

# Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's sacrifice stands for freedom of thought and belief : Sirsa

**The Sikh Times New Delhi.**

New Delhi June 26, 2025: The Delhi Government, under the leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister Smt. Rekha Gupta, will commemorate the Martyrdom Day (Shaheedi Diwas) of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji in November through a series of meaningful, permanent and inclusive initiatives.

In a meeting chaired by Art & Culture Minister Shri Kapil Mishra and Environment Minister Shri Manjinder Singh Sirsa, with senior and eminent community members and representatives of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee were invited to share ideas for the upcoming tribute.

Among the participants were Shri Harmeet Singh Kalra, President (DSGMC); Shri Charan Singh, retired IAS and former Chairman of Punjab & Sind Bank; Shri Manjeet Singh Puri, retired IFS and former Ambassador; and Shri Tarlochan Singh, former Member of Parliament, along with other distinguished members of the community.



The meeting was marked by a strong sense of pride and emotion as participants lauded the government for bringing focus to Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's legacy — a leader who gave his life for freedom of belief and

conscience, setting an unparalleled example in human history. The participants also acknowledged Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's unwavering respect and commitment to respect all religions and communities, which has placed Guru Sahib's sacrifice on the national stage. "This is Delhi's responsibility and pride," said Minister Kapil Mishra, recalling his visit with Shri Manjinder Singh Sirsa to the existing memorial of Shri Guru Teg Bahadur ji at Singhu Border, New Delhi.

"When we visited the memorial sometime back, even the lights were defunct. It symbolised the years of neglect by the previous government. We changed that with immediate effect. This year, not only are we renovating the space completely, we will start a daily light and sound show, establish a Centre for Martyrdom Studies, and ensure that Guru Sahib's life becomes part of how our children learn history." Hon'ble Minister Shri Kapil Mishra further said that the tribute is not just an event but part of a larger cultural responsibility:

"Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's sacrifice is not bound by one religion — it is a universal lesson in courage, conviction and the right to believe." [Continue news page-02](#)

## Kanwar Seva Committees give a rousing welcome to CM Rekha Gupta



**The Sikh Times**  
New Delhi: 26 June, 2025

A different scene was witnessed at the Delhi Secretariat today. Office bearers of Kanwar Seva Camps arrived in a festive mood, dancing to the beats of drums, with the sole purpose of welcoming Chief Minister Smt Rekha Gupta. The welcome was grand, for after years, Kanwar committees are finally being heard and provided with the facilities they have long been demanding. Chief Minister Smt. Rekha Gupta affirmed that her government would extend full respect and hospitality to the Kanwariyas. During the holy month of Sawan, when they enter Delhi, Ministers and MLAs of the government will greet them at Delhi's borders.

The Chief Minister held a special interactive meeting today with Kanwar Seva Committees, which are responsible for arrangements like tents and community meals (bhandas) for Shiva devotees during the Kanwar Festival. Present in the meeting were Chairman of the Kanwar Festival Organising Committee and Delhi's Minister for Culture and Tourism, Shri Kapil Mishra; committee members and MLAs Anil Sharma, Sanjay Goyal, Ajay Mahawar, Pradyuman Rajput, Abhay Verma, and others. Addressing all the Shiva devotees and Kanwar Committees devoted to service, the Chief Minister said that Delhi is committed every year to serving the Kanwariyas, and this time, the Delhi Government is fully devoted to making the festival grand and seamless. She stated that this is the government's first Kanwar event and the aim is to make it the most memorable, convenient, and well-coordinated Kanwar celebration ever.

The Chief Minister informed that processes related to sanitation, toilets, security, electricity, lighting, and medical facilities have been significantly improved. A new provision has been introduced to grant permissions within 72 hours. In addition, it has been decided to provide up to 1200 units of free electricity for each camp.

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## Jagan Reddy accuses Andhra Pradesh government of Rs 9,000 crore bond scam

**Agency Andhra Pradesh.**

Former Andhra Pradesh chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, has accused the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) alliance government of gross financial mismanagement and constitutional violations in connection with the recent non-convertible debenture (NCD) issuance by the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC).

In a post on X, Jagan Mohan Reddy alleged that the current government displayed "a lack of fiscal discipline and disregard for the Constitutional framework". He pointed to the second tranche of NCDs issued by APMDC on June 25, which raised Rs 5,526 crore at a coupon rate of 9.30 per cent. With this, the total amount raised through bond issuances stands at Rs 9,000 crore. Jagan contended that the issuance went ahead



despite the matter being sub judice, with the Andhra Pradesh High Court having admitted the case and notices having been served. He alleged that the funds were intended to finance the government's revenue expenditure, in breach of constitutional guidelines. He

## AIADMK member murdered over poll rivalry, Edappadi Palaniswami alleges DMK link

**An AIADMK functionary was killed in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi, reportedly over local poll rivalry. Police arrested four accused linked to the murder. Edappadi K Palaniswami alleged that the accused are DMK members, calling it a political revenge killing.**

**Agency Tamil Nadu.**

An AIADMK functionary was murdered by a four-member gang in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, on June 24. Police confirmed that the killing was linked to a local body election rivalry.

According to the police, the AIADMK



member, Muthupalakrishnan was riding his two-wheeler when a lorry coming from the opposite direction rammed into him. All four accused were inside the lorry at the time of the crime.

All four accused, Soundararajan (A1), Karunakar (A2), Mahesh (A3), and

Karpagaran (A4), have now been arrested. Police said the murder was an act of political revenge related to panchayat-level elections.

AIADMK leader Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS) strongly condemned the murder.

In a post on X, he alleged that the accused are DMK members, including Karunakar, and blamed the DMK government for the breakdown of law and order in Tamil Nadu. EPS questioned whether the Stalin-led government would dismiss the case as a "personal murder" and accused the ruling party of fostering violence during local elections.

"It is a well-known fact that local body elections under DMK rule take place amidst their anarchy. But has the lust for power driven DMK members to the extent of murdering opposition party members?" he wrote.

EPS further demanded that the government take strict legal action against all those involved, including who he claims is a DMK leader, Karunakar.

## Old bridge collapses in Bihar's Saharsa after overloaded tractor drives over it



**Agency New Delhi.**

In yet another case of collapsing bridges and infrastructure in Bihar, a three-span bridge in the Patarghat block of Saharsa district collapsed on Wednesday under the load of an overloaded tractor carrying maize.

The incident occurred in Ward No. 04 of Pama, as the tractor was passing over the old culvert built across a seasonal stream.

According to local sources, a part of the culvert caved in, causing the tractor to get stuck mid-structure, however, the driver escaped without injury.

The culvert, which is approximately 20-25 years old, had reportedly shown visible signs of wear and damage in recent days, but no maintenance work was carried out by the authorities.

## Even free bird must watch skies: Congress jabs Shashi Tharoor after cryptic post

**A day after Shashi Tharoor posted a cryptic message amid his rift with the Congress, party leader Manickam Tagore on Tuesday took a dig at the Thiruvananthapuram MP, saying that "even a free bird must watch the skies".**

**The Sikh Times New Delhi.**

A day after Shashi Tharoor posted a cryptic message amid his rift with the Congress, party leader Manickam Tagore on Thursday took a dig at the Thiruvananthapuram MP, saying that "even a free bird must watch the skies".

Tagore's remarks came a day after Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge took a veiled swipe at Tharoor, saying that while the party stood for nation first, "but for some people, it is Modi first". Minutes later, Tharoor posted on X, with a picture of a bird and a caption saying, "Don't ask permission to fly. The wings are yours, and the sky belongs to no one."

Tagore, in a tweet, took a jibe at Tharoor without naming him, saying that "birds don't need clearance to rise, but they must watch the skies".

"Don't ask permission to fly. Birds don't need clearance to rise. But today, even a free bird must watch the skies - hawks, vultures, and eagles' are always hunting. Freedom isn't free, especially when the predators wear patriotism as feathers," he said. Tensions between Tharoor and the Congress surfaced after the four-time Thiruvananthapuram MP was selected by the government to lead an all-party delegation on India's Operation Sindoora against Pakistan.

Since then, Tharoor has repeatedly praised the government, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, leaving the grand old party miffed.

Last week, Tharoor wrote in a column in The Hindu, heaping praise on PM Modi, calling him a "prime asset for India" due to his "energy, dynamism and willingness".



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's energy, dynamism and willingness to engage remains a prime asset for India on the global stage, but deserves greater backing, Tharoor said.

His remarks sparked widespread speculation that he would switch to the BJP. However, the Congress MP ruled out joining the saffron party.

## Mentality of slavery: Amit Shah reiterates call to embrace Indian languages

**Amit Shah's remarks on promoting Indian languages drew criticism from the Congress, with Rahul Gandhi saying English is essential for jobs and confidence, and accusing the BJP of limiting access to opportunity.**

**The Sikh Times New Delhi.**

Days after stirring controversy with his remarks on English, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday reiterated his call to embrace Indian languages, insisting that linguistic pride is essential to shedding the "mentality of slavery".

"There is no opposition to any language. There should not be opposition to any foreign language. But there must be an insistence to glorify our own language, to speak in it, and to think in it," the Home Minister said while speaking at an event in New Delhi.

"We must get rid of the mentality of slavery. Until a person takes pride in his language and expresses himself in it, we cannot be free from

that mindset," he said. Describing language as the "soul of a nation", Shah called for efforts to preserve and enrich all Indian languages — particularly the official one. "We should keep our languages alive. This is not just about communication, this is about our national identity," Shah said.

The BJP leader's fresh remarks came in the wake of a political firestorm triggered by his comments last week, where he said that "those who speak English will soon feel ashamed". At a book launch event last week, the Shah had argued that India's future should be built on the foundation of its native tongues. "In this country, those



who speak English will soon feel ashamed, the creation of such a society is not far away. Without our languages, we cease to be truly Indian," Shah had said.

Indian. To understand our country, our culture, our religion, no foreign language can suffice," he said.

He had also asserted that "a complete India cannot be imagined through half-baked foreign languages", expressing confidence that Indian society would eventually reject linguistic dependency on English.

"In this country, those who speak English will soon feel ashamed - the creation of such a society is not far away. I believe that the languages of our country are the jewels of our culture. Without our languages, we cease to be truly Indian," Shah had said.

Frant Continue news ....

### Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's sacrifice stands for freedom of thought and belief : Sirsa

Environment Minister Shri Manjinder Singh Sirsa spoke about Delhi's special bond with the Punjabi language, the Sikh faith and Guru Sahib's martyrdom.

"We are committed to reconnecting Delhi's identity with its heritage. I will try to work closely with the Education Department to create dedicated education programmes that ensure both school and college students learn about our guru's life, values, and historic sacrifice."

"Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji is not just a part of our history — he is the soul of Delhi's spiritual and cultural identity. His martyrdom is the world's greatest example of standing up for freedom of thought and belief. It is our sacred duty to ensure that every child in Delhi grows up knowing his story, feeling his sacrifice, and carrying forward his message."

#### Suggestions from the Community:

During the discussion, Scholars, youth leaders and community members put forward a number of ideas which the ministers assured will be reviewed for inclusion:

- Creation of a concrete memorial centre with research, exhibitions and learning spaces
- A dedicated education programme for schools and colleges in Delhi to teach Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's life and message
- Organisation of an international conference on the theme of martyrdom, religious freedom and universal human rights
- Launch of Delhi's first Punjabi Literature & Cultural Festival, celebrating the language and heritage that is rooted in the city's identity
- Public awareness efforts about key historical locations such as Rakab Ganj Sahib and the story of Lakhishah Banjara's selfless service.

The government has assured that multiple departments, cultural institutions and experts will be involved in shaping the final plan. Proposed suggestions are under consideration, and the light & sound show is scheduled to begin in November 2025.

Follow-up meetings and public consultations will be held in the coming weeks to finalise the implementation strategy.

### Kanwar Seva Committees give a rousing welcome to CM Rekha Gupta

She also assured that all pending payments post the festival will be cleared within three months. The Chief Minister further said that Ministers, MLAs, and other government representatives will personally welcome Shiva devotees with flower showers at all Delhi borders. At each entry point, secure corridors, cleanliness, lighting, and medical support will be ensured. Even the smallest of committees will be given equal support. She emphasized that the Delhi Government stands shoulder to shoulder with Shiva devotees. For the first time, the Kanwar Yatra is being organized at such an extensive administrative level. She said this year's Kanwar Festival in Delhi will be unlike anything seen before.

Shri Kapil Mishra, Minister of Culture and Tourism, who is leading the preparations for the Kanwar Festival, said that the Delhi Government is committed to making this year's Kanwar Yatra grand and well-organized. He urged all representatives of the Kanwar Committees to work sincerely and within defined standards and to treat the welcoming of Shiva devotees as a festival in itself.

Shri Kapil Mishra also added that under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan led by the Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, special focus will be given to cleanliness at Kanwar camps, including additional arrangements for mobile toilet vans. There are also plans to build welcome gates for Shiva devotees. This year's Kanwar Festival will become a unique example of public participation, and the government aims to set up at least 20 separate camps exclusively for women devotees. Now, Shiva devotees will not have to run around — the team formed by the Honourable Chief Minister will take full charge of the arrangements. ADM Rakesh, present at the meeting, shared details of the registration process for Kanwar Committees and urged everyone to submit documents on time. He informed that registration of Kanwar Committees can be done through a Google Form available on Delhi Government's e-District portal.

### Telangana releases Rs 20 crore for Bonalu festivities

HYDERABAD. Transport Minister Ponnambalam Prabhakar announced on Wednesday that the state government has released Rs 20 crore in cheques to 2,783 Mahankali temples in Hyderabad for the upcoming Bonalu festival. The Ashada Bonalu festivities will begin on June 26 at Jagadamba Mahankali temple in Golconda. Celebrations will be held in Secunderabad on July 13-14, in Hyderabad, including the Old City, on July 20-21 and at Bhagalakshmi temple, Charminar, on July 23. The Balkampet Yellamma Kalyanotsavam will take place on July 1, followed by the Rathotsavam on July 2.

The district in-charge minister thanked Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for releasing the funds, noting that the century-old Bonalu festival reflects the deep cultural and spiritual fabric of the twin cities.

#### Traffic advisory issued

In view of the Sri Jagadamba Mahankali Golconda Bonalu celebrations, a large number of devotees are expected from across Hyderabad and nearby districts on the following dates, between 8 am and 11 pm on June 26 and 29, July 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, and 24. Heavy traffic is expected on routes leading to Golconda Fort, including Ramdevguda to Golconda Fort via Makkai Darwaza, Langar Houz to Golconda Fort via Fateh Darwaza and Shaikpet Nala and Seven Tombs to Golconda Fort via Banjara Darwaza.

## As sowing season nears end, cotton belt in north likely to shrink further

**Punjab Vigilance Bureau has not disclosed the exact reason for the raid; Bikram Singh Majithia, who was previously booked in a drug smuggling case, accused the Bhagwant Mann government of harassing him.**

Jalandhar. Despite a little rebound in Punjab, cotton sowing in Haryana and Rajasthan remains sluggish as the 2024-25 season nears its end. The northern cotton belt is once again staring at a potential decline in the total area under the crop, compounding fears already triggered by erratic weather and pest attacks.

Punjab has so far covered 1.13 lakh hectares under cotton sowing, Haryana (3.80 lakh ha), Rajasthan (5.17 lakh ha) including both the upper and lower regions. With sowing almost concluded and monsoon timelines tightening, agricultural officials in both the states are expressing cautious optimism, but admit that matching previous year's acreage looks unlikely.

In contrast, Punjab has defined the trend a bit by marking a 15% increase in cotton sowing this year — coming out from a historic low, yet just a partial recovery. In 2023-24, Punjab's cotton area had crashed to just below 1 lakh hectares, a sharp decline from 2.14 lakh hectares the previous year (2022-23) — a whopping over 50% reduction. In Haryana, this year's figures are quite low as compared to 4.76 lakh hectares in 2023-24 and from 5.78 lakh hectares in 2022-23. Now, the officials are hoping to touch 4 lakh hectares by the season's end. In Rajasthan, the



crop has seen a significant downfall in two years as it was 6.62 lakh hectares last year (2024-25), which was down from 10.04 lakh hectares in 2023-24. The delayed sowing continuing until June-end.

Collectively, the northern region has witnessed 10.10 lakh hectares so far, which is around 2.35 lakh hectares less from last year when the area under the crop in three states was 12.35 lakh hectares and around 7.86 lakh hectares less than 2023-24, when the total area under cotton in three states was 17.96 lakh hectares.

The once-thriving northern cotton belt is now losing the ground fast. Officials in Punjab, meanwhile, said their area is shrinking due to frequent pest attacks on the crop and the

availability of ground water to the farmers of Punjab cotton belt, making them prefer assured paddy crop over cotton now.

Haryana attributes the sluggish sowing to a delay in water release from Punjab's Bhakra canal system in May and June, which slowed irrigation cycles. "The cotton area remained low this year due to water shortages, but we hope to achieve 4 lakh hectares," a senior official from the Haryana Agriculture Department said.

In Rajasthan, the sowing season was delayed due to hot weather conditions as several farmers are even required to sow the crop twice or thrice, a senior officer from the Rajasthan Agriculture Department said, adding that this pushed back the optimal planting window. "We expect the sowing to continue until June-end, but the full

recovery of last year's acreage is unlikely," a state agriculture officer said. Beyond weather and water, cotton growers across all these three states have been battling the persistent pink bollworm infestation, which has decimated yields and eroded the farmers' confidence. Punjab has been the worst affected, with some experts urging the state to rope in entomologists and pest management scientists to curb the pest menace.

### Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Express powers ahead with end-to-end electric traction after successful completion of Railway electrification

#### The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 26 June: In a landmark achievement towards sustainable and efficient rail operations, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has rolled out the end-to-end electric traction run of the 12423/12424 (Dibrugarh - New Delhi - Dibrugarh) Rajdhani Express. With this, one of the premier trains of the region now runs entirely on electric traction, marking a major step in Indian Railways' mission of complete electrification and reduction of carbon footprint. The transition to end-to-end electric operation of the Rajdhani Express reflects NFR's steadfast commitment to modernizing railway infrastructure in the Northeast. The fully electrified journey was made possible following the recent completion of electrification works in the remaining sections under NFR, particularly in the Dibrugarh - Tinsukia - Lumding - Guwahati route. The seamless electric operation significantly enhances efficiency, reduces travel time, lowers operational costs and contributes to environmental

sustainability. The New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Express has commenced operations under electric



traction from 25th June 2025, marking a significant milestone in railway electrification. In return journey, Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Express will operate under electric traction from 27th June 2025 onwards. In a move towards sustainable transportation, several other prominent trains connecting east-

ern and northeastern India are also transitioning to electric traction. Train No. 13181 (Kolkata - Silghat Town) Express is set to run under electric traction from 30th June 2025, while Train No. 13182 (Silghat Town - Kolkata) Express will begin operations from 1st July 2025. Train No. 12345 (Howrah - Guwahati) Sarighat Express started running on electric traction from 25th June 2025 and Train No. 12346 (Guwahati - Howrah) Sarighat Express from 26th June 2025. Additionally, Train No. 13248 (Rajendra Nagar - Kamakhya) Capital Express made its electric debut on 25th June 2025 and Train No. 13247 (Kamakhya - Rajendra Nagar) Capital Express scheduled to switch to electric traction from 27th June 2025. With full electrification, the Rajdhani Express is now truly a symbol of progress and sustainability. This is not just a technological upgrade but a leap towards a greener and faster railway network for the people of Northeast India. Indian Railways continues to move steadily towards its target of 100% electrification across the country, with Northeast India now firmly on the map of high-speed, eco-friendly rail operations.

### Andhra's first Smart Bazaar to come up in Nellore city

NELLORE. In a major urban development initiative, the State government is constructing the first-ever 'Smart Bazaar' in Nellore city, with a special focus on women's empowerment, sustainable retail, and modern infrastructure. The marketplace, being built along the banks of the Jaffer Sahab Canal between Satyanarayanaapuram Centre Bridge and Maipadu Gate Centre, is progressing at a brisk pace and is expected to be completed within the next two to three months.

According to officials, the Smart Bazaar is coming up along a 760-metre stretch, covering the 4th and 5th divisions of the Nellore Municipal Corporation (NMC). The Rs 8.4 crore project will house 200 shops built using 50 modular shipping containers, with four shops per container. Rooftop food containers will also be installed above these structures. Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) Minister Dr Ponguri Narayana, who represents the Nellore City constituency, is personally overseeing the project along with NMC engineers. HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh is expected to inaugurate the Smart Bazaar upon completion. The project is envisioned as a flagship pilot under the coalition government's urban innovation mission. "This is not just a market; it's a platform for women to achieve financial independence and dignity. Nearly 200 women will gain direct livelihood opportunities here, making it one of the largest such initiatives under the new government," a senior municipal official told.

Funding is sourced from multiple streams: Rs 3 crore from MPPMA (Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas), Rs 3 crore from the Swachh Andhra initiative, and the remainder through beneficiary contributions and bank loans. Each shop allottee will receive a Rs 1.5 lakh loan from banks.

## KIIT Ranks 5th in India in Times Higher Education Impact Global Rankings 2025

- 1st position in Reduced Inequalities category in India
- 1st position in Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions category in India
- 3rd position in Quality Education in India

New Delhi: Times Higher Education (THE) ranks universities across the globe based on their social impact through an innovative evaluation process. In this context, universities that actively contribute to societal development participate in the rankings.

KIIT-DU (<https://kiit.ac.in/>) has been a consistent participant in this initiative, and its position has steadily improved each year due to its strong performance. This year too, KIIT has excelled in the Times Higher Education Impact Global Rankings 2025. The University has been recognized for its impact across three key criteria. KIIT-DU has secured the top position in the country for its efforts

in reducing inequality (SDG-10) and for its commitment to



peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG-16) and affordable clean energy (SDG-7). Additionally, it has been ranked third in India for ensuring quality education (SDG-4). Overall, KIIT

University stood fifth among all Indian universities in the Goals (SDGs). Over 2,400 universities, this year, from 130 countries participated in the ranking. The Founder of KIIT and KISS Dr Achyuta Samanta (<https://achyutasamanta.com/>) lauded the impressive rankings. He said, "Although KIIT has a very humbled beginning but it has niched its space in globally in all accreditations and rankings, it has now achieved a status comparable to the finest universities globally. In India, it has made a significant impact as a leading university." KIIT's consistent success in these rankings demonstrates its commitment to excellence in continuous learning, sustainability, inclusion and global cooperation," he said.

## 22-year-old man who 'sneaked into' IIT Bombay and stayed inside for 20 days, arrested; police say he used 21 email Ids

**The police have found that while during the day, he attended lectures at the IIT, during the night, he would sleep on the sofas kept on the ground floor for students.**

Mumbai. The 22-year-old man, who was booked for allegedly spending nearly 20 days inside the IIT Bombay campus in Powai despite not being a student, was arrested Wednesday after police found that he had used 21 e-mail IDs and made sure "not to leave behind any proof". Sections of cheating and forgery were also added in the FIR against the accused Bilal Ahmed Teli.

The police have found that while during the day, he attended lectures at the IIT, during the night, he would sleep on the sofas kept on the ground floor for students.

While Teli told the police that he always wanted to study at IITs and hence managed to sneak in on May 27 while attending a one-day course at the institute, what made police suspicious is the "clean digital record" he



maintained using 21 e-mail addresses and several phone numbers, an official said.

An FIR was registered against Teli on June 21 after he was spotted by an IIT Bombay staffer in the office and alerted the security officials, as he had not seen him before.

While the local Powai police had earlier registered an FIR, issued a notice and allowed him go, sources said that the police believe, further interrogation may be needed to find out the motive behind his unusual action. "He was produced before the local court which remanded him in police custody for two weeks," a police officer said. Later in the day, the case was handed over to the Mumbai crime branch, which took his custody for further investigation. As per the FIR, on June 4, a staffer from the IIT Credit Department had raised an alert that an unidentified man had entered her office premises without authorisation. When asked to show his identity card, the individual fled. She shared CCTV images of the suspect with security personnel, who launched a search but could not locate him at the time.

On June 17 at around 4 pm, the staffer again contacted the IIT Vigilance Department, informing them that the same unidentified person had been spotted inside Lecture Hall LH-101 and was attending a class. The IIT Quick Response Team (QRT) reached the lecture hall and detained the individual, following which they alerted the local Powai police.

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**CPI (M) member, practising lawyer: Meet Satyesha Leuva — a 25-year-old woman elected Sarpanch of a Gujarat village**

Ahmedabad. As the counting of votes was conducted for the elections of around 3,894 gram panchayats in Gujarat on Wednesday, 25-year-old Satyesha Leuva emerged as the winner for Sarpanch's post in Vadvasa village of Prantij taluka in Sabarkantha district. Even though the gram panchayat elections are not fought on party symbols, Satyesha said she follows the communist ideology and is an office bearer of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Gujarat.

Satyesha registered a total of 596 votes while defeating her two opponents, Savita and Pushpa, who got 492 and 236 votes, respectively. The seat is reserved for women of Scheduled Caste (SC) communities.

A science graduate, Satyesha is a lawyer by profession and does her legal practice in Ahmedabad.

Speaking with The Indian Express, she said that she is an active member of CPI (M) and is a secretariat member of the party in Sabarkantha. She is also a permanent invitee to the party's state committee. Besides, she is the state secretary of Students' Federation of India (SFI), the party's student wing, in Gujarat.

According to Satyesha, Vadvasa village has been awaiting election since 2020 owing to the pending issue of fixing of OBC reservation in local bodies by a judicial commission. Since 2020, the village affairs have been handled by an administrator.

On her priorities for her village, Satyesha said that the village roads and street lights are an issue for Vadvasa, which she would like to address as an immediate priority. She also wants to work on proper disposal of garbage in the village and for those whose housing units have been sanctioned, but not handed out so far.

In the long run, she wants to have a health centre, a library and a gymnasium in the village. "Our village is around 1-1.5 km away from the national highway. The frequency of buses to reach the highway is less. So, I want to have 3-4 electric rickshaws, which can ferry people from the village to the highway," Satyesha said.

# CM Yogi lays foundation stone of CEL-ESDS Green Data Center in Ghaziabad

## The Sikh Times

Ghaziabad, June 26: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called CEL's journey a symbol of India's industrial revival and self-reliance. He said it is a key part of Prime Minister Modi's vision for a developed India by 2047, and that through organizations like CEL, the new India is moving forward with strength, technology, and confidence. CM Yogi and Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh, laid the foundation stone for the CEL-ESDS Green Data Centre in Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, on Thursday. During the event, the CM expressed happiness about the new green-field data centre being developed by CEL. He said, "It is a strong step toward achieving PM Modi's goal of net-zero emissions by 2070." He also mentioned that Uttar Pradesh will generate 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy by 2027, with CEL playing a key role in this mission. At the Golden Jubilee

**NAME CHANGE**  
I, ASHAR S/O NOOR MOHAMED residing at B-79, OKHLA VIHAR, JAMIA NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110025 have changed my name ASHAR AHMED for all future purpose.

## NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as Km Meenu alias Meena D/o Udayver Singh W/o Manjul Kumar R/o 293, Gali No. 5, Near Azad Park, Bagh Kare Khan, Malka Ganj S.O. North Delhi, Delhi-110007 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Meena.

## NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as Vandana Nanda D/o Gautam Dev Shourie R/o House Number-A-2, West End Colony, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, Delhi-110021 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Vandana Shourie.

## NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as Rashmi Uppal alias Rashmi Batheja D/o K L Uppal W/o Shiva Kumar Batheja R/o B-20 First Floor, B.K. Distt Colony, Lodhi Road, Central Delhi, Delhi-110003 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rashmi Batheja.

## NAME CHANGE

I hitherto known as Joginder S/o Satpal R/o E-26/2, Gali No. 2, Subhash Vihar North Ghonda, Garhi Munda, North East Delhi, Delhi-110053 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Joginder Sharma.

## NAME CHANGE

I, Jay Kumar S/O Mahavir Singh R/o 105, Basant Nagar, Prajapati Mohalla Vasant Vihar, South West Delhi, Delhi-110057 have changed the name of my minor daughter Kamaya aged 12 years and she shall hereafter be known as Kamya Singhania.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that our client Mr. Chirag Arora S/o Mr. Vinod Arora is the owner of Freehold Residential Entire Built-up Commercial Property with roof rights Built-up Property Bearing No. 1046 (Old No. 489/37-A), area measuring 27.65 Sq. Yds. i.e. 23.11 Sq. Mtrs. out of Khasra No. 631/395/61/2/1/2, out of entire area 55.30 Sq. Yds. situated at Abadi of Patel Block, now Known as PATEL GALI, Gandhi Nagar, in the area of Village Seelampur, Ilaga Shahdara, Delhi-110031. by virtue of GIC Deed dated 30.04.2025 as Doc No. 2025/18/3610 in Book No. 1 Vol no. 5420 on Page no. 79-102 SR IV B Vivek Vihar. In the chain documents below mentioned document not available i.e. Probate Order of Will Deed dated 14.05.2003, our client is declining that any other Person does not have any right over the said property, which is to be financed by DCB Bank Limited Branch: Kardh Bagh Delhi. If any person(s) will have any objection(s) or claim(s) will be entitled to the right of interest in the Said Property then communicate with in 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and or the same to the undersigned if found by anyone. Thereafter no claim shall be entertained.

**NAME CHANGE**

I, NO-15447406Y Rank-NK (N ASST) Name-SUNIL residing at VPO-KURTHALA, TEH-110006, DIST-NUH, HARYANA-122107, have changed my father's name from NERET PAUL SINGH to NEETHARAPAL for future purposes and in my service records my father's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 18/11/1965 instead of his correct date of birth as 10/04/1963 vide Affidavit dated 26/06/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

## NAME CHANGE

I, NO-15181092W Rank-HAV Name-CHAMAN LAL permanently residing at VILL-BALKHARI, PO-SAROA, TEH-CHACHAYOT, DIST-MANDI, HIMACHAL PRADESH-175124, have changed my mother's name from DRONPTI DEVI to DAROPATI DEVI for all future purposes and in my service records my mother's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/01/1968 instead of her correct date of birth as 17/08/1973 vide Affidavit dated 26/06/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

## NAME CHANGE

I, NO-13776793N Rank-NK Name-SOMPAK SINGH residing at VPO-SHAHJAHANPUR, TEHSIL-BEHOR, DIST-ALWAR, RAJASTHAN-301076, have changed my mother's name from VIMLESH DEVI to BIMALA for all future purposes and in my service records my mother's date of birth wrongly mentioned as 02/03/1967 instead of her correct date of birth as 01/03/1966 vide Affidavit dated 06/06/2025 before Notary Public, Delhi.

## NAME CHANGE

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## NEWS BOX

## 12 killed in attack on celebration in Mexico's Guanajuato state city

**MEXICO CITY.** Twelve people were killed overnight in the Mexican state of Guanajuato when gunmen opened fire on a celebration in the city of Irapuato, authorities said Wednesday. People were dancing and drinking in the street in celebration of St. John the Baptist when the shooting began. Revelers screamed and ran to escape the gunfire, according to videos circulated online. Irapuato official Rodolfo Gómez Cervantes, said in a news conference Wednesday that the number of victims had risen to 12. Some 20 others were wounded. President Claudia Sheinbaum lamented the attack, saying that it was under investigation.

Last month, seven people were killed in a shooting that targeted a party organized by the Catholic Church in San Bartolo de Berrios, Guanajuato. Guanajuato, which is northwest of Mexico City, has been one of the country's most violent states, as various organized crime groups battle for control. There have been 1,435 homicides in the state through the first five months of the year, more than double any other state.

## Israel kills at least 60 Palestinians waiting for aid at distribution sites of US-backed GHF, in last 24 hrs

**world.** Israel has killed at least 60 starving Palestinians who were waiting for the much-needed humanitarian aid at the distribution sites of the US-backed and Israeli military-established Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) in the last 24 hours, reported Al Jazeera.

The latest in a string of deadly attacks on desperate aid seekers came after the United Nations had condemned Israel's "weaponisation of food" against the Palestinians after a three-month-long blockade of humanitarian assistance, which was partially lifted only to replace the established aid distribution systems with the GHF. Rights groups and the UN had refused to cooperate with the GHF, slamming it as a "death trap" for Palestinians and accusing it of aiding Israel in its genocidal war in Gaza.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, called the GHF an "abomination" that has put Palestinians' lives at risk, while a spokesman for the UN human rights office, Thameem Al-Kheetan, condemned the "weaponisation of food" in the territory. According to Gaza's health ministry, Israel has killed more than 500 Palestinians at aid distribution sites since the GHF began operations last month. Meanwhile, Israeli forces also shot dead a 13-



year-old Palestinian boy during a raid on al-Yamoun, west of Jenin in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday. The boy, Rayan Tamer Housheh, was shot in the neck. Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has so far killed at least 56,077 Palestinians, mostly women and children. Israel has also targeted and killed hundreds of journalists, health care workers and aid workers.

## Haka and flag-burning: Why New Zealand is seeing anti-immigration protests

**world.** "Faith, flag, family," chanted the crowd in Central Auckland as anti-immigration protesters gathered under the leadership of Destiny Church's Brian Tamaki. The demonstrators, many of whom performed the haka, tore, stomped on, and burned flags representing Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Palestine, each act of destruction followed by traditional war dances. The protest reflected a growing unease among some segments of New Zealand's population regarding the country's changing immigration landscape.

Tamaki, a radical religious leader known for courting controversy, made his intent clear. "The spread of non-Christian religions is now out of control," he said, adding that "Any type of immigration without assimilation is invasion." The response from the country's leaders was swift and firm. Acting Prime Minister David Seymour called Tamaki's views "un-Kiwi". He also asserted that "New Zealand's great strength is that we are a nation of pioneers who moved here to give their children a better tomorrow." New Zealand's Police Minister Mark Mitchell also condemned the protest, describing the event and its use of sacred cultural practices as "vile rhetoric and behaviour," which, he said, had no place in the country. But New Zealand has seen a larger anti-immigration sentiment. Here's why.

### WHY AN IMMIGRATION PROBLEM IN NEW ZEALAND?

The outburst in Auckland did not emerge in a vacuum. New Zealand, a country of just over 5.3 million people, has seen a dramatic surge in migration since late 2022. While the government has emphasised the need for skilled immigrants, particularly in areas like education, it has also sought to prioritise native citizens for jobs where there are no shortages. The government is focused on attracting and retaining highly skilled migrants such as secondary teachers, where there is a skill shortage," said Immigration Minister Erica Stanford.

## Their wedding has drawn protests by groups who view it as a sign of the growing disparity, with locals saying it highlights how their needs are ignored amid mass tourism.

**VENICE.** Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Lauren Sanchez arrived in Venice, Italy, on Wednesday ahead of their star-studded weekend wedding, which has galvanized an assortment of protesters. Bezos waved from a water taxi as he and Sanchez arrived at the dock of the Aman Hotel on the Grand Canal with two security boats in tow. Their wedding has drawn protests by groups who view it as a sign of the growing disparity between the haves and have-nots, while residents complain it exemplifies the way their needs are disregarded in the era of mass tourism to the historic lagoon city.

