent's strategy, and quickly adapt to changing game dynamics.

Additionally, recalling the positions of different pieces on the board at any given time strengthens working memory. As chess games progress, the brain is constantly active, reinforcing both short-term and long-term memory functions.

#### Numbers backward

A simple yet powerful memory-enhancing game, Numbers Backward, is often used in cognitive psychology and brain training exercises. A sequence of numbers is presented to the player, who must then repeat them in reverse order. As the difficulty increases, longer sequences are introduced. This game sharpens short-term memory by requiring active engagement with information and improves the ability to mentally manipulate data in real-time. It also enhances focus and concentration, which are essential for effective memory function.

#### The science

Engaging in memory-based games stimulates neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to reorganise itself by forming new neural connections. This is particularly beneficial in improving cognitive flexibility, attention, and information retention. Regularly challenging the brain with memory-enhancing activities has been linked to improved cognitive function and a reduced risk of memory decline.

These are edited excerpts. Read full articles on Seniors Today website.



# GON' GIVE IT TO YA

**Of the two new KTM 390 Adventures, the Adventure X is the road-biased one and relatively less equipped. Despite that, it has the potential to be the bike most people will need**

Devashish Puranik

Both the 2025 KTM 390 Adventures represent a massive jump in ability over the previous generation bikes. Similar to the previous nomenclature, the 390 Adventure (also known as the S) is the better equipped of the two with more off-road ability, whereas the 390 Adventure X is the road-focused and more affordable bike with less equipment. The ex-showroom price difference between the two bikes is not insignificant; therefore, the question is whether the extra money is worth spending or if the Adventure X's capabilities are substantial enough.

I approached this road test with a slightly different angle because I myself own a 2025 KTM 390 Adventure S (I'm going to call it the S in this article for convenience), on which I've clocked around 1,500 kilometres since its purchase two months ago. Looking at the 390 Adventure X standing next to my bike left me with mixed feelings. Although the S is the more expensive bike of the two, I genuinely think the X's colour and graphic execution looks noticeably better. We received a brand-new orange bike where in the graphics were also shades of orange and were executed very tastefully, and the rear body-panels were black, which complemented the front design nicely. The other noticeable visual distinction between the two is the X's 19-/17-inch alloy wheel set-up compared to the S' 21-/17-inch spoke wheels. Tyres on both bikes are dual-purpose Apollo Trampir XR's.

The 390 Adventure X uses the same basic formula as the Adventure S: a comfortable and upright riding posture, a narrow yet accommodating seat, a tall visor with the TFT display placed at a similarly high position, WP Apex long-travel suspension complemented by 228-millimetre ground clearance, and, most importantly, the immensely characterful and rev-happy 399-cc, single cylinder, LC4c engine developing 46 hp and 39 Nm.

As soon as I started riding the 390 Adventure X, what became immediately noticeable was how much more responsively it handles on the road compared to the S. The 19-inch front wheel results in a relatively more flickable motorcycle that is genuinely fun to throw around the bends. This also

results in a bike that is easier to manoeuvre in traffic. The suspension spec and travel are the same on both Adventures, but the X doesn't get adjustable damping. Nevertheless, the suspension has been set up extremely well and it immediately feels more comfortable than the default suspension setting that the Adventure S comes with. The X's suspension does a fantastic job of dealing with our unpredictable roads and, for the most part, won't leave you wishing for the adjustability that the S gets.

The Apollo Trampir XR's inspire confidence while riding in dry as well as wet conditions and the braking performance is also strong. The Adventure X also comes with a superslick bi-directional quick-shifter as standard which feels great to use. The 399-cc engine is not very refined modes, so the throttle map on the X is the same as the "street" throttle map on the S, which means the 390 Adventure X feels fast and its acceleration is linear.

While I don't think you'll miss the rain throttle map that the S gets (I find it a little too gentle), I did miss the aggressive and fun off-road throttle map. I think the immediate and rapid feel of this mode would've been an absolute hoot along with the Adventure X's superior road handling. The X also misses out on S' cruise control, which may seem puzzling given that the former is the more touring-oriented bike.

However, the throttle action is relatively low-effort and won't induce significant wrist fatigue over longer rides. Some other electronics that this make their absence felt frequently, but would certainly provide an extra layer of safety that could prove useful in certain situations.

This is a motorcycle that will be bought primarily for touring as well as city use, and it fulfils those requirements very well. Additionally, it can also handle a decent amount of off-road use, so when you encounter a rough patch during your travels, you can soldier on without being worried.

For Rs 2.91 lakh (ex-showroom), the 390 Adventure X gives you a solid amount of capability for the money and is an excellent all-rounder. If you'd like to have the additional off-road ability, equipment, and electronics that the 390 Adventure S offers, you'll have to shell out approximately Rs 80,000 more.



PHOTOGRAPHS: KALIDAS M



PHOTOGRAPHS: KALIDAS M

# Not your typical electric scooter

We rode BGauss' RUV 350 Max on public roads and some aspects of this scooter surprised us

Anvay Mahajan

BGauss introduced the RUV 350 last year. During the initial ride that was held during a brief session on a closed, nearly flawless surface, the electric scooter wasn't pushed to its limits. Now, nearly a year later, we finally had an opportunity to thoroughly test its reliability and rideability.

The first thing that catches one's eye are the scooter's striking 16-inch alloy wheels with bold red accents. In video editor terms, the red hue is highly saturated, making it pop visually. The rear wheel is mounted on a single-sided swingarm. Most of the body is constructed from metal, giving the scooter a solid and sturdy feel. In spite of its kerb weight of 122 kilograms, the scooter feels surprisingly light.

The five-inch TFT display on the RUV 350 is clear, bold, and straightforward, with smooth, lag-free operation across various functions. However, the buttons were not up to standard. Notably, buttons like the cruise control and horn got stuck after exposure to rain, which raises questions about reliability in the long run. The scooter offers three storage compartments: an open front storage equipped with a Type-C USB charging port, a space beneath the floorboard for the 500-W charger, and an under-seat storage area. The RUV 350 EX and RUV 350i EX, both equipped with a 2.3-kWh battery, provide 20 litres of under-seat storage. In contrast, the RUV 350 Max offers a slightly reduced 15-litre capacity to accommodate its larger 3.0-kWh battery. The 15-litre storage space feels just about sufficient.

The 3.5-kW (4.8-hp) motor on the BGauss RUV 350 Max delivers decent performance for daily urban commuting, making overtakes feel effortless. It offers three riding modes—Eco, Ride, and Sport—with a top speed of 75 km/h. Eco mode is limited to 45 km/h. In Sport mode, we did notice a vibration in the motor as the scooter approached 70 km/h. The 16-inch alloy wheels offer great confidence while cornering, and the scooter feels nimble and easy to flick through traffic. However, the stiff suspension set-up compromises ride comfort, especially over bumps and rumble strips, thus dampening the comfort advantage typically expected from larger wheels. It's equipped with drum brakes at both ends, which makes slowing down noticeably a task that requires effort. At this price point, most competitors at least offer a front disc brake, putting the RUV 350 at a disadvantage in terms of braking performance.

The 3.0-kWh LFP battery pack on the RUV 350 Max comes with an ARAI-cert-



tified IDC range of 145 kilometres. We managed to cover 116 km in Eco mode with seven per cent battery still remaining, which is quite respectable. Once the battery level dropped below 10 per cent, the scooter automatically entered "Limp Home" mode, capping the speed at 29 km/h.

The BGauss RUV 350 Max is currently priced at Rs 1.40 lakh (ex-showroom). With its 16-inch alloy wheels—a rarity in the electric scooter segment in the Indian market—it certainly stands out visually and functionally. However, when compared to more "traditional" electric scooters such as the Chetak 350i or the TVS iQube 3.5-kWh series, the limited 15-litre under-seat storage, stiff suspension set-up, and drum brakes feel like a compromise. As a result, the RUV 350 Max's price tag comes across as steep when one considers the quality, features, and practicality offered by its competitors.



PHOTOGRAPHS: SANJAY RAIKAR



# HIDDEN GEM

In our opinion, this Ducati allows one to use "supersport" and "practical" in the same sentence

Joshua Varghese

The Ducati SuperSport 950 S is among those motorcycles that are easily forgotten. Sadly, due to no fault of its own. Despite being the most accessible fully faired Ducati, it is simply overshadowed by its famous, more glamorous, more expensive, and performance-oriented Panigale siblings. A difference of just Rs 1.57 lakh between the SuperSport 950 S and Panigale V2 (955-cc) does not help its case either. That made us think: what defines those who prefer the SuperSport to the Panigale V2? To find out, we filled up the SuperSport 950 S' 16-litre fuel-tank and set out for a ride.

After the first few kilometres, the comfort offered by the undemanding riding position came to mind as a compelling reason to pick this motorcycle instead of the Panigales. Although it is SuperSport by name, its rider triangle is clearly that of a sport-tourer. The wide, well-cushioned seat, low foot-pegs,

and reasonably high clip-on handlebars make for a riding posture that is immediately more comfortable than any other faired Ducati motorcycle in the market today. In the real world, that translates into a longer time in the saddle as well as a longer distance with less inconvenience.

For the Indian motorcyclist who enjoys a nice, long ride on the weekend over roads with varying levels of smoothness, this is immediately a more practical alternative to the demanding perch of an actual supersport. The seat is 810 millimetres off the ground but I would pick the taller seat option because it is better padded and, therefore,

should prove more comfortable over long distances.

It may be difficult to believe how relaxed this motorcycle is unless one spends some time in the saddle because it also carries the same visual aggression of the Panigales. The SuperSport's latest aesthetic updates have brought it closer than ever to its siblings thanks to the revised front end, a new headlight, and slots in the fairing. Now that the Panigales have moved on to a double-sided swingarm, the SuperSport's single-sided unit makes it a unique proposition.

Although the changes are minimal overall, its timeless styling makes this motorcycle turn heads

even now, proving yet again that a good design always stands the test of time. In fact, the silencer is the only thing that looks dated here. It is also worth noting that the wind-screen is adjustable for height—a feature that makes the distinction clear; this is a sport-tourer.

By upgrading the console to similar levels of functionality as the previous generation of the Panigales, Ducati have made it easier for one to navigate through the improved electronics suite. The most useful of these include cornering ABS, traction control, updown quick-shifter, and wheelie control. The last one made it to the list because, make no mistake, performance still forms a prominent part of what defines this motorcycle.

From the moment the engine comes to life, it has the unmistakable character of a Ducati powerhouse. The 937-cc, eight-valve, liquid-cooled, L-twin unit is capable of developing 110 hp (three hp less than in its previous iteration) at 9,000 rpm and a peak torque of 93 Nm at 6,500 rpm but as it idles, the Testastretta 11° is relatively calmer than the Superquadro. Following a long ride, we observed that it was slightly more refined too.

*These are edited excerpts. Read full articles in the July edition of Bike India magazine. Visit their website to subscribe.*





How is the airport infrastructure development progressing in the country?

India has witnessed high level of growth in airport infrastructure development, both in terms of quality and numbers. The number of airports has increased from 74 airports to 159 in the decade ending on 2024. In 2024 alone, 102 new Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) routes were launched, including 20 in the North Eastern States. RCS has facilitated affordable air travel for 15 million passengers. Significant infrastructure development is underway, including new terminals at key locations such as Varanasi, Agra, Darbhanga, and Bagdogra. In terms of Greenfield airports, 12 Greenfield Airports have been operationalized in last decade. And development of key airports like Noida (Jewar) and Navi Mumbai International Airports is progressing rapidly, with operationalization targeted around August 2025. The government has set an ambitious target of developing 50 more airports in the next 5 years and connecting 120 new destinations in the next 10 years. A substantial CAPEX of over 91,000 crore is planned for airport infrastructure development under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) during FY 2019-20 to FY 2024-25, with approximately 82,600 crores already spent by November 2024. Lenders from India have now experience of conducting Techno-Economic Viability and lending airport sector which has long gestation period.

Airport projects are facing delays, in spite of the policy measures for the faster execution of infrastructure projects. How do you look at this scenario?