## Analysis: A battered Iran faces an uncertain future after its grinding war with Israel

**DUBAI.** The bombing has quieted in Iran's 12-day conflict with Israel. Now its battered theocracy and 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei must regroup and rebuild in a changed landscape. Israeli airstrikes decimated the upper ranks of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard and depleted its arsenal of ballistic missiles. Israeli missiles and American bunker buster bombs damaged the nuclear program — though how much remains disputed. Khamenei went into deep isolation in an undisclosed location, appearing only twice in videos as the Israelis had free rein over the country's skies. Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance," a group of allied countries and militias in the Mideast, has been mauled by the Israelis since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack. Foreign

support Tehran may have expected from China and Russia never



materialized. At home, old problems remain, particularly an economy wrecked by international sanctions, corruption and mismanagement.

"Iran's leadership has been dealt a heavy blow and will be conscious of preserving the ceasefire, which gives the regime breathing room and allows

About a dozen Venetian organizations — including housing advocates, anti-cruise ship campaigners and university groups — have united to protest the multi-day event under the banner "No Space for Bezos," a play on words also referring to the bride's recent space flight. They have staged small-scale protests, unfurling anti-Bezos banners on iconic Venetian sites. They were joined Monday by Greenpeace and the British group "Everyone Hates Elon," which has smashed Teslas to protest Elon Musk, to unfurl a giant banner in St. Mark's Square protesting purported tax breaks for billionaires. On Wednesday, other activists launched a float down the Grand Canal featuring a mannequin of Bezos clinging onto an Amazon box, his fists full of fake dollars. The British publicity firm that announced the stunt said it wasn't a protest of the wedding "but against unchecked wealth, media control, and the growing privatisation of public spaces." The local activists had planned a more organized protest for Saturday, aiming to obstruct access to canals with boats to prevent guests from reaching a wedding venue.

They modified the protest to a march from the train station after claiming a victory,



asserting that their pressure forced organizers to change the venue to the Arsenale, a more easily secured site beyond Venice's congested center. It will be a strong, decisive protest, but peaceful," said Federica Toninello, an activist with the Social Housing Assembly network. "We want it to be like a party, with music, to make clear what we want our Venice to look like." Among the 200 guests confirmed to

be attending the wedding are Mick Jagger, Ivanka Trump, Oprah Winfrey, Katy Perry and Leonardo DiCaprio.

Venice, renowned for its romantic canal vistas, hosts hundreds of weddings each year, not infrequently those of the rich and famous. Previous celebrity weddings, like that of George Clooney to human rights lawyer Amal Alamuddin in 2014, were embraced by the public. Hundreds turned out to wish the couple well at City Hall.

Bezos has a different political and business profile, said Tommaso Cacciari, a prominent figure in the movement that successfully pushed for a ban on cruise ships over 25,000 tons traveling through the Giudecca Canal in central Venice. "Bezos is not a Hollywood actor," Cacciari said. "He is an ultra-billionaire who sat next to Donald Trump during the inauguration, who contributed to his reelection and is contributing in a direct and heavy way to this new global obscurantism."

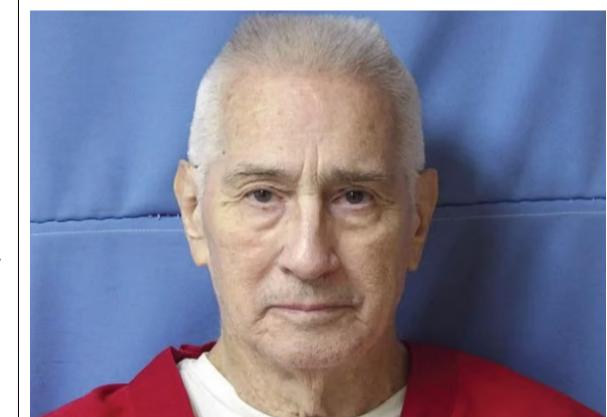
## Mississippi executes the longest-serving man on the state's death row for 1976 killing

**PARCHMAN.** The longest-serving man on Mississippi's death row was executed Wednesday, nearly five decades after he kidnapped and killed a bank loan officer's wife in a violent ransom scheme.

Richard Gerald Jordan, a 79-year-old Vietnam veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder whose final appeals were denied without comment by the U.S. Supreme Court, was sentenced to death in 1976 for killing and kidnapping Edwina Marter. He died by lethal injection at the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman.

The execution began at 6 p.m., according to prison officials. Jordan lay on the gurney with his mouth slightly ajar and took several deep breaths before becoming still. The time of death was given as 6:16 p.m. Jordan was one of several on the state's death row who sued the state over its three-drug execution protocol, claiming it is inhumane.

When given an opportunity to make a final statement Wednesday, he said, "First I would like to thank everyone for a humane way of doing this. I want to



apologize to the victim's family." He also thanked his lawyers and his wife and asked for forgiveness. His last words were: "I will see you on the other side, all of you." Jordan's wife, Marsha Jordan, witnessed the execution, along with his lawyer Krissy Nobile and a spiritual adviser, the Rev. Tim Murphy. His wife and lawyer dabbed their eyes several times. During a news conference after the execution, Keith Degruy, a spokesperson for Marter's family, read a statement on behalf of her two sons and husband, who were not present at the execution.

"Nothing will bring back our mom, sister and our friend. Nothing can ever change what Jordan took from us 49 years ago. Jordan tried desperately to change his ruling so he can simply die in prison. We never had an option," he said. Jordan's execution was the third in the state in the last 10 years; previously the most recent one was carried out in December 2022. It came a day after a man was put to death in Florida, in what is shaping up to be a year with the most executions since 2015.

## Trump grapples for upper hand in debate over damage caused by US strikes on Iran

**THE HAGUE.** President Donald Trump on Wednesday rejected an early intelligence assessment that U.S. strikes inflicted only a marginal setback on Iran's nuclear program, insisting that his country's spies did not have the full picture and defending his own swift conclusion that American bombs and missiles delivered a crushing blow. "This was a devastating attack, and it knocked them for a loop," Trump said as his administration scrambled to support his claims, made only hours after the attack, that Iranian nuclear facilities were "completely and fully obliterated." Trump said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and other military officials would hold an "interesting and irrefutable" news conference Thursday morning to "fight for the Dignity of our Great American Pilots" who carried out the mission. He wrote on social media that "these Patriots were very upset" by "Fake News" reports about the limited impact of the strikes. The issue dominated Trump's attendance at NATO's annual summit in the

Netherlands, which was otherwise focused on European security. The White House highlighted an Israeli statement that Iran's nuclear efforts were delayed by years, much longer than the few months determined by American intelligence. A spokesperson for the Iranian foreign ministry also said the facilities have suffered significant damage. But those comments fell short of Trump's hyperbole and did little to suggest that U.S. strikes had eliminated the threat of Iran developing a nuclear weapon. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking in an interview with Politico, limited his own assessment to saying Iran was "much further away from a nuclear weapon today than they were before the president took this bold action." Drawing reliable conclusions about the impact of the U.S. strikes remains difficult, especially only days after they took place. That makes the issue a breeding ground for competing claims that could determine how American voters view Trump's risky decision to join Israel's attacks on Iran.

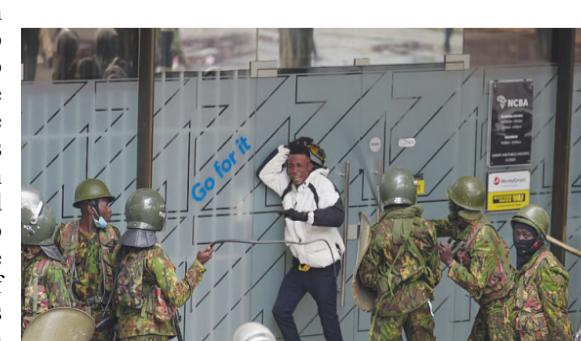
Jeffrey Lewis, a professor of nonproliferation at the Middlebury Institute, said Trump was trying to have it both ways. "If it's too early to know, why is Trump saying it's obliterated?" he said. "Either it's too early to know, or you know." What's next? Also at stake are Trump's next steps in the Middle East, where diplomatic efforts could be required to prevent Iran from rebuilding its nuclear program. Trump said U.S. and Iranian officials would meet soon, resuming a dialogue that was interrupted by nearly two weeks of war, even as he suggested that negotiations were no longer necessary. "I don't care if I have an agreement or not," Trump said, because Iran was "too badly damaged to even consider rebuilding its program." "They're not going to be doing it anyway. They've had it." Iran maintains that its atomic ambitions are for peaceful purposes, while U.S. and Israeli leaders have described the country's nuclear program as the precursor to obtaining a nuclear weapon.

## Youth-led protests erupt again in Kenya over police brutality and poor governance

**NAIROBI.** Youth-led protests against police brutality and poor governance have erupted across Kenya again on Wednesday, with thousands making their way to the central business district in the capital, Nairobi. The protests, which coincided with the first anniversary of demonstrations opposing tax hikes that left 60 people dead and 20 others missing, followed last week's rallies that demanded answers for the unexplained death of a Kenyan blogger while in police custody. Frustration is growing, especially among Generation Z, over police violence, economic struggles, and government mismanagement. The Communications Authority of Kenya has directed local media to stop all live broadcasts of the protests halfway through the day as President William Ruto warned that violence wouldn't be tolerated. Many turned to social media to share updates and remember slain protesters. Others posted anti-government messages and memes. On the streets, some could be seen

offering protesters water. Here's why unrest is gripping Kenya: Police brutality. Calls for accountability have grown louder in Kenya after a street hawker was killed during last week's protests. A Kenyan court has given detectives 15 days to complete investigations into two police officers suspected of the shooting. This came as young people flooded social media platforms throughout the week with commemorations of protesters killed last year. At the time, Ruto apologized and vowed to end police brutality as the top police chief resigned. "Not a single officer has been held to account," said Hussein Khaled, a human rights activist, adding that people took to the streets "to demand justice in terms of compensation ... arrest of those officers who were involved ... police reforms because too many Kenyans are losing their

lives" to police brutality. Economic frustration. Last year's deadly protests strongly opposed a finance bill that raised taxes significantly to address debt, putting an undue burden on



widespread criticism and calls for Ruto's resignation, following the appointment of a new but widely criticized cabinet. A revamped healthcare levy also changed standard premiums to a progressive tax, based on income. United Nations' data shows that 70% of sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 30, with 67% of Kenya's young people unemployed.

Both the health and the education sectors, which greatly affect the youth, are seemingly sinking due to misguided policies and failure to provide needed resources. At the same time, there appears to be unlimited funds for 'aristocratic' luxuries," said Macharia Munene, professor of History and International Relations at United States International University Africa in Nairobi, referring to some state people's spending that has been strongly condemned.

## NEWS BOX

**YSRCP leader Jagan Mohan Reddy moves AP High Court to quash case over Palnadu accident**

**VIJAYAWADA.** Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has filed a petition in the AP High Court seeking to quash a case registered against him by the Nallapadu police in connection with a fatal accident at Rentapalla village in Palnadu district.

The incident occurred during Jagan's visit, resulting in the death of Cheel Singayya after being struck by a vehicle. Jagan, named the second accused, argued that the vehicle he was travelling in weighed nearly 4,000 kg with security personnel, making it unlikely to have crushed the victim.

He dismissed the police version as fabricated and politically motivated. Initially booked under Section 106(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita (death by negligence) based on a complaint by Singayya's wife, the case was later altered to include Sections 105 (culpable homicide) and 49 (abettment), allegedly based on a statement by one Durga Rao.

Jagan contended that a Tata Safari initially identified as the vehicle involved in the accident, and its driver and owner were arrested, and later released on bail. He criticised the seizure of his vehicle, the addition of serious charges without evidence, and warned of damage to his reputation.

He requested interim relief, and an urgent hearing, which Justice V Lakshmanarao scheduled for Thursday. Petitions from YSRCP leaders, including Subba Reddy, Perni Nani, Vidadala Rajini, and K Nageswara Reddy, were also posted for hearing on the same day.

## Excise sleuths bust three illegal liquor networks, 1,247 fake bottles seized in Vijayawada

**VIJAYAWADA.** Andhra Pradesh excise officials, under the guidance of Principal Secretary Mukesh Kumar Meena and supervision of Commissioner Nishant Kumar and Enforcement Director Rahuldev Sharma, have dismantled three illegal liquor manufacturing and distribution networks in West Godavari, Konaseema and Anakapalle districts.

The operations led to the seizure of significant quantities of spirit, spurious liquor, raw materials and equipment, along with the arrest of multiple key operatives and suppliers.

Prohibition and Excise officials from Amalapuram and Kakinada, with a coordinated strategy, raided a large-scale spurious liquor production facility in Komaragiripatnam village of Allavaram mandal. Seized items included 1,065 litres of spirit, 125 PET bottles labelled 'AC Black', sealing machinery, fake caps, labels and caramel used for manufacturing. Eight individuals, including Neredumilli Subrahmanyam and Chavakkula Premkumar, also known as Babloo, were arrested.

Building on leads from the Konaseema raid, officials raided another illegal unit within the Palakollu P&E station limits of West Godavari district. This facility was involved in manufacturing and bottling spurious liquor, with significant quantities of rectified spirit, glycerine, caramel, and artificial flavouring agents seized.

Key accused Puli Roshani Sheetal and Borra Satya Apparao were arrested. In a separate operation, excise officials uncovered a spurious liquor distribution network operating from two locations in Payakaraopeta of Anakapalle district: a coconut farm near Srirampuram-Kesavaram Road and a godown owned by Vijayalaxmi Traders.

## Police seize 200 kg of ganja worth Rs 15 lakh in Vijayawada

**VIJAYAWADA.** NTR police on Wednesday arrested two persons and seized 200 kg of ganja worth approximately Rs 15 lakh under Krishna Lanka PS limits. NTR District Commissioner of Police, SV Rajashekhar Babu, said the accused—Andi Nagaraju (26) of Bheemunipatnam and Anbalagan Sinrasu—were transporting ganja from the Visakhapatnam Agency area to Tamil Nadu when police intercepted them during a vehicle inspection drive.

Acting on a tip-off, Krishna Lanka SI Bhanu Prasad and his team, along with the Vijayawada EAGLE unit, conducted checks near Geethanagar Katta. Police first stopped a Swift Dzire and discovered bags of ganja, taking the driver into custody. Meanwhile, the driver of a Tata goods vehicle approaching the same checkpoint attempted to flee but was also apprehended.

The Commissioner said prime accused Nagaraju, originally from Madurai, had settled in Thagarapuvalasa. Learning of the high demand for ganja in Chennai, he began sourcing it from nearby agency areas at low prices and smuggling it to Tamil Nadu.

Despite two prior arrests and jail time, Nagaraju resumed smuggling after his release. In this attempt, they loaded 100 kg of ganja in Nagaraju's car and another 100 kg in a mini goods vehicle, both heading towards Chennai. Police arrested both accused under relevant sections of the NDPS Act and seized the two vehicles used in the operation. Further investigation is ongoing.

## Dallewal sticks to earlier stand, says 'no talks with Centre if Punjab is involved'

**Dallewal reiterates SKM's stance of excluding Punjab officials from Centre talks on MSP guarantee law .**

**Chandigarh.** The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) on Wednesday stuck to its earlier stand and announced that talks with the Centre regarding the minimum support price will take place only if the ministers and officials of Punjab are not involved. SKM leader Jagit Singh Dallewal, who was on a fast unto death demanding minimum support price for all 23 crops, said the Punjab government will not be involved in the talks with the Centre. The morcha had refused to participate in the meeting to be held on May 4, saying that they will not attend the meeting with the ministers and officials of the Punjab government.

The morcha had put this precondition to Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Chouhan. The Agriculture Minister appealed to the farmer leaders to reconsider their decision, saying that the country has a federal structure and the state governments have an important role.

Dallewal said that due to the Indo-Pak war in between, they could not take the dialogue forward. SKM will soon write a letter to the Centre seeking resumption of dialogue. Dallewal was talking to media persons to give details of the money spent during the



movement that lasted more than a year and to talk about the future strategy of the movement. Dallewal said that the Punjab government had ended their movement by deceit. "Tractors, trolleys and other goods worth lakhs of rupees of our farmers have been damaged. We will not participate in talks with such ministers and officials."

He said that the issues have to be resolved by the Centre, so the talks will also be held directly with them. Farmer leaders said that the fight for MSP guarantee law is still incomplete. SKM (non-political) will continue the struggle to take this fight to victory. He told that a huge Kisan Mahapanchayat is being organised in

Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, on July 5 on the issue of MSP guarantee law. He said that notices of cases registered against farmers during the agitation on Shambhu, Khanauri and Ratanpura fronts are being sent to the farmers.

He threatened that if the Haryana government does not withdraw those cases then another programme will be announced in the national meeting of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) to be held in Bangalore on July 6. Farmer leaders said that a state-level conference will be organised on the issue of MSP in

Bangalore on July 7 in which all the senior leaders of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) will participate.

He said that the land which is being acquired by the Punjab government in every district of the state under the Land Pooling Scheme is part of a big conspiracy to snatch land, but they will not let the government snatch even an inch of land from the farmers. He said that during the movement, from February 13, 2024 to March 18, 2025, the Khanauri Morcha platform received financial help of Rs 34,32,567 from the public. During the same period, Khanauri Morcha incurred an expenditure of Rs 37,65,539.

## 'Confession doesn't seem voluntary': Court acquits 2 booked in extortion case

**The Mumbai Police had booked William Rodrigues and Akash Shetty, while naming Ravi Pujari as a wanted accused, for allegedly making extortion calls to a Mumbai-based builder and his brother.**

**Mumbai.** STATING THAT an accused's confession cannot be considered voluntary as his parents were kept in custody by the police, a special court on Tuesday acquitted two alleged gang members of gangster Ravi Pujari, booked in an extortion case in 2018.

The Mumbai Police had booked William Rodrigues and Akash Shetty, while naming Ravi Pujari as a wanted accused, for allegedly making extortion calls to a Mumbai-based builder and his brother.

The police had claimed that Pujari had made the calls to the builder in November 2018 and demanded Rs 2 crore to continue the construction work on his project and threatened him with consequences if the payment was not made. In January 2019, calls



were also made to the builder's son and nephew, demanding money. The builder then approached Goregaon police, which handed over the probe to the anti-extortion cell.

The accused were also booked under sections of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime

Act, under which a confession made before a certain rank police official is admissible as evidence.

Special Judge Mahesh K Jadhav said that the mandatory provisions of the MCOCA were not followed by the police and that the confession does not seem voluntary. "The presence of assistant police inspector in the confession room as well as the presence of police officer in civil dress... presence of custody of parents of accused William (Rodrigues) with police officers clearly reflect the confession was an outcome of threat, inducement, etc and it is not voluntary in nature," the special court said, adding that the confession is "not free from threat and inducement".

## Gujarat gram panchayat polls: Retired forester elected sarpanch, defeats estranged son in two-way contest

**Ahmedabad.** Of the various battles

that played out across the state during the Gram Panchayat elections held earlier this month, one of the most interesting ones was of an estranged father-son duo in Gulkund gram panchayat in Ahwa taluka of Gujarat's Dang district. Here, retired forest department employee Sureshbhai Vagh (55) was up against 32-year-old Rajeshkumar – his son from his first marriage.

As the results were declared Wednesday, Suresh emerged as the winner in the contest that had only two candidates. He had defeated his son, an advocate by profession, by over 500 votes.

Talking to The Indian Express, Suresh said, "As a forester, I worked in various districts in South and Central Gujarat, but due to my ill health, I took voluntary retirement and settled in my native village. I wanted to do something for the villagers, so I decided to contest the election. There was no opponent except my son against me, with whom I am not on talking terms. I have no relations with my first wife Vimalben either even



when Suresh and Rajesh would cross paths but instead of talking, they would change their routes, the sources added.

The Gulkund gram panchayat has a total of 1,840 voters, of whom 1,624 cast their votes via ballot paper, said sources.

Expressing gratitude to the voters, Suresh said, "I will address the issues faced by the villagers and initiate development works."

## Nearly 60% of bakeries in Mumbai yet to switch to cleaner fuel

**Civic officials said that of the 340 bakeries which are yet to switch to cleaner fuels 28 bakeries have already initiated the process to switch.**

**Mumbai.** With less than a month to meet the deadline, almost 60 percent of the bakeries in Mumbai are yet to switch to cleaner fuels. In a recent survey carried out by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) it has been found that around 340 of the total bakeries in Mumbai or 59% of the total 574 functional bakeries are yet to switch to cleaner fuels.

Furthermore, the data shows that 187 bakeries or 32.5% of the total bakeries are currently using cleaner fuels. According to the BMC's data, there are 1,064 licensed bakeries in Mumbai, out of which 490 of them are non-operational while 574 are currently operational. The BMC's survey came two weeks before the deadline of the Bombay High Court's (HC) order, which mandated all bakeries and eateries to switch to cleaner fuel by July 8.

The civic body's data was presented in a review meeting that was carried out by Mumbai (Suburban) guardian minister, Ashish Shelar.



Civic officials said that of the 340 bakeries which are yet to switch to cleaner fuels 28 bakeries have already initiated the process to switch.

Of the remaining bakeries, 150 of them have shared their willingness to make the switch. The numbers are being updated in our database and by July 9, we are expecting more bakeries to either switch into the process of conversion or complete the process entirely," the civic official said. During the review meeting, Shelar said that he suggested that a special

incentive scheme for bakers be launched that will be backed by the both BMC and Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB). Earlier in February, the Mahanagar Gas Limited (MGL) had waived off security deposit for bakers in Mumbai.

Since 2022, Mumbai – despite being an island city has been looming under the woes of air pollution. In 2023, the BMC issued the Mumbai Air Pollution Mitigation Plan (MAPMP) in which smoke and emission generated from bakeries and eateries were identified as one of the key sources of Mumbai's air pollution. The BMC's data shows that as of today, bakeries contribute to 6% of Mumbai's overall air quality. "Even though 6% may not be a very high number, it should be noted that almost all these bakeries are located in densely populated areas like Byculla, Mazgaon, Malad, Santacruz among others.

## Man dies in Vadodara after his auto overturns, falls into pit

**Community halls like Sindhu Bhawan, a popular venue for Sindhi events, have hosted multiple besnas in a single day, with up to three to four condolence meets for Air India crash victims taking place across its ground and first-floor halls.**

**Vadodara.** A 38-year-old man died in the wee hours of Wednesday after he sustained grievous injuries when the autorickshaw he was driving overturned and fell into a pit in Vadodara. The incident sparked a political controversy, with the Opposition blaming the BJP-ruled Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) for putting lives at risk as a mild downpour led to waterlogging in some areas. It also pointed out that the water level of the Vishwamitri rose steadily after a 100-day dredging and desilting exercise undertaken by the civic body. A medical team, which reached the spot on an ambulance, declared Anil Thakor Vasava dead. The pit was on an unfinished patch of a road in Sardar Estate area that was allegedly caused by some drainage work carried out by the VMC. Vasava, who is survived by his parents, wife and two minor children, was the only breadwinner of his family. His brother Sunil said that the family

suffered the loss due to negligence of the civic body.

Sunil, who received the body of the deceased, also said, "My brother was the only breadwinner... His wife and two minor children as well as our parents were dependent on his income. Had the civic body completed its work, my brother would not have mistaken the pit for a harmless pothole in the rain. We will file a complaint against the VMC."

The Vadodara unit of the Congress Wednesday held a protest outside the office of Mayor Pinky Soni, alleging that VMC officer-bearers had refused to answer questions related to the Vishwamitri River project, undertaken ahead of monsoon. Opposition leader Chandrakant Shrivastav, said, "We have no other option, but to sit on dharna outside the Mayor's office because they do not hear us or bother to answer

questions... When we asked them if Vadodara will witness floods and what is the effectiveness of the 100-day project of desilting and dredging, we were told 'Floods will happen'... So what did they do for 100 days? Where was the Rs 1,000 crore, paid by taxpayers, spent? Should we not be asking these questions?"

Shrivastav said that "inefficiency and apathy" of the civic body resulted in the death of the

autorickshaw driver. "There are so many road cave-ins, there are pits being dug and left open. Today, a young breadwinner of a family has died due to the apathy and negligence of the VMC, but the office-bearers of the BJP have no answers."

Meanwhile, senior officials of the VMC said that the drainage work was done, but the patchwork was pending and that the driver "ought to have exercised caution".

A senior officer said, "The patchwork was started immediately after the unfortunate incident... However, during rain, drivers are advised to drive at a speed that can be controlled and also keep an eye for uneven roads, especially in areas where the civic body has undertaken pre-monsoon work..." Bapod police station in Vadodara city filed a case of rash driving on public way against the deceased, based on the statement of his brother.

## Panchkula police destroys drugs worth Rs 1.53 crore



**Panchkula.** The Panchkula police has destroyed narcotics worth approximately Rs 1.53 crore in accordance with the NDPS Act. The destruction process took place at a modern incinerator facility located in the hygienic factory area of Bagwala, Panchkula, ensuring full transparency and adherence to legal protocols.

The drug disposal was carried out by a dedicated Drug Disposal Committee headed by Commissioner Sibash Kabiraj following the requisite judicial approvals.

The entire process was conducted under strict supervision to ensure it was lawful and secure. DCP Srishti Gupta, ACP Vikram Nehra and Inspector Sukhbir Singh from Raipur Rani police station, among other officers, were present during the disposal.

The substances were seized in 48 separate cases over time and had an estimated market value of Rs 1,53,29,570.

During the event, DCP Srishti Gupta too interacted with local residents of Bagwala and sought feedback on the drug situation in their area. She urged citizens to report any information related to drug trafficking or illegal narcotics activities directly to the police. She also assured the public that those struggling with addiction would be provided access to treatment, rehabilitation, and counselling services.

"This is not just the police's battle — it's a collective fight in which every citizen's participation is crucial," she said.

Commissioner Sibash Kabiraj called the initiative a significant step in the fight against drug abuse. He reaffirmed that the Panchkula police remains fully committed to continuing strict, transparent, and sensitive action against narcotics. "Drugs are eating away at the fabric of society. Eliminating them requires a united front involving the administration, community, and each citizen," he stated.

## Has India forgotten the 'smart power' lessons Narasimha Rao employed

A spectacular display of strategic autonomy in world politics appeared on Sunday at the United Nations Security Council emergency session after the US-led strikes on Iranian nuclear sites. Pakistan joined hands with Russia and China to propose a resolution demanding an "immediate and unconditional ceasefire". While the draft resolution did not explicitly name the US or Israel, it condemned the attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities. To pass, the resolution requires the backing of at least nine members—which it has reportedly secured—but also not attract any veto by the permanent members. That proviso makes it a non-starter, since the US won't censure itself. Nonetheless, it is an astonishingly assertive display of strategic autonomy by Pakistan within a week after the lunch hosted by US President Donald Trump for Pakistan's army chief General Asim Munir at the White House and their one-on-one conversation. Trump has a way of intimidating people positively or negatively. He could not find time to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of G7 summit last week, but instead invited him to the White House. Trump probably intended to get Modi and Munir together, which would have been a feather on his cap as a 'mediator'. So typical of Trump! But Modi preferred to visit 'Mahaprabhu's land', Odisha.

How does Gen Munir get away with such blatantly provocative 'multi-alignment'—to borrow External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's coinage? The answer is that the exceptional hospitality Munir received at the White House did not cloud his firm judgement about the highest importance of Islamabad acting—and be seen as acting—as Iran's best friend in the neighbourhood at such a time of trial and tribulation in that country's 2,700-year history, when it faces an existential threat from the US-Israel juggernaut.

Alas, India lacks such clarity of mind about the importance of Iran. Some 30 years ago, the UN arena in Geneva witnessed another diplomatic pirouette involving Pakistan and Iran, when Iran killed an Organisation of Islamic Cooperation resolution sponsored by Pakistan at the UNHRC condemning India's alleged human rights violations in Kashmir. Iran was responding to an Indian request made personally by Jaishankar's then predecessor, the late Dinesh Singh. I had accompanied Singh on that historic mission—'historic' because Prime Minister Narasimha Rao had ordered such a diplomatic initiative on the basis of a meticulous assessment that the OIC resolution had a good chance of getting approval at the UNHRC, which, we feared, might lead to the reopening of Kashmir file at the Security Council in New York. Neither Boris Yeltsin's Russia nor Bill Clinton's America was a dependable friend at that time. Rao, our only statesman who draws comparison with Jawaharlal Nehru in sheer erudition, took that audacious decision since he was a scholar-politician-diplomat himself who spoke Persian and was deeply immersed in Iran's history to comprehend the subtlety and sophistication of the Iranian mind—and its intense desire for a close relationship with India. Fortunately, in Singh, too, we had a rare foreign minister who genuinely believed in India's independent foreign policy and strategic autonomy. Indeed, Rao and Singh made a great combination as statesmen. Although neither wasted time spinning airy geostrategies to educate their peer groups in western capitals, they were real practitioners of what Joseph Nye would call 'smart power' in politics. Suffice to say, not only did Iran support us, but they also arranged an impromptu meeting for Singh with China's foreign minister Qian Qichen, who happened to be in Tehran on that day. To our great delight, Qian, who was a politburo member too, told Singh that Kashmir was a backlog of colonial history and a purely bilateral issue between India and Pakistan that ought to be resolved by the two countries directly.

## Congress May Have Finally Solved Its Tharoor Dilemma In Kerala

With the Nilambur by-election in the bag, maybe the Congress can finally put the sordid Tharoor saga behind it and concentrate on the challenging panchayat and assembly elections looming ahead.

The Congress party's victory in Kerala's Nilambur by-election has pretty much sealed the fate of its high-profile dissident Lok Sabha MP from the state capital, Shashi Tharoor. The Thiruvananthapuram MP had deliberately boycotted the campaign on the plea that he was "not invited" to address any rallies. The Congress won anyway, wresting the seat back from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) with a handsome margin of more than 11,000 votes. The outcome is a huge morale booster for the Congress, coming as it does a few months before next year's crucial assembly polls, which the party hopes to win and end its losing streak in the state elections that followed the big 2024 battle last summer.

### The 'Tharoor Effect'

The verdict also lays to rest fears of the Tharoor effect in Kerala, because of which the Congress leadership had been handling him with care despite his flirtation with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and his defiant admission of "differences" with his party. One swallow does not make a summer. The win in Nilambur is no guarantee of a state-wide victory for the Congress in Kerala's complex demographic landscape. The next big hurdle for the Congress is the upcoming panchayat polls due towards the end of the year. Five years ago, the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) had swept these elections, paving the way for its stunning second consecutive victory in the assembly face-off that followed a few months later. The LDF is no pushover, and as the numbers in Nilambur show, it put up a strong fight despite the presence of a rebel candidate who cut into its votes. The Congress, therefore, dare not rest on its Nilambur laurels and depend on anti-incumbency - visible in the by-poll - to see it through the panchayat elections first and then the assembly face-off. However, what the Congress party's success in Nilambur has done is to render Tharoor less relevant in its political calculations for both battles. Congress circles are confident that he has lost his damage potential and that going ahead, they can afford to ignore him.

### The Post-Op Sindoor Outreach

Perhaps Tharoor had an inkling of the Nilambur outcome and read the writing on the wall. It is significant that on the morning of the result day, an article penned by him appeared in an English newspaper widely read in the South, in which he called Prime Minister Modi "a prime asset for India on the global stage". The article was

ostensibly about the Modi government's post-Op Sindoor outreach, in which Tharoor led one of the seven international delegations that travelled across the world. There, he heaped praises on the Prime Minister for "his energy, dynamism and willingness to engage". In what is being seen as an oblique disapproval of his party's repeated criticism of the government, Tharoor said the PM "deserves greater backing".

### Congress Indifferent?

Perhaps the Congress was busy celebrating its Nilambur win because, for the first time since Tharoor began his campaign to needle his party, regular baiters like Jairam Ramesh did not carp about the fulsome compliments for

a wake-up call for Tharoor. Is he on the margins of irrelevance in Kerala?

Tharoor's main dilemma now is this: he's lost his exalted status in the Congress, and the CPI(M) will not have him. But is the BJP ready to accommodate him, and if yes, in what capacity? At one point, there was speculation that Tharoor would be useful for the BJP to make a breakthrough in Kerala, which has been off-limits to the party since the state's inception despite an active RSS and ABVP presence.

### Why ABJP Journey Won't Be Smooth

There are two difficulties here. One is Tharoor's own diminished stature in the state after he butted heads with

his party in Nilambur and came off badly. The other is the BJP's politics. The party ran a polarising campaign in Nilambur, in which it accused both the Congress and the CPI(M) of pandering to Islamic fundamentalists and extremist elements. It had hoped to woo both Hindu and Christian votes in the constituency through high-voltage propaganda. However, voters weren't happy. The BJP's candidate, Mohan George, not only polled marginally fewer votes than in the last election but even lost his security deposit.

### Congress Gets Some Breathing Space

Nilambur is an assembly segment in Priyanka Vadra's Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency. It has been a traditional Congress stronghold, but in the last two assembly elections, the seat was won by the LDF.

It is populated by Hindus and Muslims in roughly equal numbers and has a sizable Christian population as well. An initial study of the results suggests the Muslims consolidated in large numbers behind the Congress. The party also retained the support of the Christians. Congress circles hope that if this pattern repeats itself in other parts of Kerala, it will be able to recapture the state after a decade out in the cold. With the Nilambur by-election in the bag, maybe the Congress can finally put the sordid Tharoor saga behind it and concentrate on the challenging panchayat and assembly elections looming ahead. For the party to retain political relevance, it is vital that it wins both polls and proves that it is still a force to reckon with, at least in the southern states.



Modi from one of their own MPs. In fact, few bothered to respond to what Tharoor wrote.

This was in sharp contrast to the daily war of words that broke out between Tharoor and his critics in the party, such as Ramesh and Pawan Khera, to name a few, while the Thiruvananthapuram MP was jetting his way around the American continent extolling the virtues of Operation Sindoor. Congress spokespersons lost no opportunity to mock Tharoor, and he responded in kind. The petty level of the exchanges caused much mirth in BJP circles, which could not hide their glee that yet another favourite of the Gandhi family had turned rogue and was giving his party sleepless nights.

### What's Next?

Many in the Congress feel that the Nilambur verdict may be

## Hate crime bill needs balanced execution

The law aims to suppress prejudice, and could have a sobering effect on fringe political elements whose vitriolic speeches lead to sharp divisions



hydra-headed monster called fake news, which feeds on itself and has become the cause of much social discord. The law aims to suppress prejudice, and could have a sobering effect on fringe political elements whose

vitriolic speeches lead to sharp divisions. "Hurting religious sentiments" has become an oft-used phrase while targeting certain communities or castes, and is interpreted at will. The new laws are likely to bring in clear definitions of hurt and hate, and aid law-enforcing agencies in discerning malicious cases.

While it is almost impossible to filter through the vast folds of social and other media, the proposed laws give district authorities sweeping powers to crack down on offenders. They are expected to face resistance on the grounds of protecting the freedom of speech. A balanced implementation would be essential, as the laws could be misused against honest expression and as a political tool. The drafts exempt artistic works, academic research, factual journalistic reporting and religious discourse, provided the content does not incite violence. It is laudable that the government is making a concerted effort to rein in communalism and foster an atmosphere of positivity.