Some of key points which are impacting this aspect are:

- Shift to EPC mode from item rate contract is taking time to mature
- Lowest bidder winning the bids, thus resulting in award of work to an entity who may have issue of skilled professionals and skilled manpower. This process of lowest bidder also leads to selection of PMC who may not be able to support efficient project management and also contracts management.
- Land acquisition issues – protest from locals – change in airport location – thus delay in conceiving airport project as planned
- Lack of digitalization; such as effective use of technology in design, construction and project management. Tools such as BIM, MS Project, Primavera, etc. are suggested to be used.

How do you view the total capacity and capacity utilization of the current airports across the country?

Airport sector has now crossed pre-Covid numbers both for passenger and cargo. Skyrocketing passenger traffic reflects sectoral momentum. In 2024, domestic air passenger traffic more than



Technology-led growth in aviation

Nirmal G. Humbad, Managing Director, Dorsch Consult India Pvt. Ltd. talks about airport infrastructure and efficiency

doubled to 228 million, a remarkable increase from the 103 million passengers recorded earlier. Domestic air passenger traffic grew by 5.9% in the January -

November period of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.

International routes also experienced substantial growth, with 64.5 million passengers carried between January and November 2024, marking an 11.4% increase.

The total number of air passengers annually have exceeded 350 million, firmly establishing India as the third-largest aviation market globally.

Even, cargo handling capacity is growing at 10%+ annually with a new focus on warehousing for perishables and streamlined customs protocols.

What are your suggestions to enhance the operational efficiency of Indian airports?

Airport is highly operation centric business. Technology is key and important factor in enhancing operational efficiency in airports. Digi Yatra services to

Technology is key and important factor in enhancing operational efficiency in airports. Digi Yatra services to 24 airports have significantly enhanced passenger convenience and security.

24 airports have significantly enhanced passenger convenience and security. This initiative provides a seamless, contactless travel experience for passengers. Over 8 million users have downloaded the app.

We at Dorsch are promoting technology in airports which are being designed by us and also airports in which we have conducted due diligence. Power over Ethernet (PoE) is being implemented at one of the airports. Technology in terms of Digital Twin, BRS, Perimeter Intrusion System etc. can provide huge support to airport operations.

Aviation safety is another area which

is needed to be addressed. AAI is looking for modernization of ATC. Maintenance facilities is another key factor which needs to be addressed. Building of MRO and Flight Training Schools will help. A significant stride towards enhancing aviation safety was the inauguration of the advanced Digital Flight Data Recorder and Cockpit Voice Recorder (DFDR & CVR) Laboratory at the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) in New Delhi.

How do you look at the future of Indian airports in the next 5 years?

Development of more twin airports, hub airports, MRO facilities, Flying Schools, GA Terminals based on Smart Airport and Green Airports with Sustainability Concept will happen in India. Guideline for airport implementation where guidelines does not exist, is suggested to be provided. More airports on PPP basis by combining smaller airports along with major airports as twin airport offer will happen. Also, there will be easier financing to PPP projects, with Indian banks having first-hand experience of lending large greenfield airports. Needless to add that India will remain in top three countries in world when it comes to passenger traffic.

STEEL FOR TOMORROW

Aryan Agarwal, Vice President, Super Smelters Limited, on driving innovation in TMT bars for next-gen infrastructure



How do you view the increasing importance of TMT steel bars in the Indian construction industry?

TMT bars have evolved from a basic construction input to a strategic enabler of safe, resilient, and future-ready infrastructure. Their importance will only grow as India continues its transformation into a \$5 trillion economy. With India undergoing a construction boom—smart cities, highways, metros, and housing projects—TMT bars have become indispensable. Their superior strength, ductility, and earthquake resistance make them ideal for modern RCC (Reinforced Cement Concrete) structures. As India moves toward green construction and carbon neutrality, TMT bars made through energy-efficient processes, like EAF/IF with renewable energy, are gaining traction. Brands adopting “green steel” practices are leading this change. There’s a major real estate and infrastructure push in semi-urban India specially in Tier 2 & 3 cities. As awareness and regulations rise, local builders are moving from conventional steel to branded TMT bars for better ROI and structural safety. Government initiatives like PM Awas Yojana (Affordable Housing), Bharatmala & Sagarmala Projects, and Smart Cities Mission are fueling demand for high-grade steel bars.

Which are the major products and solutions offered by the company in TMT steel bars?

At Super Shakti, we believe that strength isn’t just about steel—it’s about trust, consistency, and innovation. Our latest offering, Super Shakti CRS Fe 550D+ SD Advanced Y Ribbed TMT Bars, sets a new benchmark in construction excellence. Inspired by advanced European design patterns, these bars are scientifically engineered for superior concrete bonding. Y-ribs give the capability to fight against natural disaster; its geometry enhances extra root strength in transverse ribs throughout the bar and the passive film form throughout the circumference of bar to protect it from corrosion, making them the ideal choice for long-lasting, future-ready homes. The Advanced Y Rib pattern, with deeper and more closely spaced ribs at varied angles, allows the bar and concrete to act as one cohesive unit—ensuring maximum grip and unmatched reinforcement that enhances fatigue life while retaining bond strength, maximum TMT bars failed in fatigue test, in case of Y-Ribs always found to be earthquake resistant. Precision CNC notch cutting guarantees a uniform rib design throughout, enhancing both bonding and structural consistency. What sets us apart is our fully integrated manufacturing process—from alloy and pig iron production to the final TMT bar—all under one roof.

How are these TMT bars providing strength in heavy-duty construction applications?

Super Shakti CRS Fe 550D+ SD TMT bars are specifically engineered to meet the demanding needs of heavy-duty construction—from high-rise buildings to bridges, flyovers, dams, industrial foundations, and infrastructure in coastal or seismic zones. Here’s how they provide exceptional strength and reliability:

With a yield strength of 550 MPa and superior ductility, these bars offer the perfect balance of strength and flexibility, essential for large-scale structural loads.

Designed for aggressive environments—coastal, humid, and industrial zones—the CRS coating and internal chemistry provide long-lasting protection against rust and corrosion, increasing the lifespan of heavy-duty structures. Inspired by European construction patterns, the unique Y-shaped rib pattern with deep and closely spaced ribs ensures superior bonding with concrete, preventing slippage and enhancing the monolithic behavior of the structure. The ductile nature of CRS Fe 550D+ SD bars enables them to absorb seismic shocks and cyclic loads, making them ideal for earthquake-prone zones and dynamic load-bearing structures like flyovers, towers, and industrial plants.

Every bar is produced in a fully inte-

grated steel plant, ensuring uniform chemical composition, CNC precision rib cutting, and stringent quality control—key to performance in critical infrastructure projects.

Despite their high strength, these bars retain excellent bendability and weldability, allowing them to adapt easily to complex design requirements in bridges, industrial sheds, and commercial high-rises. Super Shakti CRS Fe550D+SD TMT bars the numerical impact reflect in budget to reduces required development length/splice lengths by 15-25%, improving constructability and efficiency. Corrosion Resistance TMT Bars (Critical for Durability):

**Protective Oxide Layer:** Formed during Tempcore process.

**Corrosion rate reduction:** 30-50% lower than mild steel in aggressive environments (marine, industrial).

**Lifespan impact:** Can extend service life of structures by decades, reducing maintenance costs.

**Seismic performance** (Ductility & Energy Absorption)

**Uniform elongation:** High (>12%) due to ductile core.

**Energy absorption capacity (area under stress-strain curve):** 2-3 times higher than mild steel.

**Numerical safety:** Allows structures to undergo large deformations (≥ 3% drift) without collapse during major earthquakes (e.g., complying with IS 13920/IBC codes).

What are the major innovations in your TMT steel bars for better quality and extended life of projects?

Inspired by European standards, the Y-shaped ribs with deeper and closely spaced patterns ensure stronger bonding with concrete, reducing slippage and enhancing structural durability. Computer-controlled rib patterning ensures precision, uniformity, and consistent grip across the entire bar—resulting in uniform reinforcement throughout the structure. Special anti-corrosive treatment and internal chemistry make these bars ideal for coastal, humid, and industrial environments, protecting structures from rust and degradation.

The bars offer a unique balance of Yield Strength more than 550 N/sq. mm with superior ductility, making them suitable for both load-bearing and earthquake-prone zones. Entire production—from iron making to rolling—is done in-house, ensuring consistent quality control at every step and uniform mechanical properties in every batch. Scientifically engineered for cyclic loading and seismic activity, these bars help prevent structural failure in bridges, flyovers, and high-rise buildings.

Can you elaborate on the innovation of Y-ribbed TMT bars?

TMT bars are a major advancement in TMT technology overall because of their strength, ductility, and corrosion resistance. They transform steel from a passive reinforcement material into an active, high-performance structural partner, providing stronger bonds, longer lifespan, higher resilience in challenging environments. This innovation is particularly valuable in high-rise buildings, bridges, flyovers, seismic zones, and anywhere durability and performance are critical. The Y-ribs create more surface area and mechanical grip, allowing concrete to lock onto the bar more tightly. This leads to better stress transfer between concrete and steel, higher resistance to slippage under load, and improved structural integrity over time. This ensures consistent bonding strength throughout the length of the bar, which is critical for load-bearing structures. In seismic events, strong bonding between steel and concrete prevents displacement. Y-ribbed bars provide better energy absorption, higher ductility and reduced risk of sudden structural failure.

Structures like bridges and flyovers face constant dynamic loads. Y-ribbed bars, with their deep and angular ribs, resist fatigue cracking better than standard bars. Because of stronger grip and stress distribution, micro-cracks in concrete are less likely to form around the rebar.

Next-Gen parking for cities

Ashish Majithia, Founder and CEO, Nextkraft Parking Technologies, highlights safer, smarter, and scalable parking innovations

How are parking systems changing from traditional to efficient and automated methods?

With rapid urbanization and a significant rise in vehicle ownership, Indian cities are facing a severe shortage of dedicated parking spaces. Traditional parking methods are no longer sufficient, largely due to limited land availability. The only viable solution to meet this growing demand is to go vertical. Automated Parking Systems offer an efficient and space-saving alternative by enabling cars to be parked vertically, optimizing the use of available space. These systems not only fulfil the project’s parking requirements but also enhance overall project viability by reducing the construction footprint and associated costs. As a result, developers are increasingly turning to smart, automated parking solutions as a key element in infrastructure planning.

What are the key space-saving concepts in vehicle parking?

Automated Parking Systems (APS) are designed to maximize the number of vehicles that can be accommodated within limited land areas. These systems are broadly classified into three categories: Dependent, Semi-Automated, and Fully Automated.

- Dependent systems include solutions like stack parking, pit stack, and three-level stack systems, which require some manual coordination between vehicles.
- Semi-Automated systems typically involve puzzle parking and pit puzzle systems, offering greater automation with minimal user intervention.
- Fully Automated systems such as



tower parking and cart-based systems operate entirely without human involvement, making them ideal for high-density urban developments.

How is automated and mechanical parking system gaining traction in the country?

India is witnessing a growing adoption of automated parking systems, with a projected Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10% through 2030. Regulatory changes are also contributing to this trend. For instance, the Maharashtra government’s policy mandating fixed parking slots for vehicle registration will increase demand for efficient parking solutions. Automated systems are the only viable option for accommodating more vehicles in increasingly constrained urban spaces.

What are the safety measures needed in automated / mechanical parking systems?

Safety begins at the design stage. It is essential to follow clearly defined design standards, Standard Operating



Procedures (SOPs), and Factors of Safety (FOS) for every component of the system. Tower parking and other fully automated systems function similarly to elevators, except that they do not transport humans.

Therefore, they must be equipped with advanced safety mechanisms such as overspeed governors, progressive safety devices, and real-time monitoring tools. Leveraging technologies from the vertical transportation industry will ensure both operational reliability and effective preventive maintenance.

How is company offering safe and sustainable parking solutions in vehicle parking?

At Nextkraft, safety and user experience are our top priorities. Our structural designs especially for tower and puzzle, follow Indian Standard (IS) codes and are engineered to withstand seismic and wind loads. For critical components like lifting mechanisms, we refer to elevator industry standards to ensure maximum reliability. We have also integrated smart

maintenance technologies to proactively address issues before they arise, significantly reducing system downtime.

What is your current market presence and how are you planning to expand your business?