## Hearing Kashmir's call for progress

Following the Pahalgam attack, Kashmiris united in an unprecedented manner to condemn terrorism. It highlighted the social cohesion and empowerment reflected in last year's Lok Sabha and assembly elections. It shows that Kashmiris' yearning for empowerment can't be easily doused now

In the prevailing wilderness of global and national events, public attention has partly shifted away from the Pahalgam terror strike that was followed by the response of Operation Sindoor only a few weeks ago. What may have gone unnoticed are a few signs of a move back to normalcy shown in Jammu and Kashmir. For one, the opening of the world's tallest rail bridge over the Chenab was an affirmation that Kashmir would move forward undeterred. Tourism is again picking up. Yet, irrespective of this, anxieties and emotions triggered by the terror attack will take time to settle—both among the local population and visitors. More than any guarantee from outside, what provides assurance is the newfound belief and determination of the Kashmiri people. Candlelight vigils, shutdowns and community leaders leading the castigation of terrorism were signs of a sure shift from past trends. There were processions of condemnation in every corner of the valley in the aftermath of the attack. The strong, united response against terrorism appeared to be an extension of the spirit of electoral participation seen last year.

The tenacity of this new Kashmir was significantly drawn from the two spotless elections in 2024, first for Lok Sabha and later for the assembly. There were no complaints of fatigue among the people even though the two elections were held in short succession. Campaigning by the parties and candidates was as combative as it could be, with a significantly larger number of candidates, especially women, hitting the ground than in the past. The voter turnouts carried a powerful message. The five Lok Sabha constituencies saw a turnout of 58.58 percent. For the 90-member

assembly, it went as high as 63.88 percent. Border constituencies, including the 470 polling stations near the Line of Control returned remarkably high turnouts. Assembly segments of Pulwama, Zainapora and Eidgah, saddled with a history of militancy and boycotts, registered 10 percent higher polling than in 2014. There was not a single repoll and no violence. Befittingly, the election in the territory was termed "Jashn-e-jamhuriyat", a celebration of democracy. Elections in the erstwhile state of J&K were marked by protests, boycotts, threats and fear, which led to low turnouts. Contrasted with allegations of poll-rigging and a sense that the elections were imposed by the authorities, the two elections last year had the semblance of a choice made by the people, of the people and for the people. After the process, there were no grievances from any candidate, winner or loser, or even the ever-intrusive J&K watchers. There were no complaints about unnecessary detention or high-handedness.

These were no consolation elections either, customised for any constrained zone. The 'gold standard' of election management was equally applied. Ensuring accuracy of the electoral roll, strict enforcement of the model code, capture of money and drugs, facilitation of voters including home voting for the needy, webcasting of polls—each bit meticulously followed. Not taking away from the special sensitivity about the Union Territory, the elections were like anywhere in India. The achievement would look taller if seen against the complex background of bifurcation of the

erstwhile state, abrogation of Article 370 and delimitation of constituencies that preceded the polls. However, the electoral process is not the main point of discussion. Both the character and outcome of the two elections was a collective



yearning for peace and progress, that went much beyond voting action—a rejuvenation of the force of the people who themselves led the process, writing a chapter of vindication. The Election Commission described the exercise as "underscoring a renewed spirit of civic participation and hope for a new era with people deciding their own future".

The assembly election made it clear that the people of the valley have taken responsibility for their own lives, veering away from the gun and choosing peace and progress instead. Citizens were, in a way,

giving a reply to the elements of dissonance and sabotage both inside and outside the country. The consensus among political parties for holding the elections suggested a unity of purpose.

While being a battleground of political ideas, polls do create a social cohesion that is valuable. Stability and energy generated by free and fair elections can galvanise a whole community to push forward development and reconstruction. J&K elections have created a resounding trail of community strength that can overcome shocks like the Pahalgam massacre and jumpstart normalcy.

A level of normalcy is ordinarily a prerequisite for conducting elections. At the same time, elections augment normalcy and add to its quality and endurance, by endowing it with legitimacy. Jammu and Kashmir has accrued this capital which should help it see through aberrations like Pahalgam in a social and political sense and help buttress security even while the state may have its arsenal in paused readiness. The terror attack was a manifest attempt to disrupt peace and distract people, especially the youth from the democratic and developmental path they so decisively chose through the two elections. The good thing is that the successful conduct of elections has fortified the polity and the society of Kashmir against these and other challenges, big or small, present or future. Hopes born out of the democratic churning of 2024 are likely to keep growing; not to be doused by odd voices or acts of insinuation and skepticism from outside or within.

# Criminal with 15 cases among 6 arrested in police encounter in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.** Six criminals were plotting to rob a truck to smuggle liquor to Bihar. However, a late-night encounter in Manesar between the gang of Kaushal Joniawas and police put paid to their plans on Tuesday. All six of them were arrested in the shootout that took place inside a house near Panchgaon Chowk, where history-sheeter Joniawas sustained a bullet wound to his left leg during retaliatory firing by the police. Kaushal was then rushed to a nearby hospital where he is currently undergoing treatment, Gurgaon police spokesman Sandeep Kumar (ASI) said. Kaushal was previously involved in fifteen criminal cases, including two murder cases, attempted murder cases, robberies and extortion. The police arrested Kaushal (25), a resident of Joniawas village (Gurgaon); Varun alias Anmol (25) of Rajasthan, currently residing in Wazirpur, Gurgaon; Ombir alias Golu (24) of Wazirpur; Anil alias Monu (24) of Heraledi village (Gurgaon); Archit alias Dheeraj (24) of Wazirpur village; and



Ranjit alias Gaurav (24) of UPASI Sandeep said a case was registered against the accused for murder bids on police officers, planning robbery and under the Arms Act at Manesar police station. On Tuesday morning, sub-inspector Lalit Kumar, head of the Crime Branch in Manesar (Gurugram), received a tip-off following which Crime Branch

teams from Manesar and Sector 10 formed separate units to arrest the suspects. The police spokesman said, "A police team arrested Anil alias Monu and Varun near the Daulatabad Toyota Agency centre." During the interrogation, the suspects revealed their associates, Archit and Ranjit alias Gaurav, were in Heda-Hedi village and others might be

near Mewat side and Panchgaon Chowk. SI Lalit Kumar led a team to the specified location and arrested Archit alias Dheeraj and Ranjit alias Gaurav from a plot. "The interrogation revealed Kaushal and Ombir were scheduled to meet the co-accused with weapons before robbing a truck at NH48. Crime Branch teams from Manesar and Sector 10, equipped with security devices and weapons, arrived at the specified location around 8.30pm near Panchgaon Chowk towards Kasan. Both Kaushal and Ombir fired at police, who responded with a warning shot and urged them to surrender, but the criminals continued firing. The police then struck Kaushal's left knee and apprehended Ombir. The police also recovered a pistol, a country-made pistol, five live cartridges and seven bullet shells from the scene. Anil and Archit were also involved in two murder cases each in the past. A case was registered against the accused for murder bids on police officers, planning robbery and theft under the Arms Act at Manesar police station.

## No direct household lines, Gurgaon civic body told to supply water via boosting stations

**Gurgaon.** GMDA CEO Shyamal Misra on Wednesday asked MCG to stop direct water supply to households and route it through designated boosting stations which are set up to regulate flow and pressure. According to officials, direct lines, currently supplying water to Amanpura and several other streets, were made on the main line meant to feed the Dayanand Colony boosting station. These diversions resulted in a drop in water pressure levels meant for the larger network. Similar direct connections were made in F and H block in Palam Vihar and sectors 21, 22, 23, and 12B as well. The GMDA CEO further told MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya to ensure that all boosting stations under the municipal corporation, 144 in total, were commissioned and made operational. "Boosting stations must be commissioned and operational to maintain pressure and ensure equitable supply to everyone in the city," the GMDA CEO said. The directive came during a meeting chaired by Misra at the GMDA office, where senior officials of GMDA, MCG, MCM, and HSVP were also present. Several underground tanks (UGTs) and boosting stations, which are either not commissioned or not made fully operational, include two units in Sirhaul, one in Tigray, D block of South City II, Sector 30, Sector 41, Sector 40, Sector 17 C, and Sector 44, GMDA officials said. Additionally, areas like New Palam Vihar (along Dwarka Expressway), Sukhrali Enclave, and the 900-meter restricted belt around Gurugram Air Force Station, where illegal tapping was seen, were also discussed during the meeting.

"Coordination of all departments is integral to accelerate the ongoing infrastructural development works being taken up in the city," Misra said.

Meanwhile, according to HSVP, cases of land acquisition and missing links flagged by GMDA were being addressed on priority. "Land pockets along key master dividing roads in sectors 71/73, 88/89, and 62/65—long held up—have now been handed over to GMDA following court resolutions.

## Owner of car that ran over LLB student on e-way near Hero Honda Chowk traced, driver still on the run

**Gurgaon:** A day after a law student died and his friend suffered critical injuries after being hit by a car near Hero Honda Chowk, police have identified the Skoda car owner.

According to police, the Skoda Rapid car (HR 20 AL 4127) is registered in the name of a woman, Sunita, a resident of Hisar. She told police that she was unaware of the accident. Police have yet to identify the person behind the wheel at the time of the accident. The driver, suspected to be under the influence of alcohol, fled the scene after colliding with the victims, identified as Harsh Singh, 25, a resident of Om Nagar colony, and his friend Abhishek Kumar, 23, from Shanti Nagar in Sector 11.

Harsh was declared dead at the civil hospital in Sector 10. Abhishek, who sustained critical injuries, was initially taken to Safdarjung Hospital and later transferred



to a private facility in Rohini for surgery. The incident occurred around 3.40am on Tuesday, when a speeding car struck the duo as they stood near the railing on the service lane. Harsh was with his neighbour Moksh, outside Chanchal Dhaba, an eatery along the highway, when the collision occurred. Moksh recounted, "The dhaba was crowded, so we were waiting for our turn. There, Harsh met an old friend, Abhishek, and they stood near

the railing to chat. Suddenly, a speeding Skoda hit both Harsh and Abhishek."

Although some people chased the car, the driver fled from the spot, Moksh said.

According to police, bystanders captured the car's registration number, recorded video footage of the accident, and shared it with them. "A couple of people near the spot took videos of the car, through which we traced the car owner. We are yet to record the statement of Abhishek," a police officer said. A CCTV video of the incident also surfaced on social media, showing the victims being flung nearly 10 metres by the impact and the car running over them.

An FIR was registered at Sector 37 Police Station for causing death due to negligence and rash driving following the complaint filed by Harsh's father, Santosh Kumar.

## Not just miners, industrial waste is laying siege to Aravalis along Haryana-Rajasthan border

**Gurgaon.** Two chemical waste burners were found deep into the forest in Nuh's Khor Kalan along the Haryana-Rajasthan border this week, indicating that illegal mining wasn't the only threat to the ecologically sensitive Aravalis in the region. The Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) got a tip-off from locals about industrial waste being burnt in the open in Khor Kalan village. A team went to the site and saw two large cauldrons being used to set afire toxic chemical waste in the woods.

HSPCB officials told TOI on Wednesday that these makeshift burners were dismantled, but they suspect that the forested border region, among the few preserves of green left in the Aravalis, are increasingly becoming dumping grounds for industrial waste transported from across state lines."

Waste may be transported from industrial hubs in Rajasthan's Bhawali, Khush Khera and Dharuhera," said Akanksha Tanwar, HSPCB regional officer (Nuh).

HSPCB on June 17 wrote to the Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board about industrial waste burning by factories in Bhiwadi. "We have written to RSPCB regarding the issue and to ensure that the industries do not dump and burn chemical waste in the Aravalis," Tanwar said. The hills along the Haryana-Rajasthan border are already under the Supreme Court's scanner for illegal mining.

With enforcement in this rocky terrain particularly tricky, officials and environmentalists said the region is already under duress. "Illegal burning of industrial waste in forest land not only violates pollution norms but also endangers the entire ecosystem," the HSPCB regional officer added. "This is not an isolated incident. The Aravalis are fast becoming an unofficial dumping ground. Burning industrial waste releases toxic pollutants into the air, contributing to environmental degradation and posing serious health risks to nearby communities.

Authorities from both states must coordinate better and increase surveillance," said Vaishali Rana, a Gurgaon-based activist. Khor Kalan villagers, too, said they have been raising an alarm about billowing smoke and pungent odour emanating from the forest area."

Waste is brought from the across the border and illegally burnt in our village. This has been going on for years. Cattle in our village have been dying from drinking wastewater that flows out of chemical residues and villagers have been suffering from skin diseases and breathing ailments. These units are still operational," said Shabab, a resident of Khor Kalan. Reports of industrial waste being discharged into the Aravalis of Nuh go back almost a decade.

HSPCB, in 2016, issued closure notices to several units operating in the area. A similar order was issued in 2023. TOI, in Dec 2022, also reported about waste burning units like these operating in Khor Kalan.



contribute to the shortage. He added that since the Authority is dependent on two sources of water supply—the Ganga water and the borewells (groundwater)—most of the time, they don't have enough water to supply to residents/society. "As a result, we end up depending on tankers. The charge of a tanker ranges from Rs 1350 to Rs 1650 per tanker for a 20,000-litre supply," he said. When residents raise complaints with the Authority, they are told that there's no water in the pump house or no water pressure. Noida Highrise Federation (NHRF) president Nikhil Singh said that the reasons cited for this short supply also include non-payment of bills to PVVNL, resulting in line disconnection. Speaking of the protest, he said that it will start from Central Market and pass through Pratik Laurel, RG Residency Society Sector 120, and end at the pump house near Eldeco Amantran Apartments.

## Two new Noida expressway underpasses: 15 firms throw hat in the ring

**Noida.** The Noida Authority has announced that 15 companies have submitted proposals for constructing two new underpasses on the Noida Expressway. The Authority will evaluate these proposals before finalising the construction agency. The underpasses will be built near Jhutta and Sultanpur villages and will be developed using diaphragm wall technology, necessitating traffic diversion during construction. While the Sultanpur underpass will be built at an estimated cost of Rs 80 crore, the Jhutta underpass is estimated to cost Rs 100 crore. The completion deadline for both projects, measuring 700 metres each, is 18 months. Vijay Rawal, deputy general manager (civil) of the Noida Authority, said that the Sultanpur village underpass will be built near Jaypee Wish Town in Sector 128. "This underpass is intended to facilitate movement for residents of Wish Town, Sultanpur, and Sectors 128 and 129, providing easier access to Sectors 105 and 108," he said. Citing that nearly 1,00,000 people currently live in Jaypee Wish Town, residents highlighted the urgent need for an underpass at the place. The area hosts multiple IT firms, schools, academic institutions, and hospitals. Thousands of people travel in the area and need to cross the Expressway. There are two small underpasses near our societies, but they are unable to handle the traffic pressure during peak hours," SK Maheshwari, a resident, said, adding that the underpass should be wide enough for two vehicles to pass at a time.

## News box

### No data with MCG on 34 defaulters with 97cr tax dues

**Gurgaon.** An audit of the MCG joint commissioner's office found that the corporation has no records of 34 property owners who have not paid taxes amounting to nearly Rs 97.2 crore. Without the details of the owners, there is little action that the corporation can take to collect this property tax, the principal accountant general pointed out in the report for the audit carried out this Feb. "In the absence of the names of the property owners, chances of serving notices and initiating legal action to such property owners were negligible. There might be very bleak chances of recovery of outstanding property tax from these properties," the report said. It added that "considering the financial interest of MCG", authorities should take up the matter with revenue officials for identifying the property owners. MCG, the report said, had "failed to take action" to recover taxes from defaulters, leading to accumulation of dues. The auditor also sought explanation from MCG regarding the failure to recover taxes and the lack of enforcement measures against the defaulting owners. Asked about the report, an MCG official told TOI on Wednesday that the corporation is trying to "retrieve" the records of the defaulters. Other than stamp duty and advertisement fees, property tax is a key revenue source for the corporation. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, MCG collected Rs 232.9 crore in property taxes. It has projected income from property tax at Rs 275 crore this fiscal year. According to the audit, there are 120 property tax defaulters, each of whom owes the corporation more than Rs 1 crore. In total, dues from unpaid property tax stand at Rs 280.6 crore, other than Rs 18.4 crore fire tax and Rs 35.6 crore in development charges. Kuldeep Yadav, a city councillor, said it was "unacceptable" that such a massive sum of taxes has not been collected. "The audit report's findings are a scathing rebuke of MCG's inability to fulfil its basic responsibilities. It is clear that MCG has been asleep at the wheel, allowing tax evaders to go unpunished while the public suffers. Heads should roll over this scandalous dereliction of duty," he said.

## 'Bill paid in advance', but thousands reel from acute water shortage in 100x sectors

**Noida.** Residents of highrise societies in 100x sectors are facing acute water shortages. Besides being insufficient, the duration of water availability has also decreased to one or one and a half hours over the past couple of months. Residents now plan a protest on June 29. The Apartment Owners Association (AOA) of sectors including 120, 119, and 118, said that they have already paid Rs 29 lakhs due in advance on April 21, for the current FY 2025-26. Rishi Purwar, the acting AOA vice president of Eldeco Amantran society Sector 119, told TOI that there is a shortage of Ganga water supply. Several power disruptions and powerline repairs

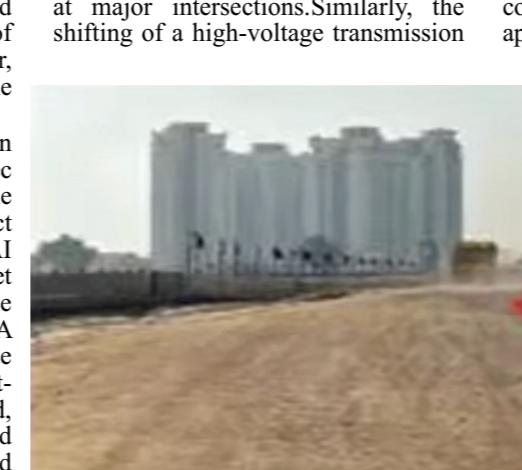


contribute to the shortage. He added that since the Authority is dependent on two sources of water supply—the Ganga water and the borewells (groundwater)—most of the time, they don't have enough water to supply to residents/society. "As a result, we end up depending on tankers. The charge of a tanker ranges from Rs 1350 to Rs 1650 per tanker for a 20,000-litre supply," he said. When residents raise complaints with the Authority, they are told that there's no water in the pump house or no water pressure. Noida Highrise Federation (NHRF) president Nikhil Singh said that the reasons cited for this short supply also include non-payment of bills to PVVNL, resulting in line disconnection. Speaking of the protest, he said that it will start from Central Market and pass through Pratik Laurel, RG Residency Society Sector 120, and end at the pump house near Eldeco Amantran Apartments.