Nextkraft Parking has established itself as a trusted partner in the real estate industry across Mumbai, Pune, and various parts of Maharashtra. We are proud to be the preferred parking solution provider for industry leaders such as Lodha Group, Dosti Realty, House of Hiranandani, and Goel Ganga Group, among others. Our vision is to extend our presence across India, focusing on cities where urban density demands innovative parking solutions.

How do you look at the future of parking systems in India? What will be trending?

The parking industry in India is at the cusp of a major transformation. While metro cities are increasingly adopting tower parking systems due to limited land availability, Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are showing a rising preference for stack and puzzle parking solutions. We foresee a steady rise in automated solutions across all city tiers, driven by urbanization and technological innovation.



## AI MODELS WITH SYSTEMIC RISKS GIVEN POINTERS ON HOW TO COMPLY WITH EU AI RULES

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



A copy of “The European Union Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act” on display during the AI & Big Data Expo 2025 at the Olympia, in London, Britain, (Image Source: Reuters)A copy of “The European Union Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act” on display during the AI & Big Data Expo 2025 at the Olympia, in London, Britain.

The European Commission set out guidelines on Friday to help AI models it has determined have systemic risks and face tougher obligations to mitigate potential threats comply with European Union artificial intelligence regulation (AI Act).

The move aims to counter criticism from some companies about the AI Act and the regulatory burden while providing more clarity to businesses which face fines ranging from 7.5 million euros (\$8.7 million) or 1.5% of turnover to 35 million euros or 7% of global turnover for violations.

The AI Act, which became law last year, will apply on Aug. 2 for AI models with systemic risks and foundation models such as those made by Google, OpenAI, Meta Platforms, Anthropic and Mistral. Companies have until August 2 next year to comply with the legislation.

## The Digital Product Passport’s (DPP) perfect tech stack? Blockchain and AI

BLOCKCHAIN



There is new news in the world of enterprise technology and B2B use cases, coming from Switzerland and Italy. Lexsential Law Firm has just assisted a group of investors in a strategic transaction in the blockchain and digital world.

**Who did what?**

The firm assisted Kelipe by Andrea Biffi (former CEO and shareholder of SOFAR S.p.A., former board member of Asensus

Inc. – a NYSE-listed company recently acquired by Karl Storz – president of 1Med S.A., CRO, Advisor to Alfasma S.p.A., board member of many international companies in the healthcare sector, and serial investor in the healthcare world), Stefano Farina (entrepreneur and investor in the healthcare sector), and Enrico Perfler (founder and board member of 1Med S.A.CRO, active in the pharma and medtech sectors and investor

in healthcare) in the investment round in DigitCo and in the latter’s acquisition of Tokenance’s digital assets. Tokenance is an innovative start-up that develops solutions combining blockchain systems and artificial intelligence, including the Tokenance Digital Product Passport + AI platform. Yes, you heard it right, it’s DPP, based on both blockchain and AI.

## UBISOFT’S OUT OF TOUCH SHAREHOLDERS THINK VALORANT WILL STEAL SALES

GAMING

At a recent Ubisoft shareholder meeting, Yves Guillemot and Frederick Duguet, CEO and CFO, respectively, fielded questions from a less-than-impressed audience. If nothing else, the session was a glaring indictment of how much the shareholders know about the company they’ve invested in.

At one point, a “20-year” individual shareholder slammed the company’s leadership and stressed his disappointment at the ‘catastrophic’ share price. After that, he demanded to know what Ubisoft is doing about VALORANT, a game that ‘a lot of people have been talking about’ that could steal sales from Ubisoft.

**‘VALORANT is a Top Five Game’**

During the question-and-answer segment of the recent general shareholder meeting, an investor stood up and unleashed an almighty fury upon Yves Guillemot and Frederick Duguet:

“I’m unhappy with the catastrophic share price, -40% over ten years, I’m very disappointed with everything we’ve been seeing of late. I’ve got real concerns. I don’t recognise Ubisoft that I once knew in the past. How is it that the head of HR saw nothing – we operate in these buildings, so how is it they didn’t stop it? How is it that nothing was seen and nothing was done? How can we tackle increasing prices, the fact that we have gamers that are becoming more demanding?”

He was talking about the recent allegations and internal concerns that came to light concerning abuse and volatile working conditions.



## SABAH MUSEUM EMBRACES AR/VR TECH, CULTURAL AMBASSADORS

AUGMENTED REALITY



## A Retro Gaming YouTuber Faces Potential Jail Time for Reviewing Pre-Loaded Consoles

GAMING

With the rise in prices for retro games and retro consoles – seriously, just look at how much GameCube games used to cost then versus now — more and more gamers are turning to emulation as a means to experience gaming’s past. That, or waiting for various developers to re-release their older titles via collections, like the upcoming Mortal Kombat: Legacy Collection.

However, it appears that even emulating games has its own risks. Just ask Italian YouTuber Once Were Nerd, who is facing a

litany of legal charges, including the potential for jail time — all over creating videos with emulated devices.

**Be Careful With What You Showcase On YouTube, Or Else You’ll Face The Consequences**

As first reported by Android Authority, Once Were Nerd, who covers retro gaming in-depth on YouTube, is facing legal repercussions not from the discussions they have, but rather the devices they’re using.



## IT’S TIME FOR HUMANITY’S BEST EXAM FOR AI

Better benchmarks can unlock the social benefits of AI technology.

The rhythm of artificial intelligence (AI) development has become unsettlingly familiar. A new model is unveiled, and with it comes a predictable flurry of media attention. One cluster of articles dissects its intricate training

data and architecture; another marvels, often breathlessly, at its newfound capabilities; and a third, almost inevitably, scrutinises its performance on a battery of standardised tests. These benchmarks have become our primary yardsticks for AI

progress. Yet, they predominantly paint a picture skewed toward raw technical prowess and potential peril, leaving the public with a pervasive feeling that each impressive step forward for AI might translate into two regrettable steps back for the rest of us.

Many of these evaluations concentrate on the technical capacity of the model or its computational horsepower. Others, with growing urgency, assess the likelihood of misuse—could this advanced AI empower rogue actors to design a bioweapon or destabilise critical infrastructure through sophisticated cyberattacks? A significant portion of evaluations also measures AI against human performance in specific job tasks, fuelling widespread anxieties about automation and diminished human agency.



BLOCKCHAIN

## Neo Blockchain Collaborates with ChainGPT to Power Decentralised Applications with Cutting-Edge AI

Neo Blockchain has announced a strategic collaboration with ChainGPT to integrate its trading ecosystem with powerful AI abilities.

Neo is a protocol network that allows people to develop decentralised solutions, including DApps and smart contracts. On the other hand, ChainGPT is an AI platform designed particularly for the decentralised and smart digital ecosystem.

The partnership between the two firms seeks to build a more intelligent and accessible digital asset economy.

**What This Alliance Means For Neo**

According to the announcement, this partnership will infuse ChainGPT’s AI toolbox into the Neo Blockchain ecosystem, including N3 and Neo X trading platforms.

With this partnership, Neo Blockchain will integrate



ChainGPT’s AI chatbot (specialised for decentralised interactions) within the Neo ecosystem. This means ChainGPT’s AI agents will help Neo Blockchain users and developers address enquiries regarding Neo’s ecosystem, decentralised applications, and smart contracts.

The partnership is set to be significantly beneficial for Neo Blockchain developers to develop smart contracts leveraging the power of AI with few or no coding requirements. This strategy will also remove obstacles facing businesses and developers seeking to build on Neo.



# Living energy

Learn how using vastu elements consciously transforms space into a mirror of your energy and growth

## CONSCIOUS VAASTU



Dr Harshit Kapadia

### Silent influence of space

Every space we inhabit silently shapes our thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The colours, layout, and invisible energy of a room affect how we feel and engage with life on a daily basis. Conscious Vaastu® recognizes this deep connection and provides a thoughtful way to understand, interpret, and positively influence it. At its core lies the belief that space is

never static, it constantly interacts with our personal energy and either evolves with us or holds us back. Through this lens, Conscious Vaastu® categorizes spatial energy into three distinct types: Outdated, Evolving, and Evolved.

### Outdated (Static) energy

**Definition:** Energy that has remained unchanged for years - walls, furniture, and emotional patterns locked in place.

**Example:** A bedroom with the same paint / wall-paper, and layout for years without any refresh.

**Experience:** Feels dull, heavy, and uninspiring. **Impact:** Reflects a fixed mindset; individuals may feel stuck or disconnected from growth.

Resistance to change both physical and emotional, which can result in lethargy that mirrors the space itself.

### Evolving (Fluid) energy

**Definition:** Flexible energy that adapts with time and purpose.

**Example:** A space that's regularly uplifted or rearranged according to current needs, inspiring innovation and flow.

**Experience:** Revitalizing, fresh, and energizing. **Impact:** Encourages flexibility, curiosity, and personal development.

These spaces carry a dynamic rhythm. They shift organically supporting resilience, movement, and openness to change.

### Evolved (Luminous) energy

**Definition:** Elevated energy that uplifts and inspires everyone within it.

**Example:** A thoughtfully designed, well-lit space with natural elements and clear energy flow.

**Experience:** Vibrant, clear, and visionary. **Impact:** Supports leadership, intuition, and mental clarity.

Evolved environments pulse with purpose and higher resonance, recharging emotional energy and sharpening inner focus.

### People reflect their spaces

Just as the three energy profiles identified by Conscious Vaastu® influence our mindset and emotions, our personal energy also directly impacts the quality of space around us. Conscious Vaastu® views space as a living entity that responds to the vibrations of those who inhabit it.



PIC: FREEPIK

### Mindset and space profile

Our personal mindset shapes the spaces we inhabit and those spaces shape us in return. Conscious Vaastu® helps us identify which of the three profiles we currently embody:

Energy Identity	Traits	Energy Profile
Fixed-Mindset Individual	Resists change, stuck in old patterns	Outdated / Static
Growth-Oriented Individual	Open to feedback, learns and adapts	Evolving / Fluid
Visionary Individual	Builds toward the future, inspires others	Evolved / Luminous

Understanding this relationship empowers a conscious lifestyle. This one important conscious step can initiate meaningful transformation. Stay aware, and continue nurturing that high vibration with consistent effort and care.

### Energy alignment tips

True harmony happens when inner energy matches outer space. Here are simple tips to help you align energy consciously:

**Introduce movement:** Shift furniture or create open pathways to keep energy flowing.

**Increase light:** Use natural light wherever possible. If limited, add warm or balanced lighting to brighten your space.

**Allow change:** Implement subtle updates whenever you feel stagnant, change invites new energy and perspective.

**Uplift personal energy:** Surround yourself with positive intentions, movement, and joy that reflect who you're becoming not just who you've been.

Even small adjustments can refresh your environment and elevate your emotional well-being.

PIC: FREEPIK



Gita Hariani

# WHAT'S ON THE CARDS?

Here's what the cards suggest from July 26 to August 8 for all zodiac signs

**Universal Theme for the next 15 days – Three of Wands: A time of expansion, growth, new opportunities and travel**

Gita Hariani is a numerologist, tarot card reader, Bach flowers practitioner and banker. Follow her on Instagram: @evolvewithgithariani



### Aries 6 of Wands: Success after a long struggle

You will be recognised for a job well done. You will taste success after a long struggle. All your hard work will be applauded. Continue to work hard and stay on your course. You will feel confident and empowered. Preen like a peacock.



### Taurus Knight of Swords: Take decisive action

A time wherein you will feel confident and passionate and focused. Make the changes required to reach your goals. You will wear blinkers and take decisive action. You will get things moving. Not a time to sit around and do nothing, but to take the reins in your hand. This attitude accompanied by well thought through plans and action guarantees success. Be sure but not reckless.



### Gemini 8 of Cups: Move on

You may be feeling at a loss. You need to move on from that relationship or job or toxic situation that doesn't serve you. You are propelled to a better and a higher journey of that which works in your highest interests. It is a journey of finding your inner self, almost spiritual in nature. Have faith and you will emerge stronger and happier.



### Cancer Moon: Mood swings, subconscious

This feeling is a bit illusive, deceptive, like what meets the eye is not the truth. Delve in the darkness, trust your intuition, your inner voice to guide you and no one else. Everything feels like an illusion. Do not overthink. Let things flow. Secrets could be revealed. Mood swings could increase. Listen to music, meditate, and have faith. Soon clarity will beckon.



### Leo Sun: Joy, vitality, shine

It's your birthday month and you are shining. People are noticing you and your talents and pouring you with love and appreciation. You are trending on social media and other platforms. You are feeling alive. Soak in the sun, bask in your glory, but keep your eye on the prize.



### Virgo Star: A period of hope and faith

Someone up there loves you and sends you loads of blessings. You will feel hopeful and positive. All the pieces will start to fall in the right places. Things, people, relationships move forward. You feel rejuvenated, healed and connected to the universe. Health is highly improved.



### Libra 6 of Cups: Childhood memories, children and grandparents

You are going to have a blast from the past revisiting your childhood memories, your friends, your growing up homes, and most importantly your parents and grand parents. Life is simple and innocent almost childlike. You are happy and you feel safe and protected.



### Scorpio 10 of Cups: Emotional fulfillment

Bliss, happiness, love, contentment, and gratitude for the family and a blessed life. Emotional happiness. You are feeling good. Be grateful and thank the universe for your blessings. There is a sense of belonging and a thriving atmosphere be it at home or in your career. There is financial well-being. You could be celebrating a special occasion or just life.



### Sagittarius 3 of Pentacles: Team work

It's a collaborative atmosphere wherein everyone comes together to help and enable. Team work is amazing and organic. You will find success in partnerships and collabs. Like a well-oiled machine everyone seems to be working towards a common goal. Each one's skill will be recognised and put to use well.



### Capricorn 5 of Wands: Conflicts, aggression

There is aggression and conflict in the atmosphere. People don't seem to be streamlined but rather entertaining fights and disharmony. Ambition and selfishness drive actions. Try to understand the situation and dial it down. Don't loose your cool but don't get pushed over either. Stand firm and silent. Work quietly. Try being more collaborative.



### Aquarius Strength: Resilience, patience

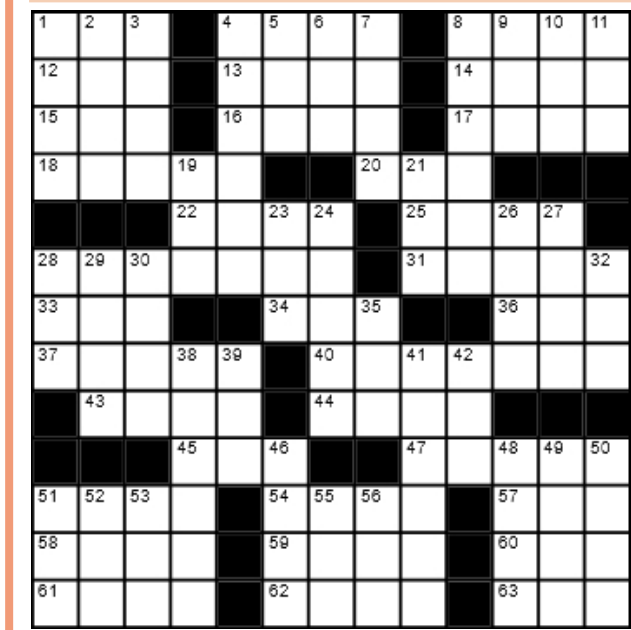
Overcome challenges with inner strength and patience. Know that this is the time to stand your ground with resilience not aggression. A quiet and silent approach will help. Harness your inner strength with courage and compassion and you will emerge victorious.



### Pisces Hierophant: Traditions, structure

A time to conform to old age traditions, respect authority, institutions, religious heads, and established social structures. They will show you the right direction. Be independent but don't break away. This period asks for you to pursue knowledge and old values. Traditions and marriage, guidance and wisdom of the yesteryears beckon.

## Crossword #1574



- Across**
- African Natl. Cong.
  - Hindu god of fire
  - Slender
  - \_\_\_\_\_ good boy : behave yourself (2,1)
  - Heath
  - Exchange fee
  - Prepare for war
  - Priestly robes
  - Berlin negative
  - Precious stone
  - Geometric proof is complete
  - Ransack
  - Indonesian island
  - Television aerial
  - Movement of the eyelids
  - "Bravo!"
  - U-turn from WSW
  - Noah's boat
  - Dairy topping
  - Shine, sparkle or twinkle
  - End piece
  - Gumbo vegetable
  - Mr Morrison of the Doors
  - Is aware of
  - Sweetheart
  - Morales of movies
  - "Bad Behaviour" star Stephen
  - Donation to poor
  - Norse god
  - Pounds abbr
  - Surfeit or excess
  - Part of a plane
  - The letter "S"
- Down**
- Blind as \_\_\_\_\_ (1,3)
  - Fiddling emperor
  - A body of troops in tents
  - Great river
  - Mass
  - Wealthy person - "bon" anagram?
  - Dessert Storm place?
  - Item of footwear
  - Large, abbr.
  - Latin trio
  - "My" in French ?
  - Type of beer
  - Flow back
  - Undivided
  - It takes two to \_\_\_\_\_ ?
  - Oasis lead singer \_\_\_\_\_ Gallagher
  - Concerning, in legal terms (2,2)
  - Pendulum's path
  - Undercover cop, in short
  - English footballer \_\_\_\_\_ Walcott
  - IPL team from Kolkata
  - Large deer
  - Fix or straighten
  - May in France
  - Annoying or irritating
  - Adult male
  - Siamese cry?
  - Shield or heraldic border
  - They are woven by spiders
  - Impudence
  - Purse or a satchel
  - Former measure of length
  - Atomic mass unit
  - Star Wars, initially
  - Scots "own"

## YOUR DAY By Vinayak Vishwas Karandikar



**ARIES:** Today is the day for emotional and spiritual growth; also, you may travel. Expect expenditure on spiritual practices, education, or mental well-being. People in psychology, holistic healing, education, and social work will benefit. You may spend time reflecting on relationships. A good day for introspection and meditation. Lucky number: 7; Lucky colour: Light Blue



**Taurus:** Business partnerships and financial planning will be important today. Expect expenditure on networking, legal matters or financial planning. People in finance, law, consultancy, and those working on contracts will benefit. A good time for deep conversations with family and close friends. Some people may suffer from joint pain or muscle stiffness. Lucky number: 4; Lucky colour: Green



**Gemini:** Communication and clarity will be crucial today. Expect expenditure on health check-ups, communication tools or professional fees. People in media, content writing, counselling, and astrology will find success. Family discussions may lead to emotional healing. Some people may suffer from throat infections, sinus issues or eye strain. Lucky number: 5; Lucky colour: Yellow



**Cancer:** Work and relationships may feel challenging today. Expect expenditure on home repairs, health or family obligations. People in healthcare, insurance, and mental health services will benefit. Disagreements with family members may arise. Patience is the key. Some people may suffer from digestive issues or headaches. Lucky number: 2; Lucky colour: White



**Leo:** Recognition and rewards for past efforts will come today. Expect expenditure on luxury items, career advancement or business needs. People in finance, medicine, and HR will benefit. Responsibilities may affect your family time. Balance is necessary. Some people may suffer from eye strain or back pain. Lucky number: 9; Lucky colour: Orange



**Virgo:** Financial growth and stability are indicated today. Expect expenditure on education, travel or leisure activities. People in law, entertainment, and teaching will benefit. Small disagreements with your spouse or children may arise. Some people may suffer from stress-related issues or digestive problems. Lucky number: 6; Lucky colour: Brown



**Libra:** Time to focus on family bonding and relaxation. Expect expenditure on home decor, family outings or entertainment. People in the art field, media, and spirituality will benefit. A good day for meditation and family bonding. Some people may suffer from respiratory issues or back pain. Lucky number: 3; Lucky colour: Pink



**Scorpio:** Self-reflection and emotional healing are needed today. Expect expenditure on education, travel or therapy. People in research, consultancy, tourism, and psychology will benefit. A peaceful day to focus on home and personal well-being. Some people may suffer from shoulder pain or allergies. Lucky number: 2; Lucky colour: White



**Sagittarius:** Effort and patience will bring rewards today. Stuck payments may be recovered. A good day for financial planning. People in communications, the literary field, and public speaking will be successful. Your children may require attention and care today. Some people may suffer from toothaches or eye problems. Lucky number: 9; Lucky colour: Red



**Capricorn:** Financial gains and delayed rewards are expected today. Expect expenditure on family needs, health or home investments. People in banking, finance, and education will benefit. A good day to relax and enjoy time with family. Some people may suffer from minor throat or dental issues. Lucky number: 8; Lucky colour: Silver

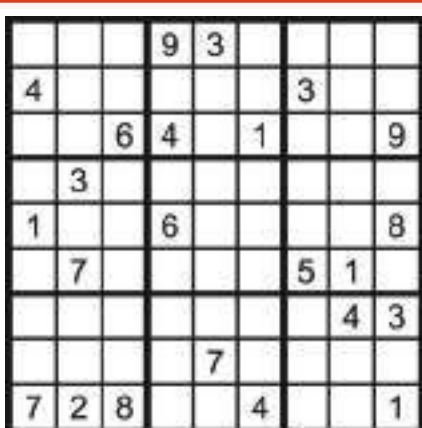


**Aquarius:** Travel, investments, and self-improvement are in focus today. Expect expenditure on medical needs, self-care or professional courses. People in healthcare, tourism, and finance will benefit. Emotional distance in relationships may be felt. Some people may suffer from sinus issues or throat infections. Lucky number: 3; Lucky colour: Blue



**Pisces:** A day of celebrations, emotional fulfilment, and travel. Expect expenditure on celebrations, vacations or self-improvement. People in entertainment, spirituality, and sports will benefit. Your travel plans may face minor delays but will be enjoyable. Some people may suffer from fatigue, anxiety or hair loss. Lucky number: 7; Lucky colour: Black