## 20 months on, delay in removal of drain stalls work on highway service road in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.** For nearly 20 months, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has been waiting for the removal of a stormwater drain near 88A and 88B sectors. In fact, the prolonged delay has brought the construction of a 600-metre stretch of service road on Gurgaon-Pataudi-Rewari highway to a standstill. Last week, NHAI wrote to GMDA once again, flagging the "serious hindrance" caused by the incomplete removal of the drain. The letter pointed out that construction is progressing at an "extremely slow pace" due to the obstruction. After sluggish action for nearly two years, NHAI has now decided it will dismantle the affected portion of the drain itself and recover the cost from GMDA. "If the stormwater drain is removed quickly, we will be able to complete the service road within a month and traffic movement can be allowed between Wazirpur and Dwarka Expressway section through the service road," an NHAI official told TOI.

An NHAI official said, "We are awaiting a response from GMDA as we cannot wait any longer. Partial removal was done, but the 600-metre section is still intact. It's causing unnecessary delay." The 2km-long drain was constructed by HSVP over a decade ago as part of infrastructure in the developing new



sectors. However, when NHAI undertook the upgrade of the 43-kilometre stretch of NH352W—formerly a state highway—the drain became a major impediment to service lane development. Despite repeated requests from NHAI, only a portion of the drain has been dismantled so far, leaving a 600-metre stretch of the corridor unfinished. The four-laning of the highway began with a scheduled completion date of Dec 2022. However, with only 66% of the total work completed so far, the project is running well behind schedule. NHAI is now working toward a revised target of completing the entire highway by the end of 2025. The NHAI letter to GMDA highlighted traffic safety concerns due to the diversion of vehicles onto the left-hand carriageway. The NHAI letter said, "Due to non-clearance, the right-hand side cannot be completed and merged with the main road. All traffic is to be diverted on the LHS only, which creates a very accident-prone situation."

Even as the service road remains held up, the work on other segments of Gurgaon-Pataudi-Rewari highway project is being expedited. The construction of a 180-metre, two-lane unidirectional flyover at the junction of Dwarka Expressway and NH352W is currently underway. Once complete, this flyover

will provide direct connectivity for traffic headed to Rewari from Delhi or Gurgaon via Dwarka Expressway, significantly easing vehicular movement and cutting down congestion at major intersections. Similarly, the shifting of a high-voltage transmission line near the KMP Expressway is in progress. We are hopeful of finishing all remaining work of the project by Dec-end," an NHAI official said. The highway project was originally conceived in 2018, when the govt approved upgrading the two-lane state highway to a four-lane national highway to boost regional connectivity and support the rapid urbanisation of southwest Haryana. Estimated to cost Rs 900 crore, the project saw its foundation stone laid by Union road transport minister Nitin Gadkari in July 2020. However, actual construction began only in Nov 2021 and within 10 months, it hit a major roadblock when the National Green Tribunal stayed the work in Sept 2022. Environmentalists challenged the forest clearance granted to the project, pointing out that the compensatory afforestation plan involved planting trees 300 kilometres away in Panchkula, which would not offset the loss of local green cover. In April 2023, Supreme Court lifted the stay, allowing construction to resume. However, it directed that compensatory afforestation must take place within the city, further complicating execution.

# Mission Mathematics expanded to classes 6 to 10 in Delhi Government schools

**The Directorate of Education (DoE) has directed Delhi Government schools to analyse Class 10 mid-term performance and identify learning gaps accordingly**

#### Agency New Delhi.

The Delhi Government's "Mission Mathematics and Special Enrichment Classes" initiative has now been extended to students of classes 6 to 10 for the 2025-26 academic session to strengthen maths learning and address learning gaps.

The Directorate of Education (DoE) made the announcement in a departmental circular issued on Monday, citing improved performance in annual assessments and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) board examination results since the initiative began in 2022.

Launched in response to poor mathematics performance in board exams, the programme initially focused on classes 8 to 10. It introduced activity-based worksheets, "Question of the Day" exercises, and assessment



tools to foster "joyful and concept-driven learning". These resources were expanded to Classes 6 to 10 in June 2024 and will now be shared digitally with schools for all targeted classes—three times a week—starting July 7.

To further personalise support, DoE has directed schools to analyse Class 10 mid-term performance and identify learning gaps

accordingly. A centralised tracking module is also being developed to monitor attendance and academic progress in Mathematics.

#### Eligibility and implementation

Students for the Special Mathematics Enrichment (SME) classes are selected based on their prior academic performance. For Classes 6, 9, and 10, students must

have scored at least 50 per cent with grace marks in Mathematics or passed via compartment exams. For Classes 7 and 8, students scoring 40 per cent or below in the previous year are eligible.

In both cases, subject teachers may recommend additional students based on classroom performance.

SME classes will be conducted in small groups of 20-25 students, before or after school hours. Schools have been allowed to appoint resource persons for these sessions, with dedicated funds already allocated, as per the circular.

Teachers will have to maintain detailed records, including a separate notebook for each student. They have also been advised to use curriculum mapping to align Class 10 content with foundational gaps from previous years.

**Accused should be given strictest punishment, says family of Delhi girl pushed off terrace**

#### Agency New Delhi.

"She was just a child... Her whole life was ahead of her," a teary-eyed Sonia said, as family members, neighbours and friends gathered around her. On Monday, Sonia's 19-year-old sister, Neha, was pushed off the terrace of the building she lived in with her family, allegedly by a 26-year-old man she knew.

On Tuesday morning, the injured Neha succumbed to her injuries in Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital.

"Multiple teams from Jyoti Nagar police station, Gokulpuri subdivision and Operations unit of North East were deployed to trace the accused, Taufeeq. He was arrested on Tuesday night from Rambur in Uttar Pradesh," DCP (North East) Ashish Mishra said.

Neha's father Surendra works as a security guard, and she recently took up a job in a private firm. She studied till Class 12 and could not go to college because of the family's poor financial condition, police sources said. Anticipating communal tension, the police, meanwhile, have stepped up security in the area. Gaurav Gupta, Additional DCP (North East) said that Neha's family was contemplating getting her married soon. "Neha and the accused knew each other but she had not

been speaking to him for some time. The accused found out that her family was planning to get her married. He was enraged," he said. A police officer said that he wore a burqa and called her to the terrace of the five-storey building. "They likely had an argument there after which he pushed her," said the officer. Taufeeq was no stranger to the family. "We have known him for three years... We considered him our brother. I don't know what happened in the last few months.

## 'A double blow': Imports of dry fruits hit, traders in Khari Baoli tackle challenges

**New Delhi.** The traders in Khari Baoli in Old Delhi, one of India's oldest markets, stare at uncertain times. The imports of dry fruits from Iran have been hit amid escalating geopolitical conflict in West Asia. This latest blow comes at a time merchants are navigating a setback triggered by the closure of the Attari-Wagah border following tensions between India and Pakistan after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

Sharing his plight, Sudhir Jaggi, President of the Sarve Vyapar Mandal of the Khari Baoli market, said, "First, the Attari-Wagah border was shut down... so goods from Afghanistan completely stopped coming in. And on top of that, this issue with Iran has happened—it's like a double blow. We have no idea what's going to happen next. The Afghanistan route has been shut for a while, and there's still no clarity."

He added that the market is deprived of new foreign stock of dry fruits. "Abhi to maal nahi aa raha, jo maal India mein tha wahi bik raha hai. Iran se dry fruits container se maal aata hai sea se, seedhe ports aur phir humare godowns mein utaara hai, uska baad hum apni requirements ke hisaab se uska distribution karte hai. Abhi maal to kahi se bhi nahi aa raha (Right now, no new stock is coming in—only what's already in India is being sold. Dry fruits from Iran come by sea, directly to the ports, and then to our godowns. From there, we distribute it as per our requirements. At the moment, nothing is coming in from anywhere)," he said. The heightened tensions in West Asia have contributed to a surge in the prices of dry fruit imported from Iran.

Jaggi highlighted that almond prices have increased by Rs 400-450 per kilo, whereas pistachio prices have increased by Rs 300 per kilo and now stand at over Rs 1,000 per kilo. Hari Om, a trader, said, "Varieties of dates like Kimia, Mariam, Zahedi, Rabbi, and Irani, which are imported from Iran, are witnessing a surge in prices in the market." Kimia Date boxes, which were earlier priced at Rs. 250 per kilo, are now being sold at Rs 400 per kilo, in the market. "Even some medicinal herbs like Salam Mishri used in Ayurveda medicines are imported from Iran, and their price has also significantly increased," said Sunny Kashyap, a trader selling dry fruits and medicinal herbs.

## Delhi man dupes travellers, airlines using forged death certificates; arrested

**Akshay Sharma targeted international travellers, and his scam involved booking tickets, cancelling them, and then claiming refunds, the police said.**

#### Agency New Delhi.

A travel agency, a fake call centre, and forged death certificates: This is how a Delhi man allegedly duped hundreds of international travellers and airline companies by booking tickets, cancelling them, and pocketing the refunds, the Delhi Police said on Wednesday.

Akshay Sharma, 40, a resident of Kirti Nagar and the director of AVS Holidays, was arrested on Tuesday by the Delhi Police Special Cell for allegedly orchestrating a sophisticated scam under the cover of a legitimate travel agency.

According to the police, Sharma's alleged modus operandi involved getting crucial documentation from his customers, along with their financial details like credit card CVVs, on the pretext of booking their flight tickets. Once the tickets were booked, Sharma would use the documents to forge the death certificates of the

travellers and obtain a full refund from the airlines, the police said. His 'call centre employees' would then call the customers and tell them that their flights had been cancelled and give them a small fraction of the refunded

Technology Act. "During sustained custodial interrogation, the accused confessed to establishing and operating fraudulent call centres over several years, under the facade of a legitimate travel service provider. He admitted to orchestrating a scheme that primarily targeted US and other foreign nationals by posing as an authorised flight booking agency," Amit Kaushik, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Cell, said. "The illicit proceeds were partially returned to the victims—after deducting fictitious cancellation fees—or withheld entirely. Preliminary forensic analysis of seized electronic devices has revealed

hundreds of forged documents used to facilitate these fraudulent claims," he added. The company has more than 500 employees, and multiple arrests will follow, a senior police official said.

## Mother-in-law of Faridabad woman buried in pit arrested; police say victim was given juice laced with sleeping pills

**Tannu Rajput's father-in-law, Bhoop Singh, has allegedly revealed that his family had conspired to murder her and reported her missing to mislead people.**

#### Agency Faridabad.

Five days after Tannu Rajput's decomposed body was found buried inside a pit outside her in-laws' house in Haryana's Faridabad, the police on Wednesday arrested her mother-in-law in the case.

The Crime Branch (DLF) arrested Sonia, 45, after her husband, Bhoop Singh, who was arrested in the case earlier, allegedly confessed that the family had conspired to murder Rajput due to ongoing domestic disputes, including talks of divorce.

The case was initially being probed as a dowry dispute.

amount, the police added. Sharma was arrested on charges of cheating and forgery under sections 318(4), 319(2), 339/61(2) and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Section 66C of the Information

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claims," he added. The company has

more than 500 employees, and multiple

arrests will follow, a senior police

alibi. The same day, a pit was dug outside their house, the police said.

Rajput was allegedly given

sugarcane juice laced with

sleeping pills, and later that

night, while she was uncons

cious, Singh strangled her with a dupatta,

the police said. Her body was then buried in the pit with her husband Arun's assistance, the police said,

adding that the family subsequently reported her

missing to mislead people.

While Arun is absconding, the role of

Singh's daughter, Kajal, is under

investigation.

## 'Nobody listens to us': Street vendors, rickshaw pullers protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar against evictions

**Street vendors in Delhi have alleged that they often face difficulties in retrieving their confiscated items from the authorities.**

#### Agency New Delhi.

Street vendors, rickshaw pullers and slum dwellers from across Delhi protested at Jantar Mantar Wednesday against evictions and demanded recognition and rehabilitation for urban workers.

The protest was led by the Indian Hawkers Alliance, Mazdoor Awas Sangharsh Samiti and Delhi Rickshaw Chalak-Malik Sangharsh Association. Workers from various markets, such as Chandni Chowk, Sarojini Nagar, Meena Bazaar, GTB Nagar, India Gate, Kamla Nagar, Sangam Vihar, and Ratiya Marg, were present.

Women dry fruit sellers from Jahangirpuri complained of theft when the authorities came to evict them. Rajini, a vendor who has sold dry fruits for the past eight years at Chandni Chowk, said, "We face loss of goods; sometimes we don't even get it back. They just make us run from one office to another saying that you don't

have the required documents. I sell perishable goods; they get spoiled if kept for long."

A group of women street vendors from India Gate sat holding placards in the last row. "I have been doing this for the last ten years at the same location. Earlier, we never used to face any problems, but now officials and the police come and kick our goods, confiscate them and seek money.

When we ask for our goods back,

nobody listens to us," said Gulesha Khatoon.

A few rows ahead sat Ritu Joshi, 40, a resident of Nehru Colony, Govindpuri, who feared whether her family would get accommodation if their camp is demolished. "Our camp is also about to get demolished, they promised us to give flats, but I fear if they will, what if we are stuck

like some families of the Bhopiheen camp who still don't have places to live," she said.

Sanjeev Kumar, 34, a rickshaw puller from Karpura, said that for the last two or three years, the traffic police have been confiscating his rickshaws. "I have lost two rickshaws in the last few years. They

said that we have sent it to Hapur, go get it from there. How will I be able to go?" he asked.

Sandeep Verma, the convenor of the Indian Hawkers Alliance and a member of the town vending committee (TVC) for the Sadar Paharganj Zone within the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), expressed his dissatisfaction with the way the authorities treat street vendors in the area.

"There are many flaws in the previous survey conducted; officials don't even consult the elected TVC for any actions or decisions. The vendors are ready to pay fees for the space, but first, the authorities need to recognise us as we have been historically living and selling things over here," Verma said.

**'Told him to stay calm': robbers barge into businessman's farmhouse in Delhi's Ghitorni, take him to Gurgaon, loot Rs 30 lakh**

#### Agency New Delhi.

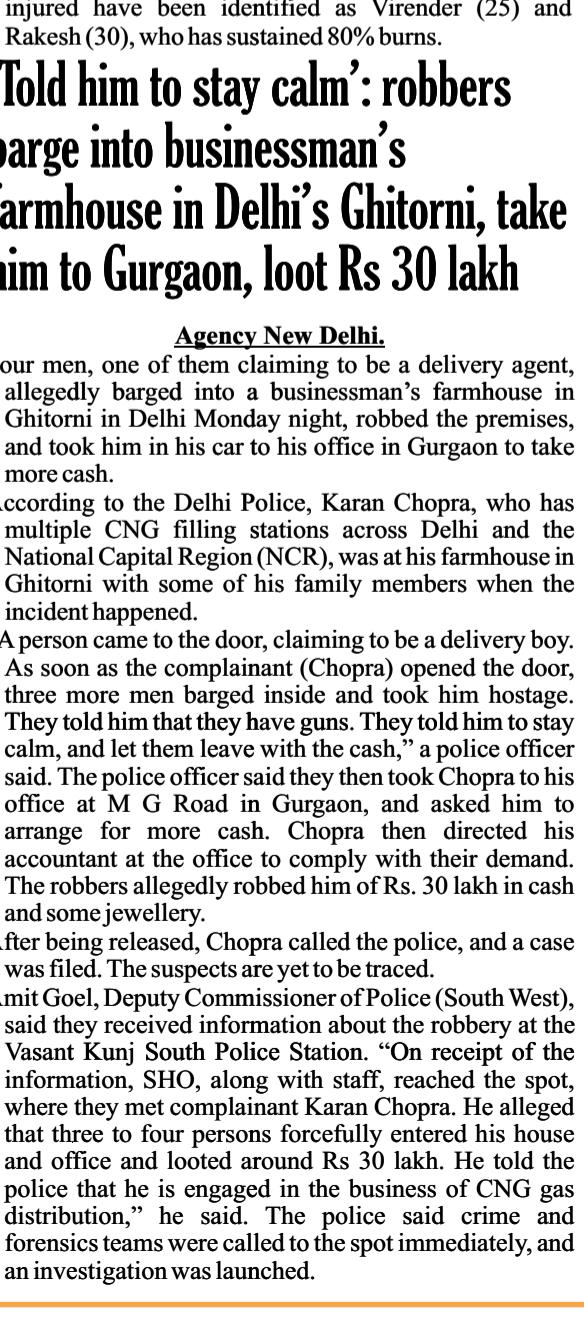
Four men, one of them claiming to be a delivery agent, allegedly barged into a businessman's farmhouse in Ghitorni in Delhi Monday night, robbed the premises, and took him in his car to his office in Gurgaon to take more cash.