## FRJ - SUDOKU - 465



## Solution

Across: 1. ANC, 4. April, 8. slim, 12. Be a, 13. Moor, 14. Agio, 15. Mm, 16. Abba, 17. 20, 18. 22, 19. 22, 20. 22, 21. 22, 22. 22, 23. 22, 24. 22, 25. 22, 26. 22, 27. 22, 28. 22, 29. 22, 30. 22, 31. 22, 32. 22, 33. 22, 34. 22, 35. 22, 36. 22, 37. 22, 38. 22, 39. 22, 40. 22, 41. 22, 42. 22, 43. 22, 44. 22, 45. 22, 46. 22, 47. 22, 48. 22, 49. 22, 50. 22, 51. 22, 52. 22, 53. 22, 54. 22, 55. 22, 56. 22, 57. 22, 58. 22, 59. 22, 60. 22, 61. 22, 62. 22, 63. 22, 64. 22, 65. 22, 66. 22, 67. 22, 68. 22, 69. 22, 70. 22, 71. 22, 72. 22, 73. 22, 74. 22, 75. 22, 76. 22, 77. 22, 78. 22, 79. 22, 80. 22, 81. 22, 82. 22, 83. 22, 84. 22, 85. 22, 86. 22, 87. 22, 88. 22, 89. 22, 90. 22, 91. 22, 92. 22, 93. 22, 94. 22, 95. 22, 96. 22, 97. 22, 98. 22, 99. 22, 100. 22, 101. 22, 102. 22, 103. 22, 104. 22, 105. 22, 106. 22, 107. 22, 108. 22, 109. 22, 110. 22, 111. 22, 112. 22, 113. 22, 114. 22, 115. 22, 116. 22, 117. 22, 118. 22, 119. 22, 120. 22, 121. 22, 122. 22, 123. 22, 124. 22, 125. 22, 126. 22, 127. 22, 128. 22, 129. 22, 130. 22, 131. 22, 132. 22, 133. 22, 134. 22, 135. 22, 136. 22, 137. 22, 138. 22, 139. 22, 140. 22, 141. 22, 142. 22, 143. 22, 144. 22, 145. 22, 146. 22, 147. 22, 148. 22, 149. 22, 150. 22, 151. 22, 152. 22, 153. 22, 154. 22, 155. 22, 156. 22, 157. 22, 158. 22, 159. 22, 160. 22, 161. 22, 162. 22, 163. 22, 164. 22, 165. 22, 166. 22, 167. 22, 168. 22, 169. 22, 170. 22, 171. 22, 172. 22, 173. 22, 174. 22, 175. 22, 176. 22, 177. 22, 178. 22, 179. 22, 180. 22, 181. 22, 182. 22, 183. 22, 184. 22, 185. 22, 186. 22, 187. 22, 188. 22, 189. 22, 190. 22, 191. 22, 192. 22, 193. 22, 194. 22, 195. 22, 196. 22, 197. 22, 198. 22, 199. 22, 200. 22, 201. 22, 202. 22, 203. 22, 204. 22, 205. 22, 206. 22, 207. 22, 208. 22, 209. 22, 210. 22, 211. 22, 212. 22, 213. 22, 214. 22, 215. 22, 216. 22, 217. 22, 218. 22, 219. 22, 220. 22, 221. 22, 222. 22, 223. 22, 224. 22, 225. 22, 226. 22, 227. 22, 228. 22, 229. 22, 230. 22, 231. 22, 232. 22, 233. 22, 234. 22, 235. 22, 236. 22, 237. 22, 238. 22, 239. 22, 240. 22, 241. 22, 242. 22, 243. 22, 244. 22, 245. 22, 246. 22, 247. 22, 248. 22, 249. 22, 250. 22, 251. 22, 252. 22, 253. 22, 254. 22, 255. 22, 256. 22, 257. 22, 258. 22, 259. 22, 260. 22, 261. 22, 262. 22, 263. 22, 264. 22, 265. 22, 266. 22, 267. 22, 268. 22, 269. 22, 270. 22, 271. 22, 272. 22, 273. 22, 274. 22, 275. 22, 276. 22, 277. 22, 278. 22, 279. 22, 280. 22, 281. 22, 282. 22, 283. 22, 284. 22, 285. 22, 286. 22, 287. 22, 288. 22, 289. 22, 290. 22, 291. 22, 292. 22, 293. 22, 294. 22, 295. 22, 296. 22, 297. 22, 298. 22, 299. 22, 300. 22, 301. 22, 302. 22, 303. 22, 304. 22, 305. 22, 306. 22, 307. 22, 308. 22, 309. 22, 310. 22, 311. 22, 312. 22, 313. 22, 314. 22, 315. 22, 316. 22, 317. 22, 318. 22, 319. 22, 320. 22, 321. 22, 322. 22, 323. 22, 324. 22, 325. 22, 326. 22, 327. 22, 328. 22, 329. 22, 330. 22, 331. 22, 332. 22, 333. 22, 334. 22, 335. 22, 336. 22, 337. 22, 338. 22, 339. 22, 340. 22, 341. 22, 342. 22, 343. 22, 344. 22, 345. 22, 346. 22, 347. 22, 348. 22, 349. 22, 350. 22, 351. 22, 352. 22, 353. 22, 354. 22, 355. 22, 356. 22, 357. 22, 358. 22, 359. 22, 360. 22, 361. 22, 362. 22, 363. 22, 364. 22, 365. 22, 366. 22, 367. 22, 368. 22, 369. 22, 370. 22, 371. 22, 372. 22, 373. 22, 374. 22, 375. 22, 376. 22, 377. 22, 378. 22, 379. 22, 380. 22, 381. 22, 382. 22, 383. 22, 384. 22, 385. 22, 386. 22, 387. 22, 388. 22, 389. 22, 390. 22, 391. 22, 392. 22, 393. 22, 394. 22, 395. 22, 396. 22, 397. 22, 398. 22, 399. 22, 400. 22, 401. 22, 402. 22, 403. 22, 404. 22, 405. 22, 406. 22, 407. 22, 408. 22, 409. 22, 410. 22, 411. 22, 412. 22, 413. 22, 414. 22, 415. 22, 416. 22, 417. 22, 418. 22, 419. 22, 420. 22, 421. 22, 422. 22, 423. 22, 424. 22, 425. 22, 426. 22, 427. 22, 428. 22, 429. 22, 430. 22, 431. 22, 432. 22, 433. 22, 434. 22, 435. 22, 436. 22, 437. 22, 438. 22, 439. 22, 440. 22, 441. 22, 442. 22, 443. 22, 444. 22, 445. 22, 446. 22, 447. 22, 448. 22, 449. 22, 450. 22, 451. 22, 452. 22, 453. 22, 454. 22, 455. 22, 456. 22, 457. 22, 458. 22, 459. 22, 460. 22, 461. 22, 462. 22, 463. 22, 464. 22, 465. 22, 466. 22, 467. 22, 468. 22, 469. 22, 470. 22, 471. 22, 472. 22, 473. 22, 474. 22, 475. 22, 476. 22, 477. 22, 478. 22, 479. 22, 480. 22, 481. 22, 482. 22, 483. 22, 484. 22, 485. 22, 486. 22, 487. 22, 488. 22, 489. 22, 490. 22, 491. 22, 492. 22, 493. 22, 494. 22, 495. 22, 496. 22, 497. 22, 498. 22, 499. 22, 500. 22, 501. 22, 502. 22, 503. 22, 504. 22, 505. 22, 506. 22, 507. 22, 508. 22, 509. 22, 510. 22, 511. 22, 512. 22, 513. 22, 514. 22, 515. 22, 516. 22, 517. 22, 518. 22, 519. 22, 520. 22, 521. 22, 522. 22, 523. 22, 524. 22, 525. 22, 526. 22, 527. 22, 528. 22, 529. 22, 530. 22, 531. 22, 532. 22, 533. 22, 534. 22, 535. 22, 536. 22, 537. 22, 538. 22, 539. 22, 540. 22, 541. 22, 542. 22, 543. 22, 544. 22, 545. 22, 546. 22, 547. 22, 548. 22, 549. 22, 550. 22, 551. 22, 552. 22, 553. 22, 554. 22, 555. 22, 556. 22, 557. 22, 558. 22, 559. 22, 560. 22, 561. 22, 562. 22, 563. 22, 564. 22, 565. 22, 566. 22,



GADGET RADAR

Realme 15 Pro

Realme has launched the Realme 15 Pro 5G and Realme 15 5G in India, priced from Rs. 23,999 to Rs. 35,999. The 15 Pro features a Snapdragon 7 Gen 4 chip, 7,000mAh battery, 50MP triple cameras, and a 144Hz AMOLED display. The Realme 15 has a Dimensity 7300+ chip and dual rear cameras. Both run Android 15, offer AI editing features, and come in Velvet Green, Silk Purple, and Flowing Silver. Sales begin July 30 with pre-bookings open now.

Realme Buds T200

Realme has launched the Buds T200 TWS earbuds in India at ₹1,999, with a limited-time offer price of ₹1,699. Key features include 12.4mm drivers, up to 50 hours of playback (35 hours with ANC), 32dB Active Noise Cancellation, LDAC support, quad-mic with AI noise reduction, and 45ms low-latency mode. The earbuds offer Bluetooth 5.4, dual-device pairing, and IP55 dust and water resistance. Available from August 1 in four colours—Dreamy Purple, Neon Green, Mystic Grey, and Snowy White.

iQoo Z10R



iQOO has launched the Z10R in India, a mid-range smartphone with a 6.77-inch quad-curved AMOLED display, MediaTek Dimensity 7400 chip, and 5,700mAh battery with 44W fast charging. It supports up to 12GB RAM, features dual 4K video recording with a 50MP Sony IMX882 main sensor and 32MP front camera, and offers IP68/IP69 protection. Priced from Rs. 19,499 (effective Rs. 17,499 with offers), the Z10R goes on sale July 29 via Amazon and iQoo.com with bank discounts and exchange bonuses.

OnePlus Pad Lite



OnePlus has launched the budget-friendly Pad Lite in India, featuring an 11-inch LCD display, MediaTek Helio G100 chip, up to 8GB RAM, and 128GB storage. It packs a 9,340mAh battery with 33W fast charging, offering up to 80 hours of music playback. Running OxygenOS 15.0.1, it includes quad speakers with Dolby Atmos and multi-window support. Priced at Rs. 12,999 and Rs. 14,999, it goes on sale August 1 via OnePlus, Amazon, Flipkart, and other major retailers.

Tasneem Kanchwala

The OnePlus Nord 5 is here, and it's aiming to reclaim its spot as the go-to choice for value-conscious smartphone buyers. Priced smartly and packed with premium features, it's positioned just above the budget crowd but below true flagships—right where OnePlus' Nord range made its name. The OnePlus Nord 5 brings meaningful upgrades across the board, refining its design, boosting performance, and extending battery life.

Design

The OnePlus Nord 5 marks a bold departure in design from its predecessor, with a fresh aesthetic that's both modern and distinctive. The most noticeable change is the rear camera module—gone is the minimal vertical alignment of the Nord 4. In its place, you now get a pill-shaped, capsule-like enclosure that houses two large camera sensors and an LED flash. The back panel is made of velvety textured glass, which not only adds a premium feel but also improves grip during everyday use. However, OnePlus has opted for a plastic frame this time, a curious downgrade from the sturdier metal build of the Nord 4.

Button and port placements are largely intuitive. You'll find the speaker grille, USB Type-C port, and SIM tray at the bottom, while the top edge houses a secondary microphone and ambient sensor. The volume rocker and power button sit on the right side, and unlike most phones in this segment, OnePlus has retained the iconic alert slider—now placed on the left edge. One thing to note: the Nord 5 is slightly bulkier and heavier than the Nord 4, which may be due to internal upgrades, bigger screen, and the larger battery. Despite the added weight, the phone still feels well-balanced in the hand, with good ergonomics for everyday use. The OnePlus Nord 5 is 8.1mm thick and the display has Corning Gorilla 7i protection.

The Nord 5 is rated IP65, ensuring comprehensive protection against dust and strong water jets—excellent assurance for daily spills and splashes. To compare, the Oppo Reno 14 upstages the Nord 5 with a higher IP69 rating, which means it withstands not just water jets but also high-pressure and high-temperature water sprays. In any case, always slap on a good protective cover and apply a screen guard right out of the box. Even with Gorilla Glass 7i protection on the Nord 5 or top-tier durability claims elsewhere, daily wear-and-tear, minor drops, and those dreaded micro-scratches are inevitable.

Display

The OnePlus Nord 5 has a 6.83-inch Swift AMOLED panel. It has ultra-narrow bezels on all sides and a screen-to-body ratio of over 93% percent. Outdoor usage is decent: the screen comfortably pushes 1,800nits peak brightness in high-brightness mode, with typical levels at 800nits and up to 1,400nits HBM, ensuring crisp clarity even in direct sunlight. HDR10+ and Dolby Vision support mean content gets all the bold colors, deep shadows, and dynamic highlights it deserves, and the 10-bit color depth (1.07 billion colors) helps everything pop. The 3,000Hz touch response and the adaptive 144Hz refresh rate makes transitions and animations feel seamless, while 1.5K resolution keeps everything sharp and super-detailed. OnePlus adds thoughtful extras like Aqua Touch 2.0 to keep the touchscreen responsive, even with wet fingers—handy for sudden rain showers or post-workout texts.

Software

The OnePlus Nord 5 runs OxygenOS 15, and for me, this is hands down one of the cleanest, most delightful Android experiences you can get—no contest. OnePlus promises a generous four years of Android OS updates and six years of security patches, a major reassurance in today's fast-paced smartphone market. Day-to-day use is a breeze: the system is intuitive, slick, and bloatware is kept to a minimum.

You'll find just a handful of removable pre-installed apps, so there's nothing here to bog down your phone or clutter the interface unnecessarily. In all my usage, app launches and multi-tasking have been lightning-fast, and the fluidity truly lives up to OnePlus's reputation—no lag, no bugs, just a genuinely smooth and reliable experience.



REVIEW

OnePlus Nord 5: Hype Or Hit?

Big specs, bold design, and strong performance—can this sub-₹36K phone truly stand out?



**Rating:** ★★★★★ (4/5)  
**Pros:** Great battery life, flagship-level camera, strong performance, clean software  
**Cons:** Plastic frame, no UFS 4.0



Performance

The OnePlus Nord 5 sports the Snapdragon 8s Gen 3 chip built on a 4nm process. This translates into impressive performance, whether you're gaming at extreme FPS, multitasking, or just plowing through day-to-day apps. Heavy-duty tasks run smoothly alongside advanced AI processing, and thanks to the category's largest vapor chamber cooling, heat is kept impressively under control—even during extended gaming sessions. The Nord 5 excels at sustained high-fps gaming and feels more responsive under load.