According to the Delhi Police, Karan Chopra, who has multiple CNG filling stations across Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), was at his farmhouse in Ghitorni with some of his family members when the incident happened.

"A person came to the door, claiming to be a delivery boy. As soon as the complainant (Chopra) opened the door, three more men barged inside and took him hostage. They told him that they have guns. They told him to stay calm, and let them leave with the cash," a police officer said. The police officer said they then took Chopra to his office at M G Road in Gurgaon, and asked him to arrange for more cash. Chopra then directed his accountant at the office to comply with their demand. The robbers allegedly robbed him of Rs. 30 lakh in cash and some jewellery.

After being released, Chopra called the police, and a case was filed. The suspects are yet to be traced.

Amit Goyal, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West), said they received information about the robbery at the Vasant Kunj South Police Station. "On receipt of the information, SHO, along with staff, reached the spot, where they met complainant Karan Chopra. He alleged that three to four persons forcefully entered his house and office and looted around Rs 30 lakh. He told the police that he is engaged in the business of CNG gas distribution," he said. The police said crime and forensics teams were called to the spot immediately, and an investigation was launched.



# There's more to Singapore than Sentosa



We talk to a few popular denizens of the Port City to find out why Visakhapatnam is called 'the City of Destiny'. Vizag's tryst with destiny preceeds the formation of India by over 100 years, going back to 1844! Sir Arthur Cotton, the legendary British general and engineer spent two years in Waltair, recovering from a 'jungle fever' that haunted him throughout his stay in the tropics. Even in his illness, he developed the Groynes in the sea, which helped break the waves and control erosion. He also redesigned and rebuilt St John's Church and drew plans for a port in the city. It was the iconic former Vice Chancellor of Andhra University, Dr CR Reddy who is credited with coining the phrase 'City of Destiny' in the 1930s. He was instrumental in relocating the Andhra University, which was located in Bejawada to the port city.

which was then a little known fisherman's village — Waltair. Old towns like Ananthapur, Bejawada, Guntur, Machilipatnam, and Rajamundry, had greater credentials at that time since they were much more accomplished educational, cultural and business centers.

"Dr CR Reddy took the bold decision because he believed this was the city of the future. However, his vision of the city was very different from the burgeoning industrial hub and megapolis that it is on course to become. He envisaged that this fisherman's village would become the intellectual capital of the state," says A Prasanna Kumar, director, Centre for Policy Studies.

But then destiny as they say, has its own plans and the Port city today is ranked among the fastest growing cities in the world.

Later on, it was Dr Abid

## Visakhapatnam The city of destiny



Hussain, the legendary district collector and former ambassador to the USA who popularised the phrase, for he rightly believed that it was only a matter of time before Vizag realised its destiny of becoming one of the greatest cities in India, says A Prasanna Kumar, who has been living here for the last 58 years.

"I moved to Vizag in 1954 from Machilipatnam. The city was then called 'India in a Microcosm'. It is perhaps, the only city in the country which has had no history of communal clashes or caste conflicts. There is no narrowness of thinking. It allows outsiders to come and merge seamlessly with the human chain. The city is blessed with tremendous natural splendor and resources," he adds.

Legendary chief Justice, late PV Rajamannar's description of Vizag captures the essence of the city. "Nestled between the sea on one side and a mountain on the other, the city is unlike any other. The sea stands for dynamism, change and adventure and the

mountain stands for permanence, tradition and values. A dialectical process is taking place in this beautiful city, shaping its destiny over the years." Ever since, in various amounts, little bits of recognition have come in to

the city through various forms — be it education, music, acting, art and sculpture. Some of these popular faces from Vizag who've made it big, share their thoughts about this City of Destiny has in store for the world.

Allu Arjun regards Vizag as his lucky charm. "All my films that were shot in Vizag (Arya, Bunny, Desamuduru, Julayi, Parugu, etc.) were superhits. Vizag is my lucky mascot. I shot for Arya at Kailasagiri, the hilltop park with panoramic sea view. The whole unit enjoyed shooting in the serene atmosphere with greenery, fresh breeze and beautiful hills all around. We also shot the film in the adjacent picturesque valleys, which boast of beautiful flora, laterite hillocks and a pleasing landscape. Parugu, Bunny, Desamuduru and Julayi were also shot on the long and vast stretches of the seashore (beach road) in Vizag. This is a popular spot for filmmakers as one can see the sprawling beaches, splendid monuments, ancient shrines, all along the road," shares Allu Arjun.

Renowned acting teacher Satyanand, who set up his acting school in Vizag as suggested by Megastar Chiranjeevi, found his calling in this port city. "I used to work as a character artiste and assistant director in Hyderabad. But I found my true calling only after moving to this beautiful city," he says.

"The tranquil atmosphere in Vizag gives you the right fillip to excel in your career. I enjoy a great freedom in my profession if I'm in this city and my institute is the first acting school in Vizag. Think it has something to do with the air in the city," says Satyanand. Tollywood superstars like Pawan Kalyan, Prabhas, Mahesh Babu, Ravi Teja, etc have all learnt their first lessons in acting at his acting school. Music director and entrepreneur Ramana Gogula says it's the diversity that sets the city apart. "For me, the city is about the ocean and it has sown all the seeds of my creativity and it has taught me to dare to be different. There is so much diversity in the city that it allows people to be themselves. I remember many afternoons when I was down and out I would go and

sit on the beach for a couple of hours and life would be okay again," he says.

Venkat Bothsa, an artist from the city says, "There's not a very big art scene in Vizag. But even if you drive for ten minutes in any direction, you come across such scenic beauty, that it gives you a beautiful background for your work."

He further speaks about the scope of art. "There's a lot of scope. The government has also allotted the Nandagiri Kala Gramam, which is a 5-acre land which has residential studios for various artists to work in." Pop singer Smitha of Hairabba Hai fame, who recently opened a spa in the city talks about the scope of fashion and beauty in the city. She says, "People of Vizag have developed a taste for fashion. The last time when I came down, I saw that especially women are into affordable fashion and it immediately struck my mind that I have to give them something from my end and I opened up my spa here."

So over-exposed is Singapore that you are acquainted with the city as soon as you land.

Wave to the familiar Merlion, purging water from the marina, there is the recognisable skyline, each building wrestling for postcard space; kerbs cleaned by a punctilious government, each leaf painted the perfect tropical green by a card soldier.

Rising on the other side of the marina, are three towers crowned by a ship — the Marina Bay Sands hotel. If your travel plans are dictated by little humans who need periodic feeding and entertainment, this is the place to lock yourself up.

Set aside a few hours for the Van Gogh Live and Salvador Dali exhibitions at the ArtsScience museum. Even if you have no academic interest in art, the

museum's child-friendly interactive exhibits make it a gentle engagement. Sit in the panelled room that projects Van Gogh's works on the walls and ceilings, immersing you in his post-impressionist world. It moves even the most number-hardened chartered accountant to tears. Your benevolent dictators can make giant sunflowers, press ancient Chinese motifs on paper, or make an e-card with Dali's moustache and Gogh's swirls on the interactive screen. Be seduced into Dali's world with ceiling installations and pull out human ribcages.

In the evening, catch the Lion King Musical, after you've tired yourself out at the casino and shops.

The last village As real is the Singapore of Orchard Street, Clarke Quay and Little China, so is the Singapore of the Pulau Ubin — the last village of the country.

Just don't expect everyone to know where it is, least of all a cab driver. Urbanisation and fervent shopping has nudged Ubin out of the country's consciousness, allotting it a ferry ride off Changi Jetty on an irregular schedule.

The boomerang-shaped granite island has metres of trekking roads and campable beaches. It's here that the national bird, Oriental Pied Hornbill, lives in its natural habitat, as does the wild boar.

If order and urbanity makes you nervous, Ubin will cater you an adventure. Only if you are stoically foolish enough to follow these instructions:

- Arrive at dusk to Changi Jetty so that you have no co-passenger on the bumboat and have to hire it. Instead of SD 2.5, you now pay SD 30 for the ride.

- Forget to withdraw money on the mainland, so that every thought of making it to the morning is presided by the lightness of your wallet.

- Plan your trip in the rains which makes camping impossible, especially since you carry no gear in your prissy little stroller luggage.

- Wait till it is dark to realise that you

a) cannot spend the night in the huts punctuating the roads (a roof on four pillars) and hence b) will have to head to the only resort on the island, an SD 18 cab drive away. Your wet, crouching figure is the object of concern for the schoolgirl here on a class trip.

- As the island's only resort, it charges SD 180 per day. Refuse to spend this much for a night's shelter.

- Eat at the resort's restaurant with the Malaysian TV crew that's shooting for Malay version of American Idol. Learn that they struck upon this idea before USA infected the rest of us.

- Note that the jetty looks habitable and is conveniently placed in the shadow. Nap fitfully till it starts to rain and notice the moored boat on your left.

- Heave onboard; the cabin is ideal. Succumb to childish joy at finding a secret hide-out. They'll never find you here.

- Sleep until the storm wakes you. Metal trembles underneath at every thunder and the reflective surface between the bow and the stern is accumulated water. Still water breeds mosquitoes, snakes and dread of malevolent spirits.

- SD 118 is small price to save yourself from a unsavoury supernatural experience. Head to the office, but it's closed and no amount of hammering helps.

- There's an emergency number taped to the door. Pound on the guest room that still has a light on and explain your predicament. The number is wrong and though friendly, the guests don't have a bed to spare for you.

- The communal shower room is the only shelter. Retrieve luggage from boat. Only now notice the board that says, 'Danger. Do not climb aboard'.

- The fear of being discovered is greater in the shower rooms, but the gate is closer. Not for trespassers the luxury of sleep. Bolt at dawn.

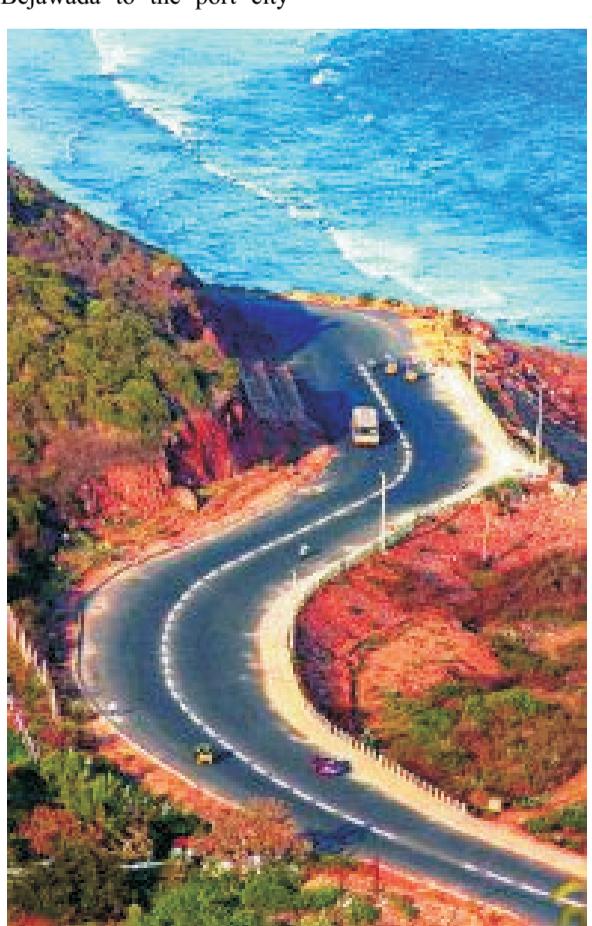
- At the first 'hut', get out your shawl and go to sleep on the parapet. Don't mind the twittering cyclists. They slept in a warm, dry bed.

- The walk back takes you around the island and to the little town where most of the 100 inhabitants of the island live. You can rent a cycle for SD8, but miserliness is the theme for the trip. Get a Coke and stake a seat on the next boat out.

You've had enough of the curated wilderness and enough of the curated urbanity. Solace is the airport.

How to cope in Ubin - Changi Village has ATMs, food courts and provision stores. You can camp and fish here.

- Try the sugarcane juice with plum; also, the pickled plums from Chinese convenience stores.



## Hiding income or making wrong claims Your ITR could attract a 200% penalty

**New Delhi.** It's that time of the year again when taxpayers across the country start filing their Income Tax Returns (ITR). But hold on. If you're all set to hit submit, take a moment and double-check your return. Under the new ITR rules, even a small mistake or a false claim can lead to big trouble.

If a taxpayer hides actual income, a 200% penalty on the tax evaded is charged for misreporting. For underreporting, the penalty is 50% of the tax owed under Section 270A, as mentioned by ClearTax. Sounds serious? It is. That's why you need to be extra careful while filing your ITR, as even minor errors can result in significant financial consequences. Therefore, taxpayers must be vigilant and ensure all information is accurate to avoid hefty penalties.

### COMMON MISTAKES IN ITR FILING

One of the primary areas of concern is the tendency of taxpayers to claim deductions under Section 80C without adequate proof for documentation.

Additionally, issues arise when taxpayers declare false House Rent Allowance (HRA) claims or list personal expenses as business expenses. Such practices can lead to severe penalties, regardless of the taxpayer's intentions or errors. Moreover, failing to report earnings from freelancing, crypto, or side jobs in your ITR may attract strict penalties. Make sure nothing is left out.

### AVOIDING PENALTIES

To avoid incurring penalties, taxpayers should ensure that all claims are backed by legitimate documentation. Mistakes made by a Chartered Accountant (CA) or consultant do not exempt taxpayers from liability. The law holds the taxpayer accountable, not the person who prepared the return.

Therefore, it is imperative for individuals to review their tax returns meticulously before submission. This proactive approach can safeguard against potential errors and subsequent penalties.

## Airtel says new fraud detection system shielded 3.5 million users in Delhi-NCR

**NEW DELHI.** Telecom operator Airtel on Thursday said its advanced fraud detection system has protected over 3.5 million users in Delhi-NCR within 43 days of launch of the new tool.

The statement assumes significance given the rising instances of digital frauds where unsuspecting users are lured online and deceived by scamsters leveraging advanced techniques, malicious links and fake profiles. "As part of the nationwide rollout of its AI-powered fraud detection system, Airtel has successfully safeguarded more than 3.5 million users across the state, within just 43 days of launching its advanced fraud detection system," Airtel said in a release. The system, automatically enabled for all Airtel mobile and broadband customers, scans and filters links across SMS, WhatsApp, Telegram,



Facebook, Instagram, e-mail, and other browsers. It leverages real-time threat intelligence to examine over 1 billion URLs daily and blocks access to harmful sites in under 100 milliseconds," the telco informed.

## Gold prices keep falling after Israel-Iran ceasefire: Check the latest rates

**Kolkata.** Gold prices kept declining on Thursday, June 26 as the tension in West Asia seemed to ebb after the ceasefire between Israel and Iran was not violated for another day despite some rumblings to the contrary. According to market information, the price of the yellow metal fell by Rs 1,800 per 10 gms compared to the level at the beginning of the week. According to IBJA (India Bullion and Jewellers Association) data, the spot price of gold of the 999 variety fell below Rs 97,200 per 10 grams on Wednesday. It touched Rs 97,030 today June 26 in morning trade. According to data from the All India Sarafa Association, gold prices slipped Rs 300 to Rs 98,600 per 10 grams in New Delhi on Wednesday. Weak global trends prompted stockists to sell the metal, triggering the decline, said analysts. Gold 999 rates over the past few days in



India, gold prices have been falling since June 23 after the uneasy ceasefire agreement between Israel and Iran. According to IBJA (India Bullion and Jewellers Association) data, the price of 10 gms of gold 999 variety is as follows: The price of gold breached Rs 1 lakh per 10 gms for the first time on April 22 following the continuous uncertainty triggered by the retaliatory trade tariffs of US President Donald Trump. Analysts pointed out that though the prices have declined now, the markets will be on the lookout for any uptick in trade-related tensions and rising geopolitical risks in the coming weeks. It needs to be reiterated that Trump's tariffs have merely been suspended and not cancelled. Some analysts pointed out that gold could stay in the band of Rs 96,000 and Rs 98,500.

## Indian banks still prefer funding fossil fuels project amid rising risk to investment: Report

### An analysis shows that public banks provided roughly 75% of the coal loans while private banks financed roughly 83% of the total underwriting.

**NEW DELHI.** Even as India aggressively pushes for a clean energy transition, Indian banks have substantially financed fossil fuel and coal-fired power projects—totalling approximately USD 29 billion between 2016 and 2023—which could hinder and complicate the path to achieving net-zero emissions, states a recent report. Prepared

by Climate Risk Horizon, a Bangalore-based non-profit organisation that monitors climate-related risks for investors, the report highlights that the State Bank of India (SBI) and private lenders such as Axis Bank and ICICI Bank were among the top financiers of coal. Titled "Stuck in the Past: Coal Ties Hinder Indian Banks' Energy Transition," the report indicates that India's leading banks invested around USD 29 billion in coal during the specified period. Of this amount, approximately USD 15.2 billion was provided as coal loans, while USD 13.5 billion was allocated to coal underwriting services. Further segregating the data, the analysis shows that public banks provided roughly 75% of the coal loans while private banks financed roughly 83% of the total underwriting. According to the report, over these eight years, the amount of coal loans fluctuated significantly. Still, coal underwriting by Indian banks remained relatively stable with an average of USD 1.7 billion per year. Underwriting service is a process of mitigating risk for financial

transactions by financial institutions by guaranteeing repayment in case of damage or financial loss. Data shows that underwriting has become the dominant



channel for financing coal globally. "In India, higher indirect coal financing by private banks indicates a continued desire to profit from the climate-changing fuel, albeit with a lower risk exposure given the coal sector's historical volatility," said Anusha Das, co-author of the report.