The OnePlus Nord 5 is available in three configurations: 8GB RAM + 256GB, 12GB + 256GB, and 12GB + 512GB, all using fast LPDDR5X RAM and UFS 3.1 storage. You also get RAM Expansion up to 12GB, ensuring smooth multitasking even in heavier workflows. All variants of the OnePlus Nord 5 come with UFS 3.1 storage. Interestingly, even the higher-end models miss out on UFS 4.0—despite it being available in the previous generation. It's a noticeable omission, especially for users expecting the latest storage tech in this price segment.

Camera

The camera system on the OnePlus Nord 5 is a definitive upgrade over the Nord 4, making a strong statement in this price segment. The main rear camera now uses a flagship-grade 50-megapixel Sony LYT-700 sensor with triple-axis OIS, capturing images with excellent sharpness, rich detail, and impressive dynamic range—particularly noticeable in daylight, where colors are vivid but faithful and even complex scenes retain depth across highlights and shadows.

Daylight photography is a treat: the Nord 5 produces crisp, natural shots, with great balance between detail and texture. Portrait mode leverages sensor hardware and sophisticated algorithms to nail subject-background separation, delivering genuinely striking results. In low-light, the main sensor impresses by reducing noise without smudging details; colors remain accurate and images don't suffer from artificial over-brightening—a leap above its predecessor.

The 8-megapixel ultra-wide rear lens, while serviceable, doesn't stand out, and there's nothing particularly noteworthy to report here. It's handy for group shots or capturing more of a landscape but isn't the highlight of the camera setup. Selfies have received a huge facelift as well, thanks to the introduction of a new 50-megapixel ISOCELL JN5 sensor on the front, which delivers stunning clarity and natural color tones. There's also a host of editing options thanks to the AI Editor that allows users to smoothen out skin tone, improve clarity, and composition.

Battery

The OnePlus Nord 5 brings a substantial leap in battery life, packing a giant 6,800mAh battery—an upgrade that's hard to miss when coming from the Nord 4's 5,500mAh cell. While the Nord 4 carried faster 100W charging, the Nord 5's 80W SUPERVOOC charging still feels plenty rapid in daily life. In practice, a quick 10-minute top-up reliably gives you about five hours of solid use, so real-world convenience barely suffers. Where you really notice the improvement is in screen-on time and ongoing endurance: the Nord 5 easily delivers 10–11 hours of active screen time per charge, outlasting most rivals and making power anxiety nearly obsolete. The larger battery dramatically extends use between charges and is keenly felt in long gaming sessions, video calls, or all-day navigation.

Price and availability

OnePlus Nord 5 is priced in India at Rs. 29,999 for the 8GB RAM + 256GB storage, Rs. 32,999 for the 12GB RAM + 256GB storage, and Rs. 35,999 for the 12GB RAM + 512GB storage options.

Conclusion

The OnePlus Nord 5 delivers where it counts—performance, battery life, display quality, and camera output—making it one of the most well-rounded mid-range phones. However, the plastic frame and omission of UFS 4.0 are noticeable compromises. If you're considering alternatives, Nothing Phone 3a Pro and Motorola Edge 60 Pro can be alternatives.

CLASH OF THE TITANS

Apple, Samsung, OnePlus lead 60% surge, driven by Tier 2+ demand and no-cost EMIs



Amazon India's Prime Day 2025 has marked a significant shift in the country's smartphone buying trends, with Apple, Samsung, and OnePlus emerging as the top-performing brands in the premium smartphone segment—defined as devices priced above Rs. 30,000.

Aggressive offers on the iPhone 16 range, along with compelling deals on Samsung Galaxy S24 series and OnePlus 13 lineup, played a key role in driving premium smartphone sales during Prime Day 2025. Deep discounts, no-cost EMI, and exchange bonuses made flagship devices more accessible, especially in Tier 2 and 3 cities, fueling demand across segments.

According to data shared by Amazon, the premium smartphone category saw over 60 percent growth in value compared to Prime Day 2024. Interestingly, nearly 70 percent of this growth came from Tier 2 and beyond cities, indicating rising demand for high-end devices outside traditional metro markets. This signals both increased aspirational buying and the growing digital maturity of smaller towns.



Amazon also revealed that 1 in 4 spends during Prime Day were on EMIs, with 90 percent of those EMIs at no-cost, making flagship devices more accessible to a broader customer base. The average selling price (ASP) across smartphones rose across all city tiers, further highlighting a decisive shift toward premium devices. While smartphones remained the headline attraction, consumer electronics also witnessed strong momentum. Categories like AI-enabled laptops, premium tablets, wearables, and action cameras saw substantial growth. Premium audio devices recorded double-digit adoption increases, particularly in Tier 2 cities. The Amazon Fire TV Stick HD emerged as the third most purchased electronic item, and Xiaomi's 55-inch FX Pro QLED with built-in Fire TV featured among the top five QLED TVs. Furthermore, the latest Kindle Paperwhite was the most purchased e-reader on Amazon.in.

Amazon India says that Prime Day 2025 emerged as the most successful edition yet. Over the course of the three-day event, Prime members placed more than 18,000 orders in a single minute—a 50 percent jump over last year. Reflecting deeper market penetration, 70 percent of new Prime sign-ups came from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, reinforcing the growing influence of non-metro India. Delivery performance also saw notable improvements, with 4-hour deliveries enabled in Tier 1 cities, while same or next-day deliveries in metros doubled year-on-year. In Tier 2 and 3 towns, delivery within two days grew 1.8X.

On the B2B front, Amazon Business reported a 9X jump in tablet sales, 5X growth in laptops, and 13X growth in televisions. The company attributed this surge to affordability-led premiumization, driven by bank discounts, exchange offers, and instant coupons.

Learn AI with Google

Eight beginner-friendly courses simplify core AI concepts using real-world examples, prompts, and certifications

Google lists a host of free AI courses as part of its ongoing efforts to make artificial intelligence education accessible globally. Available through online platforms, these courses aim to equip individuals with the essential knowledge and skills required to understand and work with AI technologies. With tech companies now urging employees to become 'AI sound', these courses could be a great starting point. The initiative is part of Google's broader push to promote digital literacy and help users, professionals, and developers adapt to the evolving technology landscape. These self-paced courses are suited for beginners and are designed to simplify complex AI concepts using real-world examples and interactive content. The courses currently available include: **Introduction to Generative AI:** This course provides a basic overview of generative AI technologies, how they work, and their use cases. **Introduction to Large Language Models (LLMs):** Learners explore the fundamentals of LLMs, their structure, and capabilities. **Introduction to Responsible AI:**

Google I/O India Highlights

At Google I/O Connect India 2025, held in Bengaluru, the tech giant announced a range of AI-focused initiatives to support India's fast-growing developer community. Key highlights included the localisation of Gemini 2.5 Flash with India-based data centres, the launch of Agentic AI tools in Firebase Studio, and a partnership with Unity for game development training. Google also introduced open-source Gemma 3 models and new collaborations with India AI Mission startups. With enhancements to Google Maps APIs and the return of its Gen AI Exchange Hackathon, the event reinforced Google's commitment to empowering Indian developers with advanced tools and global opportunities.

Focuses on building and deploying AI responsibly by addressing ethical considerations and bias mitigation. **Prompt Design in Vertex AI:** Focuses on prompt engineering, image analysis, and multimodal generative techniques,

within Vertex AI. Discover how to craft effective prompts, and guide generative AI output. **ntroduction to Image Generation:** Covers AI techniques that create images using prompts, such as diffusion and GAN models. **Encoder-Decoder Architecture:** Explains how encoder-decoder models work in tasks like language translation and summarization. **Attention Mechanism:** A detailed look at how attention mechanisms enhance the performance of AI models. **Transformer Models and BERT:** Introduces one of the most widely used model architectures, focusing on BERT and its NLP applications. The courses are hosted on Google's learning platform and accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Most include video content, quizzes, and reading materials to reinforce understanding. Upon completion, participants can earn completion badges or certificates, depending on the course. These courses are expected to benefit students, professionals, educators, and anyone interested in entering the AI field.





## Eight ayurvedic herbs and their lucky vastu placements

Jyoti S

In the bustling rhythm of modern life, finding balance and tranquility within our living spaces is paramount. The ancient Indian practice of Vastu Shastra, akin to Feng Shui, offers a holistic approach to harmonizing our surroundings for enhanced well-being. Integrating Ayurvedic principles into Vastu design further amplifies the positive energy flow within our homes. Among the myriad tools Vastu offers, the strategic placement of Ayurvedic herbs stands out as a potent means of fostering health, prosperity, and harmony. Let's delve into eight such herbs and their auspicious Vastu placements to infuse your home with vitality and balance.

**● Tulsi (Holy basil):** Revered for its medicinal properties and spiritual significance, Tulsi finds its place at the northeast corner of the house, known as the Ishan corner. This placement enhances positivity, promotes mental clarity, and purifies the air, ensuring a serene atmosphere conducive to meditation and introspection.

**● Neem:** With its potent antibacterial and purifying qualities, Neem thrives when positioned in the east or southeast direction. Placing Neem here helps to dispel negative energies, foster vitality, and promote physical health, making it an ideal addition to spaces where hygiene is paramount, such as kitchens and bathrooms.

**● Aloe vera:** Renowned for its healing properties, Aloe Vera flourishes when placed in the north or northeast direction. This placement encourages prosperity, abundance, and emotional balance while also offering protection against negative influences. Aloe Vera's soothing presence fosters a sense of calm and rejuvenation in the home.

**● Brahmi (Gotu kola):** Known for its cognitive-enhancing properties, Brahmi finds its ideal spot in the northeast or east direction. Placing Brahmi here enhances intellectual pursuits, concentration, and mental clarity, making it conducive to study areas, home offices, or children's rooms.



**● Ashwagandha:** Valued for its adaptogenic properties and stress-relieving benefits, Ashwagandha thrives when positioned in the north or northwest direction. Placing Ashwagandha here promotes emotional stability, resilience, and a sense of security, fostering a harmonious atmosphere within the home.



**● Turmeric:** Celebrated for its anti-inflammatory and purifying properties, Turmeric finds its place in the northeast or southeast direction. This placement enhances vitality, prosperity, and spiritual growth while also offering protection against negative energies. Turmeric's vibrant presence infuses the home with warmth and positivity.

**● Lemongrass:** Known for its invigorating scent and insect-repelling properties, Lemongrass finds its ideal spot in the east or southeast direction. Placing Lemongrass here enhances positivity, clarity, and spiritual growth while also providing protection against pests and negative energies.

Somya Ojha

Does your hair have a rough texture and look dry and unruly? Do you always have to rely on store-bought serums to make your hair appear moisturized and soft? If you answered yes to all the above questions, then do read on to know about certain homemade hair masks made with aloe vera gel that can restore moisture into dry hair and soften its texture. Aloe vera gel is an excellent source of numerous hair-benefiting features. It acts as a natural moisturizer that can put moisture back into your hair strands and also conditions them. Apart from that, the antioxidants present in this versatile gel can give your hair a major boost of hydration, thereby revealing softer and shinier strands. When this multi-purpose gel is used in combination with other potent ingredients, it tends to become particularly effective in treating dry and rough hair. Read to know about these easy DIY aloe vera masks that can help you attain well moisturized, soft and smooth tresses that look naturally beautiful.

### 1 Aloe vera gel and almond oil

The remarkable combo of aloe vera gel and almond oil can strengthen the hair follicles and provide moisture to rough and dry hair.

**How to use:** Mix 1 tablespoon of each aloe vera gel and almond oil. Put the resulting mask on your scalp and leave it overnight. Wash it off with lukewarm water and your regular shampoo.



### 2 Aloe vera gel and egg white

The goodness of aloe vera gel combined with the powerful proteins present in egg white can effectively soften the hair's texture and provide hydration to it.

**How to use:** Put an egg white in a bowl and add 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel to it. Thoroughly mix the components. Massage your scalp and hair with the resulting material. Leave it on for another 40-45 minutes before washing it off.

### 3 Aloe vera gel and yogurt

A high content of lactic acid in yogurt when combined with aloe vera gel's hair-benefiting property can strengthen the roots of your hair and treat dry and rough hair.

**How to use:** Combine 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel with 1 tablespoon of fresh yogurt. Massage your scalp and hair with the prepared material. Cover your head with a shower cap and let the mask stay on for an hour. Wash it off with lukewarm water and shampoo.

### 4 Aloe vera gel and honey

The fusion of aloe vera gel and honey can not only moisturize dry hair but also repair damage and prevent dryness of the hair strands.

**How to use:** Put 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel and 1 teaspoon of organic honey in a bowl. Stir thoroughly to get a smooth paste. Apply it to the scalp area and also to the ends of your roots. Let it sit there for 30 minutes before washing it off.



### 5 Aloe vera gel and fenugreek seeds

Methi is a potent remedy that can remove impurities from the scalp and hair. Combining it with aloe vera gel can help you attain dirt-free and soft tresses.

**How to use:** Soak a handful of fenugreek seeds in water for 6-7 hours. Mash them and mix with 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel to get the hair mask ready. Apply the material to your scalp and hair. Leave the mask on for the night. Wash it off with lukewarm water.



### 6 Aloe vera gel and avocado

This aloe vera mask is perfect for treating damaged rough hair. Aloe vera and avocado can collectively repair damaged hair and soften its texture.

**How to use:** Mash a ripe avocado and mix with 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel. Slather the paste all over your scalp and towards the ends of your tresses. Leave it there for an hour before washing it off with lukewarm water.

### 7 Aloe vera gel and olive oil

A storehouse of antioxidants, olive oil is another potent remedy which when combined with aloe vera gel can effectively treat dry and coarse hair.

### How to use:

Create a blend of 1 table-spoon of aloe vera gel and 1 teaspoon of olive oil. Massage it all over the scalp area and also apply it to the ends of your tresses. Leave the mask on for the night. Wash it off with lukewarm water and shampoo.

## Can consuming excess avocados be harmful for health?

Chandana Rao

Lately, whether you go to milkshake shops, cafes or restaurants, there is always a drink or a dish made from avocados, right? Especially among the fitness and health conscious folks, avocado has become extremely popular owing to the fact that it is rich in a number of nutrients and comes with many health benefits! Avocado, also popularly known as butter fruit in tropical countries like India, is also a top favourite fruit among vegetarians and vegans. Avocado milkshakes, avocado salads, avocado sandwiches - you name it; this fruit has become so popular that a whole variety of drinks and dishes are being prepared from it.

Now, the reason avocado became so popular a few years ago is that a number of research studies found that the nutritional makeup for this fruit made it a superfood which could make people extremely healthy!



As we may already know, avocados are rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are healthy fats which are very much necessary to maintain good health! Along with omega-3 fatty acids, avocados also contain antioxidants, vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B6, potassium and fibre. So, with all those rich nutrients present in a single fruit, one can only imagine how many health benefits they come with.

Some of the most common health benefits of avocado are, boosting immunity, improving metabolism to promote weight loss, muscle recovery, and boosting bone health. Prevention of heart diseases, improving digestion,

treating depression, improving the health of pregnant women, detoxifying the body and many more!

Now, just like too much of anything is bad, even consuming too much avocado can also have certain health hazards is what a few new research studies opine. Learn how consuming excess avocados can be harmful for health, in this article.



### Health complications of consuming excess avocados

Now, we may already know that consuming a spoonful of ghee on a regular basis is good for health, however, what happens if you consume excess amounts of ghee every single day? It could lead to weight gain and related problems, even though it contains good fats, right? Well, even when it comes to avocados, the same principle applies, because too much of even good things can be bad at times! We learnt earlier that avocados contain omega-3 fatty acids which are good, healthy fats necessary for the body, however, at the end of the day, healthy fats are also fats and when consumed in the excess they can lead to obesity.

So, if a person consumes more than 2 or 3 avocados on a daily basis, there are chances of him/her gaining weight and developing obesity and related ailments such as high cholesterol, heart ailments, joint pain, etc. Another health

risk of consuming avocados in the excess is nutritional deficiencies. Many people who love avocados for their great taste or health benefits tend to consume mostly avocado based dishes many times a day and ignore other staple dishes, triggering nutritional deficiencies!

Although avocado contains a number of healthy nutrients, there are certain major ingredients like proteins, carbohydrates, etc., missing in it, so consuming mainly avocados can result in nutritional deficiencies. Also, a few cases have been reported where people have developed allergic reactions, such as nasal stiffness, coughing, wheezing, etc., upon consuming excess avocados.

If you notice that happening, then you must get a medical opinion and also limit your consumption of avocados. So, in conclusion, consuming excess avocados can have a few health hazards and they must be consumed within limits.

## Here's how sugars are digested!

Praveen Kumar

Actually, carbs are the main source of energy for all of us. These carbs are digested in several ways by the body to absorb the energy. There are two types of sugars- simple and complex. What is the difference between both of them? Well, their chemical structure varies. Also, simple sugars digest fast whereas complex sugars take more time. Sugar is broken down into something known as monosaccharides before getting absorbed into your blood. Read on to know more...



■ The starting point of digestion is the mouth. Salivary amylase is secreted in your mouth. It breaks the sugar into small particles. From the mouth, the sugar reaches the stomach.

■ Once the sugar reaches the stomach, hydrochloric acid starts breaking it down further. The sugar is broken down into monosaccharides and then sent to the intestines.

■ Sugar digestion occurs a little in the mouth, a little in the stomach but happens more in the intestines. Various enzymes are released to break it down further. Lactase, maltase, isomaltase and sucrose are released to break down sugars. Broken down sugar gives energy after getting absorbed into your blood.

■ Some types of carbs can't be fully broken down. Gum, pectin, hemicellulose and cellulose can't be fully changed. In fact, even fibre simply moves till the intestines without much changes. Once fiber reaches the large intestine, it gets fermented.

■ You need to get 50% of your sugars from fruits, whole grains, veggies and milk. You need at least 200-300 grams of carbs a day. Sugars from sweets, processed foods or refined grains are unhealthy.

■ Good sugars include apples, honey, bananas, pineapple, carrot, beetroot, yoghurt, brown rice etc. Bad sources include refined white sugar, soft drinks, processed foods, refined grains, refined flours and all sweets.

■ Carbs also play a crucial role in brain function. Glucose is the brain's preferred energy source, and a steady supply helps maintain focus, memory, and mood. Skipping carbs altogether may lead to brain fog and fatigue.

■ It's important to pair carbs with fiber, protein, or healthy fats. This slows down sugar absorption into the bloodstream, preventing energy crashes and keeping blood sugar levels stable.



## Foods that reduce excess stomach acid

Neha Ghosh

Do you often suffer from stomach acidity after having a meal? If yes, then you need to include certain foods in your diet that will cut down on stomach acidity. Stomach acid to a certain level is required to digest the food and allow the body to absorb nutrients. However, too much stomach acidity occurs when there is acid backflow from the stomach into the oesophagus. Sometimes, stomach acidity can cause other problems too like stomach ulcers and heartburn. This causes a discomfort in the oesophagus. So, it is rather important to reduce your stomach acid by eating certain foods that will aid in reducing stomach acidity. Eating the right kind of foods is the key to controlling stomach acidity. Here are list of foods that reduce excess stomach acid.

### ■ Milk

Milk contains calcium, an alkaline mineral that works to neutralize acid in contact. Milk contains large amounts of calcium, making it one of the best foods to reduce stomach acid. If you are suffering from stomach acidity, soothe your stomach by gulping down a glass of milk.

### ■ Herbal tea

Herbal teas are considered to be among the best teas to fight against stomach acid. They calm your intestines and reduce the production of more acid. When you are drinking herbal teas, cool it slightly and sip the tea slowly, so that it acts better in your stomach.

Opt for dark green vegetables and make smoothies out of it. You will get all the antioxidants and nutrients in one go and it will help to reduce stomach acid quickly. Green juices help to curb inflammation in the body and it digests easily in the stomach. You can drink green smoothies before a meal.



### ■ Ginger

Ginger is another wonderful ingredient to soothe stomach acid instantly due to its anti-inflammatory properties. It has the ability to improve digestive problems and cures stomach acidity. Try chewing a raw ginger piece or make yourself a ginger tea, the next time you suffer from stomach acidity.

### ■ Green smoothies

### ■ Apple cider vinegar

Apple cider vinegar or apples are effectively regarded as effective treatments for stomach acidity. Although apples are acidic in nature, they contain healthy acids and enzymes that help neutralize the stomach acid inside your body.

### ■ Oatmeal

Oatmeal is a breakfast favourite for many. Whole grain oatmeal is an excellent source of fibre that absorbs acid in the stomach and it reduces the symptoms of acidity. Fibre reduces constipation, promotes intestinal health, and keeps the body full for a longer period of time.

### ■ Aloe vera

Aloe vera is a natural cooling agent that has the ability to treat heartburns and stomach acid. It has healing properties, when consumed, which will benefit you in reducing the stomach acidity. You can have aloe vera juice or use it in food recipes to prevent stomach acid.

### ■ Yogurt

Opt for plain yogurt without added sugars or flavors. Yogurt contains probiotics, beneficial bacteria that promote a healthy gut environment. These probiotics help balance the digestive system and reduce the incidence of stomach acidity. Additionally, the cooling effect of yogurt can provide relief from heartburn and irritation in the esophagus.

### ■ Chicken

Chicken does not cause acidity, as it has proteins that will help in preventing stomach acidity. Don't deep fry or pan fry the chicken; instead grill or sauté the chicken and avoid adding too many spices. Too much spices can increase the stomach acidity, making you feel uneasy.



### ■ Olive oil

Olive oil helps with heartburn and indigestion and provides anti-inflammatory benefits. Drizzle olive oil on your foods, instead of cooking with it. Avoid using canola oil, peanut oil and other vegetable-based oils because they are more acidic in nature.

### ■ Bananas

Bananas are naturally low in acidity and high in potassium, which helps in neutralizing stomach acid. They also contain pectin, a soluble fiber that aids in digestion and helps coat the stomach lining, reducing irritation caused by excess acid.

### ■ Raw salad

Raw salads are naturally alkaline and full of digestive benefits. Salads prevent inflammation and stomach acidity. It is because a salad consists of leafy greens, carrots, cucumbers, celery, asparagus, and lettuces, which are some of the most powerful foods for reducing inflammation.



1953-2025

# Hulk Hogan's iconic roles beyond wrestling

**Aman Jain**

**W**restling legend and pop culture icon Hulk Hogan, who passed away on Thursday at the age of 71, leaves behind not just an unmatched legacy in the world of professional wrestling, but also a memorable chapter in film and television.

While Hogan rose to global fame inside the ring, his persona carried him smoothly into Hollywood. Throughout the 1980s and '90s, he became a regular on screen, bringing his mix of action and humour to a wide range of roles.

Hogan's most remembered film appearance came in *Rocky III* (1982), where he played the wrestler Thunderlips opposite Sylvester Stallone. Though a guest appearance, it remains one of the most iconic moments in the *Rocky* franchise and helped propel Hogan's mainstream acting career.

He went on to star as the lead in several films, including *No Holds Barred* (1989), a wrestling drama produced by WWE, which was much loved. He also starred in family-friendly comedies like *Suburban Commando* (1991) and *Mr. Nanny* (1993), which helped show his comedic side, something which viewers had not seen before. While these films weren't box office blockbusters, they are an entertaining watch and have stood the test of time on OTT platforms.

Along with his film work, Hogan was also seen on television, including guest roles on *Walker, Texas Ranger*, *The A-Team*, and his own reality show *Hogan Knows Best*, which was on TV in the mid-2000s. These appearances further helped him in areas other than the wrestling ring.

Though his acting career never matched up to his wrestling stardom, The Hulk, as he was commonly referred to, had become a fixture in pop culture. Recently, in the last few years, he was also seen on famous podcasts such as *The Joe Rogan Show*, talking about his wrestling memories and life after. Hogan's death has led to all sorts of tributes from fans from all over the world on social media, who grew up watching him in WWF and WWE in their growing-up years.