The report analysed that over 200 Financial Institutions worldwide—including more than 80 banks—have adopted coal

exclusion policies to align with decarbonisation and Net Zero goals. In India, Federal Bank, RBL Bank, and Suryoday Small Finance Bank have set an example by adopting coal exclusion policies. However, most banks have 25-35% of their loan books tied to coal, which raises serious concerns about their commitment to transitioning to clean energy and threatens investment. For instance, declining price of renewable energy compare to coal energy and stricter environmental scrutiny further stressed the debt of coal-power sector. According to the report, between 2016 and 2020, major Indian and foreign investors such as HDFC Mutual Funds and ICICI Prudential lost an estimated USD 3 billion in foregone earnings because of the underperformance of coal sector stocks. The data related to lending to coal-related projects was collected from open sources and Urgewald, a German non-profit advocating environmental and human rights organisation.

## Housing sales drop 20% across top 7 cities in Q2 2025 as prices stay high

**A sluggish Q2 masked early signs of recovery in India's housing market, with rising prices, cautious buyers, and skewed supply dampening sales—but softening rates and easing tensions may turn the tide.**

**New Delhi.** Housing sales across India's top seven cities declined 20% year-on-year in Q2 2025, with approximately 96,285 units sold compared to over 1.2 lakh units in the same period last year, according to the latest data from ANAROCK Research. On a quarterly basis, however, sales saw a modest 3% rise.

"The second quarter of 2025 was a rollercoaster for the Indian housing market," said Anuj Puri, Chairman, ANAROCK Group. "The war-like climate pushed homebuyers into wait-and-watch mode, compounding the impact of soaring property prices over the past two years." Puri attributed the soft Q2 sentiment to geopolitical tensions such as Operation Sindoora and the Iran-Israel conflict, along with continued price escalation across key markets. "Buyers paused, not disappeared," he added. "Now, with domestic tensions easing and the RBI's repo rate cut injecting fresh optimism, sentiment is already beginning to turn."

**L A U N C H E S A N D P R I C E TRENDS** Among the seven major cities, only Chennai

buckled the national trend, recording an 11% annual sales increase to around 5,660 units. The city also saw a sharp 40% rise from the previous quarter. In contrast, sales in MMR and Pune, which together contributed nearly half of all homes sold in Q2, fell by 25% and

27% year-on-year, respectively. Bengaluru saw sales rise slightly (1%) from the previous quarter but was still 8% below last year's numbers. Hyderabad posted a 9% quarterly rise but dropped 27% annually. Kolkata saw the steepest sequential fall at 10%.

**CITY-LEVEL TRENDS** Developers launched 98,625 new units in Q2 2025, a 16% drop year-

on-year, as they responded to subdued demand. MMR led in fresh supply with over 28,000 units but saw a 36% annual decline. NCR was the only city with a supply uptick—launches rose 69% quarter-on-quarter and 10% year-on-year, driven heavily by high-end projects. "New supply continues to skew towards the upper end of the spectrum," Puri said. Luxury and ultra-luxury homes (above Rs 1.5 crore) accounted for 46% of new launches, while the affordable segment (below Rs 40 lakh) made up just 12%. "This clear supply mismatch is pricing out large sections of the middle-income market." Average residential prices in the top cities rose 11% year-on-year, with NCR leading the surge at 27%, followed by Bengaluru (12%) and Hyderabad (11%). However, quarterly price growth has begun to moderate, coming in at just 1%. "If prices remain in check and financing costs stay favourable, housing demand should bounce back in the second half of the year," Puri noted.



## Markets gain for third straight session as Indian benchmarks rise

**CHENNAI.** Indian equity benchmarks rose on Thursday, extending their two-day rally amid hopes of a ceasefire between Israel and Iran, despite weak cues from Asian markets. BSE Sensex, which rose 502 points in the early trade, settled at 38,116.14, up 360.63 points or 0.44% at 12.03 noon.

NSE Nifty climbed 131.60 points, reaching 25,376.35, marking a 0.57% gain for the session.

Both indices have risen nearly 1% over the previous two sessions, approaching nine-month highs. Key drivers behind the rally have been hopes of a ceasefire between Israel and Iran, which has calmed geopolitical risk—and lifted global sentiment. Weakening dollar and bond market softness bolstered metals and

commodity-linked stocks. June monthly F&O contracts expire tomorrow, adding volatility especially near 25,400–25,500 levels. Cumulative

foreign institutional investors (FIIs) selling of over Rs 9,500 crore in the past three sessions remains a headwind.



However, MSCI index was mixed, slipping 0.2% before firming modestly.

**Sector action in India**

Metals outperformed (+1%) benefiting from weak dollar dynamics. Financials & large-caps like HDFC Bank (+0.7%) and Reliance (+1.3%) advanced.

Defense stocks also gained 1–2%, fueled by global defense spending positivity.

But, June derivative contract expiry is tomorrow—expect last-hour swings. Despite rally, foreign capital is still leaving—a drag on near-term momentum. Market experts expect the day to open positively, backed by the GIFT Nifty's 40-point uptick and supportive global cues.

## Nvidia overtakes Microsoft as world's most valuable company after 4% surge

**New Delhi.** Nvidia has become the most valuable company in the world after a sharp rise in its share price on Wednesday. The chipmaker's stock went up by over 4%, taking its total market value to about \$3,763 trillion. This helped Nvidia move ahead of Microsoft, which is now the second-most valuable firm globally with a market value of \$3,658 trillion. Nvidia's shares touched a new record high of \$154.10, after climbing 4.33% during the trading session. This rally followed a positive report from Loop Capital, which raised its price target for Nvidia from \$175 to \$250. The research firm also kept its "buy" rating on the stock. Ananda Baruah, an analyst at Loop Capital, quoted in Reuters, wrote in a note to clients that Nvidia is "at the front-end of another material leg of stronger than anticipated demand." He referred to the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) and said the market is entering a "Golden Wave" of generative AI adoption.

Even though Nvidia's share price has gone up, it is still trading at about 30 times its estimated earnings for the next 12 months. That figure is lower than its average of about 40 times over the



last five years, according to data from LSEG. Analysts say this shows that the company's earnings have been rising fast enough to match the jump in share prices.

Nvidia, Microsoft, and Apple have been switching places frequently in the race to become the world's most valuable company. Microsoft recently held the top position after overtaking Nvidia in early June. But now Nvidia is back at the top. Apple remains in third place with a market value of about \$3,010 trillion after a 0.63% rise in its stock price on Wednesday. Here's a look at the top 10 most valuable companies in the world based on market capitalisation:

**India stands at a pivotal juncture. A measured Bitcoin strategy—perhaps a reserve pilot—could strengthen economic resilience and project modernity. As the US advances and nations like Bhutan adapt, India has a unique opportunity to lead.**

**New Delhi.** The US Strategic Bitcoin Reserve, launched in January 2025 under President Donald Trump, has elevated digital assets to a global stage. Valued at more than \$20 billion as of June 2025, it underscores Bitcoin's emerging role as a store of value. For India, this shift invites reflection: could Bitcoin, thoughtfully integrated, enhance our economic toolkit? The US initiative currently repurposes 200,000 seized Bitcoins as a buffer against inflation, a strategy cemented by last month's White House Crypto Summit with clearly articulated plans to buy more Bitcoin by exploring budget-neutral manners. Thereby, expanding its Bitcoin reserve holdings in the coming times without hurting the taxpayer.

Three US states have now passed legislation authorising the deployment of public funds to purchase and hold Bitcoin

as a reserve asset, with more expected to follow. These measures reflect a growing recognition of Bitcoin's potential to bolster fiscal resilience and serve as a hedge in uncertain economic conditions. This isn't a reckless pivot; it's a calculated step toward embracing digital assets' legitimacy. For India, observing this offers a lens to assess whether Bitcoin could diversify our reserves, complementing traditional holdings in an uncertain global economy.

**BHUTAN & BITCOIN: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE FOR INDIA**

Bhutan provides a regional perspective. Since 2021, it has mined Bitcoin with hydropower, amassing a \$1 billion-plus reserve by May 2025. Born from tourism's decline, this approach now supports public services and sustainability goals. India, with its renewable energy capacity, has the full scale of capability to adapt this model, though scale and regulation pose distinct challenges. Bhutan's success suggests digital assets can stabilise economies, a point worth considering.

**WHAT MAKES BITCOIN STAND OUT?** Bitcoin stands apart as an asset without an issuer—a commodity, not a security, as the US SEC now recognises. Like gold, it has no central authority; no government, bank, or company controls it. This

decentralisation is its bedrock, setting the stage for three defining traits: scarcity, liquidity, and transparency.

Only 21 million Bitcoins will ever exist, which, unlike traditional currencies or even assets like stocks, bonds, or commodities that face oversupply and hence inflation, has a fixed supply.



This mirrors gold's finite nature but operates at digital speed. Bitcoin trades globally 24/7, offering liquidity unmatched by most decentralised assets; gold, by contrast, sits static in vaults or jewellery, less fluid in daily exchange. And its blockchain—a public, tamper-proof ledger—makes every single transaction verifiable to anyone, reducing the opacity that often clouds traditional markets. These qualities echo gold's appeal: a trusted store of value beyond any single entity's grasp. Yet Bitcoin transcends it, digital

and dynamic where gold is physical and inert. At \$100,000+ today, it's this blend—gold's scarcity with digital fluidity—that earns it the "digital gold" label by many, including the White House. It's an intuitive shorthand: finite and reliable like metal, but built for a borderless, tech-driven world. Bitcoin

also stands out because of its programmability and portability. It can move at the speed of the internet, settle transactions with verification but, without intermediaries, and be stored securely with modern cryptography-based security.

In an increasingly digital and decentralised world, it aligns with how the next generations are thinking about money and value.

**THE ROLE OF REGULATION** Regulation remains pivotal. India's crypto policy—taxed but unregulated—needs clarity to unlock potential. During its G20 presidency in 2023, India chaired the formation of a crypto working group with the IMF, tasked with shaping global standards. While its recommendations will take their due course, we are seeing other jurisdictions including Russia, China, and Brazil from the BRICS, and other G20 nations led by the US, race ahead—not pausing for consensus.

## US Bitcoin Reserve signals a shift: An opening for India

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# Janhvi Kapoor

## Sweats It Out In Gym, Shares Glimpse Of Rigorous Workout Session

**J**anhvi Kapoor is a fitness lover and continues to inspire fitness enthusiasts with her dedication to staying fit. The Mr. & Mrs. Mahi star took to social media to give fans a peek into her rigorous workout routine, and it's safe to say—she's not cutting any corners when it comes to training hard. Taking to her Instagram stories, Janhvi shared a photo in which she is doing Pilates. Her trainer Namrata Purohit shared the same photo. Recently, the actress made debut at Cannes red carpet. Her look went viral on social media. Her boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya and sister Khushi also joined her.

Recently, Janhvi Kapoor and Shikhar Pahariya's London getaway has taken over the internet, especially after a heart-melting moment between the rumoured couple went viral. In a video that has now caught fans' attention, Janhvi is seen casually eating from Shikhar's plate, even though the same dish is served to her. Shikhar looks at her affectionately, and Janhvi returns the gaze with a sweet, cheeky smile.

The video was part of a series of photos and clips Janhvi recently shared on her Instagram, giving followers a peek into her vacation. She was seen posing confidently in a black tank top

and green cargo trousers in front of a scenic London bridge. Other photos included wholesome sister moments with Khushi Kapoor, with whom she enjoyed a picturesque picnic by the lakeside and even went horse riding. The adorable moment with Shikhar in the final slide of her post has especially captured fans' attention.

**J**anhvi had previously spoken about her relationship with Shikhar Pahariya on *Koffee With Karan 8*. Host Karan Johar teased her about their on-again, off-again dynamic, to which Janhvi responded, "Have you heard that song, Nadaan Parindey Ghar Aaja? Shikhar used to sing that to me a lot." The actress had also been spotted wearing a necklace bearing his name in the past. Earlier this year, Shikhar accompanied Janhvi to the Cannes Film Festival, where she attended the premiere of her upcoming film *Homebound*. Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, the film also stars Ishaan Khatter and Vishal Jethwa. On the work front, Janhvi has a packed schedule. She will be seen in *Param Sundari* opposite Sidharth Malhotra, *Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari* alongside Varun Dhawan, and *Peddi* with Ram Charan.



# Gauahar Khan

## Offers Duas At Sana Khan's Home After Mother's Demise

**F**ormer actress and *Bigg Boss 6* fame Sana Khan is going through a rough phase in her life as she lost her mother, Saeeda, on Tuesday, due to prolonged illness. In an emotional post, Sana expressed her profound grief and the deep pain she has been going through. During this time, her close friend and mom-to-be Gauahar Khan, along with her husband Zaid Darbar, arrived at her residence to pay their heartfelt condolences. In a video shared on Instagram, Gauahar, dressed in a white suit, is seen entering the building as her husband follows her.

Apart from Gauahar and Zaid, several close friends like comedian Munawar Faruqui's wife Mehzabeen Coatwala were seen visiting Sana's residence to pay their respects and support the grieving family. Sharing an emotional note on Instagram stories, Sana wrote, "Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaih Rajioon, My beloved mother, Mrs Saeeda, has returned to Allah after struggling with bad health conditions. Namaz-e-Janaza will be performed at Oshiwara Qabarstan after isha salat @9:45. Your prayers for my mother will be helpful." Her mother's funeral and burial ceremony were held on Tuesday night in Mumbai. Sana has always had a strong bond with her mother. In 2023, she shared a heartfelt video of her mother fixing her shoelaces, expressing her respect and

gratitude to her. "No love is more pure and unselfish than a mother's love. Had to post this because we often forget the love and sacrifices they make for us," she wrote. "No matter how old you are, you will always be a chota bacha for them," she added.

### Who Is Sana Khan?

Sana rose to fame after her appearance in Salman



Khan's controversial reality show, *Bigg Boss 6*. She appeared in a number of films including *Jai Ho*, *Wajah Tum Ho*, *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* and others.

In 2020, she announced her departure from showbiz due to religious reasons and has since adopted a spiritual lifestyle. She is now an entrepreneur and mother of a child with husband, Anas Sayyad.



**Sonam Kapoor And Isha Ambani Bring Star Power To Serpentine Summer Party, Pose With Cate Blanchett**



**B**ollywood star and global fashion icon Sonam Kapoor yesterday visited the Serpentine Gallery and was also announced as Member of the Summer Party Host Committee while attending Arpita Singh's exhibition: Remembering. Following the exhibition, Sonam attended the Serpentine Summer Party, co-hosted by Academy Award Winner Cate Blanchett which is an invitation-only fundraiser designed to bring together leading individuals and supporters of the institution from the worlds of art, fashion, business and technology.

Sonam Kapoor was seen posing with none other than two-time Oscar-winning actress Cate Blanchett. Cate, who is regarded as one of the most accomplished and revered figures in Hollywood, has won Academy Awards for her performances in *The Aviator* and *Blue Jasmine*. At the event, she made a bold sartorial statement in an intricately embellished dress featuring seashells, metal accents, and a sculptural hip detail—a look that was nothing short of avant-garde and theatrical, in true Blanchett fashion.

Also in attendance was Isha Ambani, who looked radiant as always in a champagne-toned beaded dress that shimmered in the evening light. The sleeveless dress featured a petal-like pattern, delicate embellishments, and a soft flared hem that added to the dreamy vibe. Isha's soft waves, natural makeup, and sparkling heels completed the look—she truly looked elegant and effortlessly beautiful.

At the Summer Party, Sonam, the global ambassador for the French luxury fashion house Dior, sported a Kimono jacket from the Dior Fall 2025 collection, embracing cultures through the world with her fashion. Others present at the fundraiser included Isha Ambani, Eiza González, Alicia Vikander, Rebel Wilson, Georgia May Jagger, Lady Amelia Spencer, Lady Eliza Spencer, Lily Allen and more.

## Esha Gupta Reacts To Being Called A 'Sex Symbol': 'It's Not A Good Title To Have'



**A**ctress and model Esha Gupta has shared her thoughts on being called a "sex symbol" in the industry. The tag, often associated with actresses, is something that she dealt with as people stereotyped her based on her striking features. Speaking to Siddharth Kannan on his YouTube show, Esha expressed her frustration at being associated with "sex." The conversation around this began when the host enquired about the people who tried to pull her down in the industry. She candidly revealed that the agency she was eyeing for a debut with refused to do so because a "director-producer" asked them not to, as they were planning to launch another big artist. The same people also made her feel bad about her looks.

"In the beginning, I did not stereotype myself; people did it. And I don't think it was the media either, the media does not do that. You are feeding the media; it is the people who feed the media," she said. Esha further reflected on being called a "sex symbol." She added, "Sex Symbol", 'Hot', what does that even mean? What is a symbol of sex? Kamasutra is a symbol of sex, it's not Esha."

Esha continued, "If you say Esha Gupta is a sex symbol, then this is something God has given me, something Kamdev has given me. If you are calling me a sex symbol, it's not a good title to have. It's not bad either." She then explained how such stereotyping impacted her, revealing that she became very unconfident about her look.

"Because you feel like, 'Oh, I shouldn't look like this, right? I should look like the girl next door.' Because that's what people keep teaching you, that how you look is not good," she mentioned, pointing out how actresses now get surgeries to look like her. The 39-year-old actress also shared that a guy from the industry asked her to get a nose job done, but she chose to remain confident with the way she looked rather than changing anything. As for her work, Esha, who made her debut with *Jannat 2*, starring Emraan Hashmi, was last seen on screen in *Bobby Deol's Aashram*. Reportedly, she has been roped in for *Dhamaal 4*, featuring Ajay Devgn, Riteish Deshmukh, Arshad Warsi, Sanjay Mishra, Jaaved Jaafery, along with fresh faces like Sanjeeda Shaikh, Anjali Anand and Upendra Limaye. It is slated to hit theatres on Eid 2026.