**Wrestling icon Hulk Hogan dies at 71, remembered for his larger-than-life movie roles and legacy in '80s, '90s Hollywood**



**Mr. Nanny (1993)**



**Rocky III (1982)**



**Suburban Commando (1991)**



**No Holds Barred (1989)**



**The A-Team**

**Bollywood mourns Hulk Hogan's death**

Legendary WWE wrestler and global pop culture icon Hulk Hogan passed away at the age of 71, reportedly due to cardiac arrest at his home in Clearwater, Florida. The wrestling world and fans across the globe are mourning the loss of one of sports entertainment's biggest stars. Soon after the news broke, Bollywood actors Varun Dhawan and Arjun Kapoor took to social media to pay tribute to the WWE Hall of Famer. "You inspired an entire generation, Hulkster. RIP," wrote Varun Dhawan in an Instagram story, sharing WWE's official tribute. Arjun Kapoor also remembered Hogan, writing, "A part of my childhood just went with u Hulkster... Thank u for the memories."



**Varun Dhawan**



**Arjun Kapoor**



**The Rock pens emotional note**

Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson has broken his silence, sharing a deeply emotional tribute to wrestling legend Hulk Hogan, who passed away on Thursday. The Rock, who once shared one of professional wrestling's most iconic rivalries with Hogan, took to social media to honor the larger-than-life superstar and reflect on their bond, both in and out of the ring. Johnson recalled a touching moment from his childhood in 1984 that left a lasting impact: "In 1984, I gave you your 'HULKSTER' headband back in the locker room at Madison Square Garden. I was the lucky kid who caught it when you threw it into the crowd." He continued with a heartfelt message about Hogan's legacy and influence: "You may have 'passed the torch' to me that night, but you, my friend, 'drew the house' — meaning you sold out every arena and stadium across the country in your prime as Hulk Hogan, on your way to becoming the greatest of all time." Johnson ended his tribute with a powerful message on behalf of the wrestling community: "From deep in my bones, and on behalf of this wild and crazy world of professional wrestling that we love, I say to you now, and forever: Thank you for the house, brother." Hogan's passing has sparked an outpouring of tributes from across the sports and entertainment worlds, marking the end of an era for millions of fans.

## Mahavatar Narsimha: The mythological animated film putting us on the global map

It is a mythological action film, and the movie has become the talk of the town for many reasons



**Murtuza Iqbal**

Ashwin Kumar's animated film *Mahavatar Narsimha* has hit the big screens on Friday. It is a mythological animated action film, and the movie has become the talk of the town for many reasons. So, here are five reasons why *Mahavatar Narsimha* is a must-watch for one and all...

**An Indian animated movie**  
Do you remember the last time you watched a good Indian animated film? While Hollywood produces many animated films in a year, we hardly get to watch any Indian animated movie. But now, we have *Mahavatar Narsimha*, which promises to be an excellent cinematic experience.

**Mythological film**  
Watching mythological films on the big screens is always a treat. We get to watch and learn a lot of things about the Gods and Goddesses. *Mahavatar Narsimha* shows Prahlad's devotion towards Lord Vishnu, and how, for his devotee, the Lord incarnates in the Narsimha avatar.

**A film for kids**  
Nowadays, Indian filmmakers are concentrating on making action and romantic movies. So, we don't have anything for kids to watch in theatres. But, thanks to *Mahavatar Narsimha*, we can take our kids to the theatres this weekend for a perfect family movie!

**Good reviews**  
If you're someone who prefers to watch a movie after reading the reviews, let us tell you that *Mahavatar Narsimha* has received amazing reviews from the critics and the audience. People who have watched the film are sharing their reviews on social media, and they are calling the Ashwin Kumar directorial a 'masterpiece'.

**Hombale Films is presenting the movie**  
Hombale Films has produced some amazing films in the last few years, like the *KGf* franchise, *Kantara*, *Salaar*, and others. The production house has presented *Mahavatar Narsimha*. So, as their name is associated with the film, we can surely say that the animated movie is a must-watch.





# Ananya

## promotes kindness education

Ananya Panday launches kindness curriculum for schools across India, aiming to instill empathy and emotional awareness in young children



CJ Desk

Actress Ananya Panday with the help of her initiative So Positive in partnership with an NGO, has launched a Kindness Curriculum designed for schools across India and said that she feels if kindness is instilled in children from a young age, it becomes second nature to them.

Ananya Panday said, "Kindness has always been at the heart of everything we do at So Positive. It's something I deeply believe in—not just as an idea, but as a way of life. I truly feel that if we can instill kindness in kids from a young age, it becomes second nature to them as they grow up."

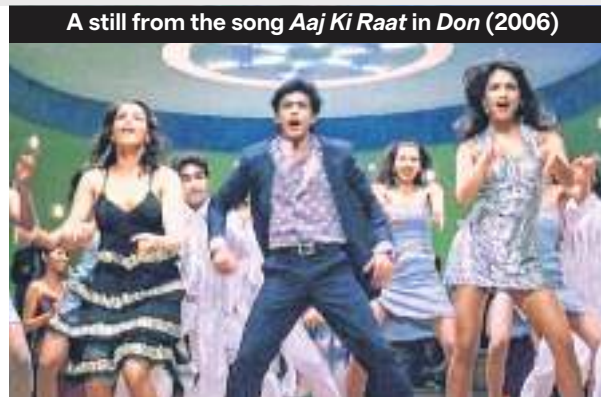
She added: "That's why the Kindness Curriculum is so close to my heart. With everything going on in the world, I feel an even stronger need to help build a generation that's more empathetic, emotionally aware, and simply kind."

Ananya's initiative So Positive, in partnership with the inspiring NGO Slam Out Loud. The curriculum will be distributed and practised in schools through Slam Out Loud's Jijivisha Fellowship and Arts for All Programme in cities across India.

Over 2.5 lakh children will benefit from this curriculum through various programmes. It's also available on So Positive's YouTube channel, making it accessible to parents and educators globally. The team is currently working towards making it available on the Government's DIKSHA Portal as well.

On the acting front, Ananya will be seen in *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri*, which marks Kartik Aaryan and the actress' second on-screen collaboration after their 2019 release *Pati Patni Aur Woh*.

Kriti Sanon likely to recreate iconic *Aaj Ki Raat* song with Ranveer Singh in Farhan Akhtar's much-awaited *Don 3*



## Kriti to recreate Aaj Ki Raat with Ranveer?

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**D**on 3 is making headlines again! Ranveer Singh's action-packed film, helmed by Farhan Akhtar, has been delayed multiple times.

While Kiara Advani was initially on board as the female lead, recent reports suggest she has opted out of the project, with Kriti Sanon stepping in to replace her.

Meanwhile, recent rumours hint at a recreation of the iconic *Don* (2006) track in the upcoming film, although an official confirmation is still awaited.

The original track featured Priyanka Chopra and Isha Koppikar dancing with Shah Rukh Khan, who portrayed the iconic role of Don. Even years after its release, the song continues to be celebrated as a stylish and energetic dance number.

According to India Today, *Don 3* will also include a similar peppy track, reminiscent of *Aaj Ki Raat*. Kriti has reportedly been finalised for the song, and she will be joined by another actress, whose name has not yet been confirmed. Together, the two will share the screen with Ranveer, echoing the trio dynamic from the original track.

On Ranveer's 40th birthday (July 6), Kriti dropped a major hint about it while wishing Ranveer on his birthday. The actress took to her Instagram stories to pen a note for the actor, which read, "Happiest Birthday @ranveersingh !! Your energy, your hardwork, your crazy talent and the love you keep spreading has always inspired me!! Shine on rockstar!" But it was the last line that grabbed eyeballs. "P.S. looking forward to working with you soon!" she concluded the note, seemingly confirming that the reports about her being a part of *Don 3* were indeed true.



## Tara's whispers of love

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Actor Tara Sutaria turned showstopper for designer Isha Jagodia as she presented her collection "Whispers of Love to Myself" at the Hyundai FDCI India Couture Week. Jagodia's showcase for her label Roseroom explored girlish charm in a delicate and unique way on the second day of the fashion gala at Taj Palace hotel on Thursday evening. Sutaria, known for movies such as *Student of the Year 2*, *Marjaavaan* and *Ek Villain Returns*, walked the ramp on the beats of the popular jazz track L-O-V-E by American singer Nat King Cole.

The showstopper caused the audience to erupt in applause as she appeared in a breathtaking ivory gold corset gown. The overarching theme of love remained prominent as the actor twirled in her puffy lace skirt for the audience and blew kisses to her rumoured boyfriend Veer Pahariya.

Pahariya, who made his acting debut earlier this year with *Sky Force*, and Sutaria have not confirmed their relationship, but their moment at the fashion gala quickly went viral on social media.

Sutaria's corset was heavily fitted with gold accents, and her contrasting white lace skirt featured an embellished bodice. Her outfit was paired with a simple necklace.

## Sonu Sood donates ₹1.5 lakh to Fish Venkat's family after his death

Sonu Sood came to the aid of late Tollywood actor Fish Venkat's family days after his death due to kidney failure. Before the actor's death, family pleaded for monetary help from Tollywood celebs, but he could not make it till the time help arrived. Thus, to support his family, Sood gave them Rs 1.50 lakh. According to information shared by Sonu's team, the actor had offered help to Fish Venkat's family hoping that he was still in the hospital and would make it, but he was shocked to know when he found out that actor had passed away.



## Filmy Shot

### Tanishk Bagchi battled depression

Music composer Tanishk Bagchi, who has delivered several Bollywood chartbusters over the years, recently opened up about going through a difficult phase in his life while working on the music for *Saiyaara*. In one of his latest interviews, Tanishk spoke about battling depression and self-doubt during the creative process, and how the film became a turning point for both his personal and professional journey. In a video shared by the makers, Tanishk also revealed that he broke up with his girlfriend just before he started work on *Saiyaara*.

### Smita Singh hints at Khauf Season 2 possibility

Filmmaker Smita Singh, creator of the acclaimed psychological horror series *Khauf*, revealed plans for a potential second season during the Screenwriters Association's 'Vartalaap' event. Released on Prime Video in April, *Khauf* was praised for its inventive storytelling and performances. Singh shared that streaming platforms previously hesitated to back horror, but Prime Video supported her vision fully. The series explores themes of misogyny and violence faced by women in a Delhi hostel, using horror to tell its story.



### The Iranis: Two new directors, one family

In 2025, Bollywood witnesses a unique milestone as the father-son duo Boman and Kayoze Irani both make their directorial debuts. Boman, famed for his roles in *3 Idiots* and *Munna Bhai MBBS*, directs *The Mehta Boys*, a personal story about a father and son. Meanwhile, Kayoze's debut, *Sarzameen*, released on July 25 on JioHotstar, explores themes of patriotism and conflict in Kashmir, starring Prithviraj Sukumaran, Kajol, and Ibrahim Ali Khan. Produced by Dharma Productions, it contrasts with Boman's intimate film. This rare father-son filmmaking moment highlights 2 distinct but passionate storytelling voices emerging together in Bollywood.

## Shobha Kapoor receives lifetime honour

Television producer honoured with Ramanand Sagar lifetime achievement award, says, 'I never thought I'd come this far'

CJ Desk

Television producer Shobha Kapoor, a pioneering force behind Indian television's golden era, was honoured with the Editor's Choice: Ramanand Sagar Lifetime Achievement Award at the Indian Telly Awards 2025. Recognised for her remarkable contribution to the industry, Kapoor has played a pivotal role in shaping Indian television for over two decades.

As the Managing Director of Balaji Telefilms, Kapoor has overseen the creation of landmark shows such as *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, *Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii*, *Kasamh Se*, *Pavitra Rishta*, *Naagin*, and *Bade Achhe Lagte Hain*. Her strategic leadership and deep understanding of Indian audiences helped build one of the country's most influential content empires.

Accepting the award, Kapoor said, "This honour means a lot. I supported Ekta's dream when she was young, and it

slowly became my passion too. Balaji Telefilms gave me my own identity."

She also thanked her husband Jeetendra, son Tusshar, and the audiences, saying, "This award belongs to them."

Named after the legendary Ramanand Sagar, the award recognises individuals whose impact on Indian television is timeless. For Shobha Kapoor, this honour marks not just a celebration of past achievements but also an inspiration to continue her storytelling journey.

